

Civic Education: A Veritable Instrument for achieving Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract. This paper attempts to establish the importance of Civic Education as a veritable instrument for promoting sustainable development in the Nigerian Society. The paper examined civic education and sustainable development, relationship between them and proffers solution on the use of Civic Education Curriculum for knowledge acquisition, skill development and value cultivation as irreducible elements for promoting and achieving sustainable development in the Nigerian Society. Civic Education is, therefore, seen as an effective instrument for sustainable development through the production of responsible citizens who will maximally contribute to building a useful society. The paper points to the fact that going by the interconnections between Civic Education and sustainable development, Civic Education remains a necessary condition for sustainable development in Nigeria. It, therefore, recommends balanced teaching of Civic Education to reflect the Cognitive (Knowledge) Psychomotor (Skill) and Affective (Value) element of functional rational Citizenship capacity building for societal development.

The need to emphasize the use of Value education techniques as basic requirement for addressing the deficiency of the existing teaching methods in the school system which are predominantly teacher centered content transmission driven.

Keywords: Civic Education, Instrument, For Achieving, Sustainable Development.

1. Introduction

Civic Education remains an important means of teaching the populace about individual rights and what duties and responsibilities the governed and leaders should do. The introduction of Civic Education as a subject to be taught in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria is expected to further deepen democratic culture and encourage qualitative participation of the average Nigerian in the governance process. According to Yahya (2013) The Civic Education curriculum addresses young Nigerians in the formative educational years. The content addresses issues that are important to developing young Nigerian people into responsible citizens. That is to say, the curriculum enable our young people imbibe the value, norms, knowledge, actions and activities for sustainable development.

While sustainable development can be seen as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development could also mean a global responsibility and solidarity between generations, between women and men and between cultures and countries. It is about safeguarding and efficient use of existing natural resources. Investments in management of human, social and psychological resources are also vital parts of sustainable development. Nevertheless, Civic Education is a veritable instrument for achieving sustainable

development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issue (Okunloye, Olokooba and Abulsalam, 2017). Civic Education is concerned with three different elements: civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition. Civic knowledge refers to citizens' understanding of the workings of the political system and of their own political and civic rights and responsibilities e.g. the rights to freedom of expression and to vote and run for public office, and the responsibilities to respect the rule of law and the rights and interests of others. (Ajibola & Habiba, 2014) Civic skills refers to citizens' ability to analyze, evaluate, take and defend positions on public issues, and to use their knowledge to participate in civic and political processes (e.g to monitor government performance, or mobilize other citizens around particular issue). Civic dispositions are defined as the citizen traits necessary for a democracy, such as tolerance, public spiritedness, civility, critical mindedness and willingness to listen, negotiate, and compromise (Ajibola and Halima, 2014) These civic elements are real because they actually affect people's lives. They are topical and relevant in contemporary human society. They are also issues of public significance bordering on core values or morality in the Nigerian society and her educational system (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC,2009,Azebamwa,2010) It is when responsible citizenship qualities are imbibed and cultivated in citizens that good human relationship, peace and order can reign in any human society.

This requirement was also reiterated by Obama (2009) in his address to American's school children declared thus:

"We will need the insights and critical thinking skills you gain in history and social studies to fight poverty and homelessness, crime and discrimination, and make our nation fairer and freer. You need the creativity and integrity you develop in all your classes to build new companies that will create new jobs and boost our economy."

This speech is established on the assumption that every citizen has got one way or the other to

contribute to national development. That is why for every society, there must be a clearly stated framework for responsible citizenship and national development. For Nigeria, there is no doubt; it has been laid down in the National Policy of Education (2008).

Nevertheless, there seem to be a strong relationship between Civic Education and sustainable development. Hence, Enoch (2009) observed that Civic Education is an effective factor to sustainable development, and therefore both concepts are seen as monolithic entities placed on a linear relationship with the concept of Civic Education being stronger. It is therefore capable of affecting sustainable development.

It is arguable to say sustainable development is interconnected with national development. This is because the concept of national development touches all aspects of societal development-economic, political, social, cultural, educational and technological. When examining Civic Education and sustainable development, it should be clearly stated that Civic Education is holistic in approach to contribute to national development. In this situation, Civic Education is seen as an effective instrument that can bring about national development by helping to produce responsible citizens who will maximally contribute to the building of a useful society. When the citizens' capacities and commitments are well developed through the Civic Education curriculum, every citizen will become conscious of his or her responsibility to the growth and development of the nation.

What is the requirement for achieving this? To achieve this there is need for a responsible curriculum that is flexible and dynamic enough to drive the society on the path of growth and developments, such a progressive curriculum must be interdisciplinary in nature and so Civic Education as an interdisciplinary area of study is clearly documented in the National Policy on Education and therefore accorded the status of a core subject. Oyetade & Oladiran (2012) observed that the concept of sustainable development has been an age long discourse in all education matters. For education is a human development process, schools are one of the

societal institutions that have an active role in assisting children and young adult learn to live and work in their nation. Therefore, teachers should endeavor to make their classrooms places where children feel that their ideas will be given a respectful hearing, and where they know that learning will rest on them. Teachers should create occasions to ask pupils what they think, how a proposed problem is to be solved, what features they think should be located on a class-constructed map etc. In such a classroom environment, the pupils learn the meaning of involvement, good will and mutual respect for one another is observed and experienced. We should look for concrete ways in which pupils input have a better-than-even chance of influencing policy. Where civic sensitivity and responsibility are nurtured, children will develop a feeling of loyalty and protectiveness towards their class. This sometimes expresses itself in surprising rewarding ways.

The move towards re-engineering teaching and learning Civic Education in our primary and secondary schools has become a must especially in the face of awakening national consciousness and promoting sustainable development. In the 80s and 90s, it became painful evident that lack of Civic Education and patriotic orientation had led to disorientation in schools and the larger society. The effects were being felt at all strata of our society. Recent happenings have indicated that Nigeria is on the brink of losing its national development. The widespread of corruption, violence, indiscipline, and disrespect for both elders and the rule of law, non-committal to duty and so on are some of the manifestation of negative values in the Nigerian society. All these call for urgent value re-orientation because of their far-reaching impact on sustainable development.

To acquire knowledge and skill have become important for an informed, efficient and responsible citizen. Today, more than ever before, young people need to understand how democracy works and how they can help to keep it and improve it. During the last 10-15 years, Civic Education has become one of the central objectives in many schools, especially in the context of promoting interdisciplinary and

practice-oriented projects, making Civic Education not merely a school subject but a way of life. The foregoing assertion therefore clearly suggests that the acquisition of the knowledge of Civic Education is a veritable instrument for sustainable development in Nigeria.

2. Civic Education in Nigerian Secondary School Curriculum

Civic Education is one of the subjects taught in both primary and secondary schools which inculcates sound moral values in the youths. It is the subject which aims to help people learn how to become active, informed and responsible citizens. Civic Education remains an important means of teaching the populace about individual rights and what duties and responsibilities the leaders and the lead have (Olaitan, 2007) Civic Education is the type of education given to the citizens of a particular country in order to make them to be active and functional citizens. Civic Education can further be defined as a subject that expose the individual to the need for imbibing positive attitude such as patriotism, peaceful co-existence, hard-work, diligence, honesty, mutual respect, love, tolerance and self discipline (Oladele, 2009). Ekwonwa, (2010) views Civic Education as aiming to educate the students to work towards the achievement of their country's national goals and in sharpening of people's value. Effective implementation of Civic Education provides a philosophical and structural framework on which to base the teaching of skills and strategies that reinforce reasoned decision-making skills, evaluation of information, practical application of civic virtue, and an in-depth understanding of citizenship responsibility (Kidwell, 2005)

Aims and Objectives of Civic Education

Shetu (2011) highlighted the aims and objectives of Civic Education as:

1. To ensure the participation of well- informed and responsible citizens, skilled in the arts of effective action and deliberation,
2. To deepen and strengthen democratic culture,
- 3 To ensure the protection of individual rights,
4. Forming and maintaining an intention to pursue a common good,

5. To protect individuals from unconstitutional abuses by government and from any source, public or private,
6. To seek the broad knowledge and wisdom that informs judgment of public affairs.
7. To develop the skills to use knowledge effectively.
8. To foster the qualities of mind and heart required for successful government within a democracy.

Such above values, perspectives, knowledge and skills in civic matters according to (Shetu, 2011) make responsible and effective civic participation possible. To this author, fostering these aforementioned qualities constitutes the mission of Civic Education.

3. Concepts of Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainability education (SE) Education for sustainability (EFS) and Education for sustainable Development (ESD) are interchangeable terms describing the practice of teaching for sustainability. ESD is the term most used internationally and by the United Nation. Sustainable development means vision expression (Lee, 1993) value change (Clark,1989) and moral development (Rolson,1994) The core idea was defined most influentially by The World Commission on Environment and Development (i.e- The Brundtland Commission) as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (1987). The fundamental principle underlying sustainability can be separated into economic, social and ecological dimensions. The economic growth is usually seen as a requirement for development, No country can achieve a sustainable economic growth if the environment is not conducive, if there is inadequate human resources and if prosperity is not fairly distributed. Therefore, the economic dimension means that economic growth shall carry on with: first respect taken to the environment, second, growth of the people’s health and education and third, a fair distribution of prosperity. The social dimension points out that important resources, power and influence

are fairly distributed and that people can feel secured and participate. The social dimension is therefore a requirement for economic growth. The environment dimension means that considerations are taken for the social and economic development. These three dimensions are integrated with each other as they are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The implication of this is that sustainable development to some extent is about politics. (Tilbury & Wortman, 2004).

A lot of approaches to education for sustainable development encourage people to understand and assess their own values and that of the society in which they live in the context of sustainability. Education for sustainable development wants people to engage in negotiating a sustainable future, making decisions and acting on them. Husckle and Sterling (2006) stated that it is generally agreed that sustainable education must be made to suit individual learners.

According to Tilbury and Wortman (2004) the following skills are necessary to education for sustainable development:

1. Envisioning – being able to imagine a better future. The premise is that if we know where we want to go, we will be better able to work out how to get there
2. Critical thinking and reflection – learning to question our current belief systems and to recognize the assumptions underlying our knowledge, perspective and opinions. Critical thinking skills help people learn to examine economic, environmental, social and cultural structures in the context of sustainable development.
3. System thinking - acknowledging complexities and looking for links and synergies when trying to find solutions to problems.
4. Building partnerships – promoting dialogue and negotiating, learning to work together.
5. Participation in decision-making-empowering people.

4. Sustainable Development Goals

In the year 2000 about 189 Countries of the world came together to face the future this was

because they saw famine, drought, wars, plagues, poverty etc in several cities, towns and villages. They knew that things didn't have to be way it was. They knew we have enough food to feed the world, but that it wasn't getting shared as expected. Therefore, these leaders created a plan called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) this set of 8 goals imagined a future of 15 years off that would get rid of poverty and hunger. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Universal International Organization working to achieve the MDGs are found in several countries of the world, it funded projects that can help fulfill the Millennium Development Goals. These countries of the world wanted to build on several successes of the past 15 years and want to go further. Hence, the setting of 17 new set of goals by 193 countries that aim to end poverty and hunger by the year 2030.

The aim of sustainable development is to balance our economic, environmental and social needs, allowing prosperity for now and the future generations. Sustainable development consist of long-term integrated approach to developing and achieving a healthy community by jointly addressing economic, environmental, and social issues, whilst avoiding the over consumption of key natural resources. Everybody has the right to a healthy clean and safe environment. This can be achieved by reducing pollution, poverty, poor housing and unemployment. No one in this age, or in the future should be treated unfairly. Global environmental threat, such as climate change and poor air quality must be reduced to protect human and environmental health. Economic prosperity is required if Nigeria is to prosper and our business must therefore offer a high standard of products that consumers throughout the world want at the price they are prepared to pay. For this, we need a workforce equipped with suitable skills and education within a framework to support them.

5. Civic Education as Instrument for Sustainable Development

Therefore, the roles of Civic Education in promoting sustainable development becomes

inestimable values, if the citizens are to be aware of their rights and obligations and participate in governmental activities with the sole aim of sustainable development. Civic Education is a necessary condition for political and economic reform. This is because it sensitizes the citizens on the need to be patriotic, co-operative, and tolerant; and abide by the constitutional provisions. It is a critical instrument for promoting justice, equity, fairplay, transparency and accountability that are of indispensable virtues or values of democratic culture (Okunloye, 2016b)

Civic education as instrument for environmental education: This subject is also relevant for promoting sustainable environment in the global human society. Responsible citizenship also involves cultivating the values of symbiotic attitude to human-environmental relations and skills for friendly environmental behavior. Civic Education is highly indispensable in the production of citizen who will be conscious of their environment and its associated problems and motivated to solve them. The knowledge of skills and values of environmental protection and environmental problem-solving are central to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the current development agenda for global human society (Okunloye, Olokooba & Abulsalam, 2016a)

Civic Education is not only restricted to the school system as an instrument of citizenship Education, but also a programme of Civic learning that encompasses citizens outside the school system to promote Civil knowledge acquisition, skill development and value cultivation for socio-economic and developmental problem solving (Okunloye, 2016b)

Civic education also promotes human right advocacy and sustains peace and stability in democratic societies: Every citizen would be aware of his or her rights, obligations and responsibilities and respect for human rights as members of one and indivisible human family (Okunloye et al, 2016b)

Civic education is also an instrument for the cultivation of local and generic value: These

values are recognized as core values for the survival of human beings especially human dignity, and love of fellow humans and good neighborliness individual differences notwithstanding (NERDC, 2009)

Civic Education for good human relation: This human relation cut across intra-group and inter-group levels across all societies. It makes all and sundry to relate together as one. No doubt, civic education is one of the antidotes Nigeria needs through our educational system to re-brand her already collapsed foundation. Civic Education makes people to be responsible and dutiful. Civic education teaches people to be good citizens; in fact, Civic Education is a catalyst to sustainable development. Through Civic Education, an individual becomes sensible and disciplined member of the community. This will ultimately promote good governance and national development (Okunloye, 2016b)

Civic Education is indispensable for the creation and sustenance of good governance. Good governance is non-negotiable for sustainable democracy in Nigeria or any other political system. The ubiquitous influence of politics over other sub-system in the society warrants active and good participation in politics by the greater majority of the citizens for good and mutually rewarding relationship between the government and the governed. It is only then that the rational and active voters can produce good leaders in government to administer every other sub-systems for sustainable development. (Okunloye, 2016b)

Obasanjo (2007) in his farewell broadcast to the nation presented this challenge: we have set for ourselves ambitions target that will make us one of the largest economies in the world by the year 2020. This is attainable and achievable, but if we divert from the part of economic prudence, reform and realities, we can miss the road. This year 2020 will be a mirage. In order to address the above challenge, Emah (2009) observed that we need a responsive curriculum such that will take cognizance of vital changes and challenges in the environment and prepares the learners to meet them. He opined that we need a responsive curriculum which equip the learner for

development in Information Communication Technology (ICT); local and global challenges of ensuring peace and conflict resolution, health concern and countless of social, economic and political demand that confront individuals and the whole society on daily basis. The present Civic Education curriculum is well responsive enough to equip students with the required skills that will make them function effectively and contribute positively and productively to the growth and development of the nation.

6. Conclusion

From the discussion so far, it is obvious that Civic Education remains a necessary condition for sustainable development in Nigeria going by the interconnections of the two. That is why civic education is identified as a vital instrument in the pursuits of development challenges. Therefore, Civic Education should be given a place of pride in our national affairs. In this regards, this paper argued for the use of Civic Education as a realistic platform for the production of responsible citizens who will contribute positively towards the country's quest for sustainable development. Civic Education should be used to promote educational culture that stimulates civic competence, critical thinking skill, articulate analyze and proffer solution to complex economic, political and socio-cultural issues of state policies. It could be affirmed that responsible citizen is the hallmark of any national development effort, in view of this, It is imperative that citizenship education through Civic Education should be sustained at all levels of education and extended to illiterate Nigerian citizens through the adult education programme and National Orientation Agency (NOA) It is in the light of this that the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be a functional Civic Education teaching and learning programme by emphasizing the skill and value components in the classroom situations.
2. Civic Education should be taught using practical and role-play and club activities in the school system
3. Civic Education should be used to educate all and sundry to contribute meaningfully to the success of the nation's economy.

4. Sustainable Development Goals should be included in secondary school curriculum as emerging issues in Civic Education and Social Studies

5. Create forum in the conventional Civic Education classroom to discuss dysfunctional news reporting about wrong conceptions of politics to address the negative messages from the society from negotiating the desirable values of Civic Education curriculum.

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