

THE ROLE OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN PERSONALITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: Civic Education has been the foundation of national development and this development is reflected in the quality of citizens a nation have. The emphasis on positive, responsible and self-reliant citizens show the importance of Civic Education to every nation. This research was therefore undertaken to evaluate the roles Civic Education plays in developing an individual and its national implication. The underlining principle of Civic Education was to fundamentally address issues as regards the rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens to the people and the government. In Nigeria, civic education has long been practiced since the Colonial era; however it was officially introduced upon the departure of the Colonial Government, with the purpose of enhancing civic responsibilities among the Nigeria populace to ensure self-sustenance. Civic education generally consist of three components; civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition, which is responsible for shapening an individual to become civilized, and politically aware of the government actions. Critically dissecting the goals of Civic Education, one can observe that its significance is vested in citizenship training; hence, it may not be wrong to state that the role of Civic Education in national development is the direct reflection of the citizens' contribution to the nation. Therefore, it could be concluded that there is an inseparable relationship between civic (citizenship) education, civility and civilisation; however Civic Education requires a medium through which its effect can be physical appreciated and that conduit are the individuals. Practically speaking, there is no direct relationship between Civic Education and national development; as development is vested on the action of the responsible individuals. Thus the need to incorporate citizenship education at all levels of societal endeavours is of fundamental essence.

Keywords: Civil Education, Society, Personality and National development, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Civic Education deals with the way government works in an organized society. It guards the rights and duties of individuals as citizens of a particular society. This is why no democratic processes can be achieved in the absence of citizens' participation (Deth, 2013). In Civic Education, constitutionalism, rule of law and good governance are highly emphasized; to create active citizens who will exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities, value diversity and participate fairly in the political activities (Aristotle, 1988; Finkel, 2002). In order to participate in societal activities in a civil manner, citizens need to have the prerequisite knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values (Deth, 2013).

Dushanbe (2007) and Olibie and Akudolu (2013) described Civic Education as fundamental aspect of the process of socialistic democratic development, which is the bedrock of civilisation. No wonder, John F. Kennedy (1958), emphasized that:

“The course of civilization is a race between catastrophe and education, and in a democracy such as ours, we must make sure that education wins the race.”

The civilization described by Kennedy (1958) was not restricted to structural development alone, rather it was describing the transition from antique to advancement in terms of capacity building, infrastructure, and contributions of individuals to the growth of the nation. The role of Civic Education in any democratic nation are numerous (Sloan, 2012; Deth, 2013), as history have consistently recapitulated the need for the incorporation of Civic Education into leadership process (Walsh, 2013; Bayeh, 2016).

Over the past few years, Nigeria has constantly been faced with lots of challenges that threaten our fragile democracy and some of these have been attributed to political intolerance, lopsidedness, suppression of political opponent and silencing of the masses. These have been associated with poor understanding of civility and the less participation of citizens who can provide and sustain quality democracy. In recent times, Nigeria has witnessed dramatic agitation for freedom, self-determination, marginalisation, political exclusion, ethnic cleansing, as well as social and political suppression. And this goes a long way to explain the importance of having developed minds to champion some of these demands otherwise, law and order breaks down.

From recent happenings, it is clear that civic virtues and qualities that defines a civilised population as described by Aristotle (1988) and Finkel (2002) have speedily dilapidated. The above situation poses serious national issues for the survival of our fading democracy.

2. CONCEPTS OF CIVIC EDUCATION

Aristotle (1988) conceptualised Civic Education as an element of education that makes the society to function well, provide for law and authoritative mandate, sociable harmony and peaceful co-habitation of citizens. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines Civic Education as that learning, which enables an individual to effectively participate in democratic and developmental processes at both local and national levels (UNDP, 2004). Peterson (2011) perceived Civic Education as any formative endeavour to teach the knowledge, skills or dispositions required for citizenship. Ross (2012) defined citizenship education as the aspect of education that deals with the relationship between the individual and political society, between the self and others.

Bagheri (2000) dimensionalised Civic Education into citizen education, and education for collective life. Smith *et al.* (2003) regarded it as democratic education that considers all aspects of human rights, which emphasises the need for rule of law and good governance (Aristotle, 1988; Finkel, 2002). Civic Education can additionally include any type of systematic process that seeks to organise people politically, for example, through public interest or reform groups or through trade or professional association (Finkel, 2002; Crittenden and Levine, 2013).

Civic Education is described as a learning system that inculcates the principles of civic life such as respect for law and order, responsibility, critical reasoning, objectivity, coordination in activities, understanding the principle of politics, the structure of political system and a dozen of other related subjects and components (Shabani, 2013). Civic Education can also be regarded as the instruction given to citizens on how to contribute civically; especially within the borders of national and universal citizenship (Centre for Civic Education, 2001).

Therefore, it will be inclusively correct to state that Civic Education fundamentally addresses the rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens to the people and the government.

3. THE HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Since no *polity* (democratic society) arena is complete without citizens; hence, citizenship in the *polity* (democratic society) is participation in the democratic process and the political structure (Aristotle, 1988; Soko, 2012). It is therefore accurate to state that Civic Education in Nigeria is as old as the Colonial rule in Nigeria. However, officially, the Colonial Government on exiting Nigeria introduced Civic Education into Nigerian educational system for the purpose of eradicating low level of civic responsibilities among the Nigerian populace. In a bid to improve the citizen, the then Military Ruler, General Ibrahim Babangida in 1989 enacted the "CITIZENSHIP AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING CENTRE ACT". The center was saddled with the responsibility of training for the development of citizenship and leadership for national benefit. However, this was not enough and the process was informal until 1999, when President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration approved the teaching of Civic Education formally in primary and post-primary schools (NERDC, 2007).

As at the time Civic Education was formally introduced, Nigeria's politics and economic terrain was very turbulent and the process was beset; thus, national values began dilapidating (Ityonzughul *et al.*, 2014). Following this, in 2008 the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) developed and introduced the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) in schools and Civic Education was reintroduced as a core course (NERDC, 2007). However, this has not been achieved at the tertiary level.

4. CIVIC EDUCATION AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017), personality is the characteristic pattern of an individual in terms of thinking, feeling and behaving, which are constantly been influenced by the continued interaction with the environment. Civic Education encompasses all processes that positively affect an individual's ideology, knowledge, motivations, capabilities, skills and actions as a member of the society (Finkel, 2002). Civic Education does not necessarily need to be intentional or deliberate, neither does it require institutionalised structures in order to transmit values and norms. According to Ukegbu *et al.* (2009), Ogundare (2011) and Ityonzughul *et al.* (2014), Civic Education is adapted towards creating dependable and honest citizens for national development. It is a critical and effective empowerment tool that enables citizens participate in democratic and developmental processes (UNDP, 2004). Civic Education enables citizens to work towards the establishment and maintenance of a democratic political system by equipping them with the required political knowledge (Tovmasyan and Thoma, 2008).

When individuals devoid of civility handle certain issues and processes, the end point is usually disastrous; leaving the reason for the responsibility unhandled, while creating more problems. This is evident in almost all spheres of life, as it has been observed with Government handling of public matters, protest by masses and riot by hoodlums, media prosecutions, commentaries and opinion about leadership; the examples are actually endless. Unsurprising, a publication of the DailyPost on December 22, 2017 captured the Inspector General of The Nigerian Police (IGP, Ibrahim Idris) declaring the need for mental evaluation of the popular Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) (Jannah, 2017). One may not be hasty to agree with the head of the Nigeria Police Force and other individuals who have clamoured for mental evaluation for both public and civil servants; as it evident that an individual who lacks civility behaves in manners closely resembling mental instability.

Education based on civility is the type of education that is focused on helping an individual acquire and learn to use their skills, knowledge and character, as well as preparing them to be experienced and responsible citizens. This process continues throughout the life of an individual. Civic Education influences the mind of the citizens to engage critically with others (Aristotle, 1988; Tovmasyan and Thoma, 2008), in a common inquiry for the universal good and survival of democracy. To this end, Civic Education is tasked with the responsibility of developing a meticulous individual, who asks pertinent questions, examining critically why things are the way they are, and seek reforms or engage in political actions. It saves one from being manipulated and controlled by others, and helps one to be responsible in the choices and actions in every situation; summarily it keeps one in charge of his destiny.

5. CIVIC EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When there is constant improvement in the social and economic welfare of the people, it can be said that a nation is developing. Many studies have established that there are essential components (civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition) entailed in Civic Education that advance for the progression of national development and integration (Olayemi *et al.*, 2011; Chikwe, 2012; Ityonzughul *et al.*, 2014).

It may not be wrong to state that the role of Civic Education in national development is the direct reflection of the citizens' contribution to the nation. This is defensible as numerous scholastics opined that Civic Education is adapted towards creating dependable and honest citizens for national development (Ukegbu *et al.*, 2009; Ogundare, 2011; Ityonzughul *et al.*, 2014). For instance, Ukegbu *et al.* (2009) outlined targets of Civic Education to include, the development of a responsible and law abiding citizen, familiarizing the individual with the knowledge of his or her privilege, rights and obligation towards the nation and finally, instilling the spirit of courage, diligence, discipline, loyalty, patriotism and value (CELI, 2015).

There is great emphasis on Civic Education because it equips the individual with the capacity to complete duties and responsibilities and to be dynamic citizens of the nation for building their future sooner rather than later. Thus, Civic Education is vital to maintain our sacred majority rule system (constitutional democracy) and must take in cognizance that the "thought of the mind", as well as "intentions of the heart"; as regards the principles guiding democratic ethos, are genetically transferred (Kidwell, 2013).

Toqueville de Alexis (as cited in Branson, 1998) pointed out that:

“Each new generation is a new people that must obtain the knowledge, learn the skills, and improve the characters or disposition of private and public figure that undergird a constitutional democracy. Those dispositions must be fostered and nurtured by word and study and by the power of example. Democracy is not a ‘machine that would go off itself,’ but must be consciously reproduced, from one generation after another (p.1).”

Critically dissecting the goals of Civic Education, one can observe that its significance is vested in citizenship training (Ityonzughul *et al.*, 2014). Citizenship is a position or status of an individual who has full political and lawful rights in a state in which he or she adds value. Civic Education is a planned exertion made by the power to confer on individuals certain knowledge, facts, capacities, societal qualities and standards and disposition important for an active and helpful life in building a dynamic and incredible nation (Ukegbu *et al.*, 2009). This shows that Civic Education enjoys a paramount role in national development through citizen participation and positive contribution to the society.

6. PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The entity country can be described without people, however, it cannot be regarded as a nation without human representation, and the development of any nation is often described in terms of human, infrastructure and capital. Personality could to a large extent explain why certain individuals are motivated to achieve over others and why some nations have continued to develop while others have remained unchanged, slow in developing or generally what is regarded by many scholars as a “failed state”, “collapsed state” or “weak states” (Rotbert, 2003).

It is very important to note that an individual’s state of the mind significantly affects the way the individual thinks and acts, and this on the long run influences negatively or positively those around him, especially if he or she is deemed a leader or mentor. Undoubtedly, this is the basis of people acting because they believe in the ideals of one individual, regardless of the person’s educational status or societal level. For this singular reason, every reasonable government strive extensively to ensure its citizens are comfortable and happy, so as to foster an environment for peace and harmony. It was on this note that the Government of Nigeria in 1989 established the “CITIZENSHIP AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING CENTRE (CLTC) ACT”. The CLTC is a Parastatal in the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports, which is principally a human development outfit tasked with the training and shaping of Nigeria citizenry to become responsible and respectable citizens and leaders (CLTC, 2017). It is not a coincidence that the handlers of the training at the centre is the Man O’ War, which motto is “build the man, build the community”. Therefore, it is clear that a well-moulded citizen will definitely build a well-defined nation (Rotbert, 2003; Ukegbu *et al.*, 2009; Ogundare 2011; Ityonzughul *et al.*, 2014).

7. CONCLUSION

There is an inseparable relationship between civic (citizenship) education, civility and civilisation. It could simply be explained as; Civic Education instils the required norms and values, which shapens the individual to be civil, and the resultant effect is the growing of a nation filled with individuals who understand their democratic rights and responsibilities, value diversity and are fair in their dealings. Therefore, it will be accurate to state that Civic Education requires a medium through which its effect can be physically appreciated and that conduit are the individuals. Suffice me to state that without the action of an individual, which positively influences the action of other group of individuals, there can be no development. Practically speaking, there is no direct relationship between Civic Education and national development; as development is vested on the action of the responsible individuals. Thus, the need to incorporate citizenship education at all levels of societal endeavours is of fundamental essence.

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