Civic Involvement of Secondary Schools Students in Ibarapa East Local Government Area, Oyo State

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of selected personal characteristics on Social Studies students' civic involvement in secondary schools in Ibarapa East Local Government, Oyo State. The study adopted the descriptive survey research. The purposive random sampling technique was used to select 545 students from 10 schools in Ibarapa East Local Government Area of Oyo State. A self-designed instrument (r=0.78) was used in dara collection. Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive (means and percentages) and inferential statistics (ANOVA). The result showed that there was no significant differences in the knowledge and performance of JSS 2 and JSS 3 students. Also, there was no significant difference in the performance of male and female students in civic education as a subject. Based on these, it is concluded that students' civic involvement was not influenced by their areas of specialization arts, science or social sciences.

Key words: Impact, Personal characteristics, Civic involvement, Social studies students, Secondary schools in Ibarapa East

Introduction

Civic education is highly important for fostering political participation, and despite the increasing recognition accorded Social Studies Education in the Nigerian schools for political and social participation among the citizens, it has been observed that there is in the school system a general lack of institutionalized civic education aimed at promoting democratic citizenship during the early and middle school years in Nigeria today (Patrick, 2007). Yet, there is the need for such democratic citizenship in civic education in Nigeria.

More so, when it is recognized that citizenship education was for a long time during the military regime suppressed and became negligible in our school system. This becomes more important when it is remembered that during the 1990s, there was an unprecedented global dissemination of information about the theory and practice of democracy and civic education for democracy. Most people throughout the world today are recognizing that civic education implies teaching and learning the principles and practices of democratic governance and citizenship (O'Brien and Parry, 2001). Thus, its interrelated components are civic knowledge, civic virtues, civic involvement and civic skills. Hence, the need for a study in the extent of children's knowledge in, attitudes to involvement and skills acquired in civic education. Civic knowledge, according to Gbadebo (2007), consists of the fundamental ideas and information that learners must know and use to become effective and responsible citizens of a democracy. Generally, civic knowledge includes principles of democratic theory of democratic governance, and behaviours of democratic citizenship. In particular, it involves concepts and data about democracy in the learner's country and companions with other countries (Patrick, 2007).

Civic skills consist of the cognitive operations that enable the learner to understand, explain, compare and evaluate principles and practices of government and citizenship. Civic virtues are the traits of character necessary for the preservation and improvement of democratic governance and citizen (Ajitoni, 2008). Examples of civic virtues are respect for the worth and dignity of each person, civility, integrity, self-discipline, tolerance, compassion and patriotism. Civic involvement relates to the use of knowledge to gather information and use it, the knowledge of government, community participation, and political participation.Bass (1995) observed that at the heart of democracy lies the belief that the whole of the citizenry will govern better than an elite few. Thomas Jefferson, one of the past presidents of the United States of America, recognized that the promise of democracy could only be fulfilled through widespread, civically-minded education. Men, women and children all came into the world as individual human beings. By the various conventions of human rights, we are equal, in rights and dignity, to all other human beings. While citizenship education is aimed at educating future citizens, it must, of necessity, address children, young people and adults, who are living beings, having the status of human beings endowed with conscience and reason. This becomes very important when we look at the context of world political events in the 1990s and in the first two decade of the twenty-first century. The last decade saw the democratic coming of age of many nations across the globe to such an extent that by the opening years of the twenty-first century, the proportion of countries which could be described as liberal democracies was above 50 per cent of the nations of the world (Lynch, 2006). Ironically, most of the new countries to that democratic club, including Nigeria which joined the league again in 1999, were almost immediately faced with the problem of reconciling various challenges posed by democracy .The issue has increasingly been posed specifically of how education for citizenship, could assist in developing the values and institutions necessary to sustain the new found democracy in Nigeria. Even the older democracies are also faced with the need to reinterpret their outmoded democratic traditions to

attune to a more modern age (Lynch, 2006). From both sets of democracies, the old democracies and the new, a growing conviction is arising of democracy being of all humankind and all nations rather than the privilege of the few. Thus, the challenge has become not just democracy but values of democracy which will reinforce inter-dependence and active participation and membership of a world society (Ajitoni, 2008).

In response to the challenge of the 1990s and the one posed by Nigeria's new found democracy, there is a need for a new approach to education for democratic citizenship within a local, national and global context. There is the need to set new yard-sticks for a new approach to education for citizenship which can develop concerned and active participants in local, national and international life, who can critically appraise and judge the merits of domestic, national and international policy. Much as it is recognized in Nigeria and in most parts of the world that adults are in charge of politics, political issues and policies, the question arises: Why are we teaching civic education to children or adolescents when they are not yet in control? The answer is simple. First, Vontz and Nixon (1999), asserted that, although there is an appropriate place for civic education at every level of learning, it is increasingly recognized that the junior secondary school years are an important time in the development of civic roles and responsibilities. Unfortunately, at this level, there is a general lack of institutionalized civic education aimed at promoting democratic citizenship during the junior school years (Pokuy Research Project 1998). Educators, policy makers, parents and concerned members of the community need to recognize civic education in the junior secondary school as a prime concern, and as an effective way to respond to the concern.

The nascent democratic experience in Nigeria provides for the common good of society by allowing citizen involvement in government. Democracy is rule by the people and government decisions are based on the consent of the ruled. To sustain this democracy depends on civic involvement among citizens (Peterson, 1997). Civic involvement which is made up of citizens' informed involvement in government, politics, and community life (Kelman, 1996), is a desired behaviour among citizens particularly citizens above age 18 years, which is the voting age in Nigeria and it should be a desired outcome of higher education. By and large, the extent to which education makes a difference in civic involvement among learners has been questioned and has thus, become a subject of controversy. Scholars have been challenged to explain the relationship between level of education and civic involvement among adults and students in institutions of learning. This is one reason this study examined the relationships between measures of civic involvement and students' personal characteristics such as education level, ethnic background, religion, gender, age and location among secondary students in Nigeria.

However, the few studies conducted on aspects of civic involvement among students which are mostly foreign-based, suggest that several factors influence aspects of civic involvement among students. These include level of education, race, ethnic group, religion, gender, age family background, and location (Carroll, 1997; Knox, Lindsay, and Kolb, 1993). Education appears to be prominent among the variables that have strong relationship with aspects of civic involvement regardless of the ethnic group, religion, gender, age, family background, or location. The limited research in these areas in respect of young learners' civic involvement in Nigeria has prompted the need for this study. It is significant and also interesting to examine civic involvement among young students in Nigeria particularly as this relates to the immediate community. In examining this civic involvement, researchers have defined young student citizens as individuals below eighteen years of age who have acquired or will acquire citizenship status in Nigeria either by birth or naturalization (Ajitoni, 2009).

Scholars have studied civic involvement among young student citizens in terms of four attributes (a) use of information sources, (b) knowledge of government, (c) community participation and (d) political participation. In previous studies, researchers have explored citizens' use of information sources to monitor political and governmental issues (Nolin, Chapman & Chandler, 1997). A few studies have looked at adult citizens' knowledge of government and politics (Bennett, 1998; Jennings, 1996). Others have explored community involvement among adults (Youniss, McClellan and Yates, 2007). Several studies have focused on political participation among adults (Brooks & Manza, 1997; Chaney, Alvarez, & Nagler, 1998; Timpone, 1998), but few studies have looked at these attributes in relation to the young learners and in relation to the learners' personal characteristic. These areas are worth considering.

Statement of the Problem

Few studies on aspects of civic involvement among students in secondary schools have been conducted and the studies, which are mostly outside Nigeria, suggest the influence of such variables as level of education, race, ethnic background, gender, age, and location. These studies have included one or two aspects of both civic involvement personal characteristics of young learners, the future leaders of any nation. Because of the failure to include the young learners and the scarcity of information that explained variances in overall's civic involvement among young learners, this study examined relationships between civic involvement and personal characteristics of students–level of education, ethnic background, religion, gender, age, and location– in Oyo State, Nigeria. This was with a view to finding out the relationship between the dependent variables and dependent measures of civic involvement– knowledge of government and participation.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

$H0_1$: There is no significant difference in the civic involvement of JS 2 and JS 3 students in Ibarapa East Local Government of Oyo State

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between Junior Secondary School students' personal characteristics– level of education,ethnic background, religion, gender, age and location– and civic involvement– knowledge of government and school/community participation–in Ibarapa East Local Government of Oyo State

Ho3 There is no significant main effect of gender on students' civic knowledge.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design. The population for the study consisted of all junior secondary school students in Ibarapa East Local Government Area in Ibarapa, Oyo State .The sample for this study consisted of 545 students selected from 10 schools in Ibarapa East Local Government Area of Oyo State. The instruments used to collect data for this study was the questionnaire (r= 0.78). In order to test the hypotheses, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used.

Results

$H0_1$: There is no significant difference in the knowledge of JSS 2 and JSS 3 students in the civic education concepts. To test this hypothesis, table 4.4 gives a summary of the analysis of variance (ANOVA of the scores of the two groups of sample students. In analyzing the knowledge base of the students, however, five marks were awarded for each correct response to the 12 item civic education concept test. This yielded a maximum possible knowledge score of 60. Means and Standard Deviations were obtained for the two groupings of students separately, and a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare these means. Table 4 shows the result of the comparison.

Table1: ANOVA Table

sources of variation	Df	Sum of square	Mean square	F-ratio
Trt (class)	1	1568.00	1568.00	
Error	6	7633.5	1272.25	1.2324
Total	7	9201.5		

Table Value

$F_{t-1,n-t} = F_{1,6}^{0.05} = 5.99$

Decision: Since $F^{cal} = 1.2324$ is less than $F^{tab} = 5.99$, we therefore do not reject H_0. Based on the decision above, we therefore conclude that there is no significant difference in the knowledge or understanding of civic education by students in JSS 2 and 3.

Hypothesis 2

H_0: There is no significant difference in the knowledge of male and female students in civic education.

H_1: There is no significant difference in the knowledge/understanding of male and female students in civic education.

Table 5: Testing Knowledge of Male and Female Students

	Male	**Female**
Item 1	25	24
Item 2	29	30
Item 3	64	68
Item 4	94	96
Total	212	218

G.T = 430

ANOVA Table

sources of variation	Df	Sum of square	Mean square	F-ratio
Trt (class)	1	4.5	4.5	
Error	6	6597	1099.5	0.00409
Total	7	6601.5		

Table Value
$F_{1,6}^{0.05} = 5.99$

Decision: Since $F^{cal} = 0.00409$ is less than $F^{tab} = 5.99$, are therefore, fail to reject H_0.

Base on the decision made above, we therefore conclude that there is no significant difference in the understanding of civic education between male and female students.

Discussion

The main focus of this study was to examine the extent of junior secondary school students' knowledge of civic education concepts their attitudes to issues and concept in civic education. This was with a view to finding outs the skills acquired by students in solving civic and citizenship related issue and problems. This is because civic education, whenever and however undertaken, is meant to prepare people of a country, especially the young, to carry out their roles as citizens. The data collected were analyzed in chapter four of this study.

From the analyses in table 4 – 9 it is noted that the mean scores of the students in the two class groupings JSS 2 and JSS 3, indicated a generally good knowledge of civic education concepts and issues. This is an indication that the teaching of the concepts in social studies has greatly enhanced the students' learning and mastery of the concepts. His finding is in agreement with an earlier one on the role of social studies in citizenship education by Gbadebo (2007). However, the finding that the scores of the JSS 2 students were higher than the scores of the JSS 3 students' in the knowledge this could be attributed to the placement of most of those civic education concepts in the social studies curriculum. Most of the concepts used in this study could be found in the curriculum of JSS 1 and JSS 2 social studies. Perhaps, it might interest us to note that up to this stage, civic education is still being taught as part of social studies, The civic education knowledge concepts measured included the ability to identify the correct names of concepts, the right definitions as well as their examples and non-examples. This ability is considered critical for the effective learning of such concepts. The good or high scores obtained by the students would seem to be evidence of a crucial ability to learn and to retain such information learnt about those concepts.

The attitudes *of* the students as shown in the results presented in chapter four provide some insight into the kind of disposition that students have towards civic education and citizenship issues. For example, the mean attitude scores of the students was $X = 5.00$. Perhaps due to the relatively high knowledge and attitudes scores of the students about civic education could be attributed to their predominantly sources of information on the area outside the classroom Iba, the area of this study, has for close to sixty years now, been the centre of political activities in the Ibarapa East Local Government Area of Oyo State. One would expect majority of the people to be politically conscious which might affect students' knowledge of and attitudes to civic or political education.

Conclusion

Civic education, otherwise called citizenship or political education, implies that education that is given to children, from early childhood, to become clear-thinking and enlightened citizens who participate in decisions concerning their society. It is here that mention must be made of civic education as comprising the knowledge, attitudes and skills component if the individual is to become a 'good citizen', that is, a citizen who is aware of the human and political issues at stake in his society and act accordingly. It is on the basis that this study examined the knowledge, attitudes and skills components of secondary school students in respect of civic education. Children, and not adults, have been chosen for this study on account of the roles these children could play in the political survival of the country. Children who become aware of the political issues in their society, who are given the chance to form their opinion, and to recognize the effects of individual political choices on the society, cannot fail to perceive that they too can play a role and are stake holders in these interactions. And when their knowledge or awareness| attitudes and skills become more conscious, more organized, they acquire a growing insight into how the society, to which they belong, can be profoundly influenced by their own actions. They also begin to understand how the political actions of today affect their own actions and lives tomorrow. Since the recent change in the political baton of Nigeria, that is, a change from military dictatorship to democracy, Nigerian schools and teachers face a particular challenge in civic education in a system in transition so to say. To deal with this dynamic situation civic education should help students develop both cognitive and practical skills that will allow them to continue learning in future. To do this also, it is essential to find out the current knowledge, attitudes and skills possessed by these students in civic education. This, exactly, was what this study did.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and results of this study, the following suggestions are made.

First for students to have the essential knowledge in civic education, there is the urgent need to redefine the objectives of formal education. These objectives should include the teaching of the nation's institutions as well as an awareness of the rule of law which applies to social and human relationships.

Second, civic education should be taught to all students irrespective of their areas of specialization arts, science or social sciences. This is to say that civic education should go beyond. The first nine years of Nigeria's education, the Universal Basic Education (UBE), to all senior secondary schools and tertiary

institutions. Civic education is meant to train good citizens, that is, citizens that should be aware of the human and political issues at stake in their society or country. This education requires from each citizen ethical and moral qualities and these qualities do not terminate at a particular level of human development but extend to all levels of our development.

Third, to achieve these laudable objectives the various school subjects must develop skills for realizing the objectives such skills include skills of data acquisition, handling and presentation, skills of imagination and creativity to complement those of science, and attitudinal or skills of behaviour which will make students more favorably disposed to political issues. All these will help to sustain Nigeria's democratic government. If there is one idea inherent in civic education, because it concerns politics and institutions, it is the idea of democracy.

Finally, in as much as teachers are very central to the realization of these objectives, it will worth-while for government to always give incentives and good remunerations to teachers for effective discharge of their duties.

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