

Civic Education as a Collaborative Dimension of Social Studies Education in Attainment of Political Ethics in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper investigated Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in attainment of political ethics in Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design. The sample for the study consisted of 580 Social Studies teachers selected from thirty secondary schools in the three senatorial districts of Delta State. The instrument used for the study was the questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using the z-test of significance. The findings indicated that there is no significant difference in the opinion of Social Studies teachers on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics; there is significant difference between male and female Social Studies teachers opinion on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics; there is significant difference between in the opinion of urban and rural Social Studies teachers on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics. It was therefore recommended that Civic Education should not be seen as a rival but as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics; Social Studies teachers should be made to understand that both Civic education and Social Studies Education are directed towards one goal of which the attainment of political ethics is one; multi-disciplinary approach should be used as a method of the implementation of Social Studies Education at all levels of education.

Keywords: Social Studies, Education, Political Ethics

Introduction

There is collaboration between Civic education and Social Studies Education in the sense that both inculcate and imbibe social participation, active student engagement and ethics. Thus, both can be seen two sides of the same coin. That is Civic Education is a collaborative dimension of Social Studies in building and bringing about good citizenship. This paper is directed by the need to determine how Civic Education as a dimension of Social Studies Education teaching and learning brings about the attainment of political ethics in Nigeria. To establish this, the paper precisely looked into the opinions of Social Studies teachers in secondary schools in Delta State as to the extent to which Civic Education and Social Studies inculcate political ethics.

More so, in the context of schools in Nigeria, most Social Studies teachers seems not to grasp the values, skills and the global dimensions associated with the attainment of political ethics. This is consistent with the past study by Keene, Baamphatla & Moffat (2013) that stated that Social Studies teachers are more likely to do away with some components if they lack an understanding of the values, skills and global dimensions that underpin citizenship skills and ethics. The emphasis on political ethics was understandable. Presently, because of increased political violence in Nigeria, teachers are given the task of teaching and inculcating citizenship competences and political ethics in addition to their content areas. In response to political violence and economic inequities, educators rekindled ideals of political integrity, democracy and social reform.

The aforementioned is also made complex by the manner the subjects (Civic and Social Studies Education) are structured, implemented, the general lack of time as well as lack of pedagogy materials. It is not an overemphasis to state that such teachers lack efficiency and competence in the implementation of Social Studies programme because most social studies teachers are not democratic and innovative hence they end up indoctrinating their students rather than promoting political morality and values.

The concept of ethics is hard to pin down and the opinions many people have about ethics are shaky. However, ethics may be seen as moral principles that act as guide to behaviour, actions, and choices. Ethics are built upon responsibility, as individuals, organizations, and societies are responsible for the actions that they take (Laudon, et al, 1996). It is the standards of right and wrong that tells what man ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, and specific virtues, and what not to do. Ethics implies those standards that place on man shoulder the reasonable duties and responsibilities to refrain from evil or those things that inhuman and wrong in the society. It includes virtues of honesty, compassion, and loyalty (Velasquez, Claire, Shanks and Meyer, 2010). More so, ethics also means the continuous effort of learning of our own moral beliefs and conduct, and struggling to ensure that the individual and the society in which he live to be of standards that are reasonable and solidly-based for the development and upliftment of the human persons.

According to Velasquez, Claire, Shanks and Meyer (2010) ethics has to do with what one feeling tells me is right or wrong. It has to do with my religious beliefs and being ethical is doing what the law requires of the

individual. Ethics is made up of the principles of behaviour the society expects and accepts. The agreement among authorities in their opinion of the term 'ethic' is that it is a complex concept, which is seen as a restrained concept. According to Whitton (2001), ethics is concerned with the application of specific ways of thinking to action. Rightly speaking, ethics give or provide accurate answers to questions such as "What should I do?" and "How do I live my life?" For Okafor and Eloagu (2002) ethics considered from a wider angle as a set of standards which guide the behaviour of an individual, group of people, organization and the society in general. The term ethic implies dealing with good and evil and with moral duty, moral standards or practice. Ethics, on the other hand, means a set of moral principles or values, or a theory or system of moral values. According to Egbegbe (2012) ethics address which are not, or in more familiar terms, what is the right thing to do". Thus, ethics have to do morality that is centred on moral standard and values. However; these moral standards or values may not be the same, they are all founded in public morality.

In relation to this paper, political ethics (also known as political morality or public ethics) is the principle of response or behaviour expected of the political class in the process of serving the community or the nation in general. According to Thompson (2012) political ethics is the practice of making moral judgements about political action and political agents. It covers two areas. The first is the ethics of process (or the ethics of office), which deals with public officials and the methods they use (Wikipedia, 2014). The second area, the ethics of policy concerns judgments about policies and laws (Gutmann and Thompson, 2006). In present day democracies, political ethics has been referred to as the problem of dirty hands (Walzer, 1973). He went on to assert that the problem creates a contradiction, in the sense that the politician must sometimes do wrong to do right and that the political class uses violence to prevent greater violence, but his act is still wrong even if justified. However, this assertion has been seen as wrong by critics. Some critics object that either the politician is justified or not. If justified, there is nothing wrong, though he may feel guilty. Others say that some of the acts of violence that Walzer would allow are never justified, no matter what the ends. Political ethics not only permits leaders to do things that would be wrong in private life, but also requires them to meet higher principles than would be necessary in private life (Stark, 2003). Political ethics is not mainly with ideal justice, however, but with realizing moral values in democratic societies where citizens disagree about what ideal justice is. It is also deals with values or moral problems brought about by the necessity for political compromises, whistleblowing, civil disobedience and criminal punishment (Wikipedia, 2014).

Civics education according to Wikipedia (2014) is the study of the great theoretical and practical aspects of citizenship, its rights and duties; the duties of citizens to each other as members of a political body and to the government. It includes the study of civil law and civil code, and the study of government with attention to the role of citizens-as opposed to external factors- in the operation and oversight of government. Kerr (2009) opine that Civic Education have to do with the promotion of participation in decision making, forging strong community links, sensitivity to values and ethics and engagement in the discussion of critical issues such as voting and political debates. Iyamu (1999) defines Civic Education as a conscious effort to inculcate in the youth, a set of values and attitude contingent on the need and problems of the society. Osakwe and Itejere (1993) defined Civic Education as a system for the acquisition and internalization of the values, sentiment and norms of society in which they live and actually get involved to ensure that the common good of the citizens is catered for including resisting anti-social and unguided youthful exuberance. Thus, Civic Education produce citizens who well informed, gather facts, reject ethnocentrism, religious jingoism and encourage national consciousness. That means that Civic Education develop in individual skills, attitudes and values that will enable them to show concern for the wellbeing and dignity of others, respecting the worth of others and approaching civil decision in a rational manner.

Civic education has been found to have greater effects on individuals who already have higher levels of participation and cognitive resources, which may make worse the gaps in society that it intended to address (Finkel, 2003). Societies have long had an interest in the ways in which their youth are prepared for citizenship and in how they learn to participate in civic life. At present that interest may be seen as a concern, most especially in democratic nation like ours. There are lots of facts that no nation, Nigeria inclusive, has attained the level of understanding and acceptance of the rights and responsibilities among the totality of its citizens that is required for the maintenance and improvement of any constitutional democracy. If citizens are to influence the course of political life and the public policies adopted, they need to expand their repertoire of participatory skills, which include political ethics (Galston, 2001).

The close link between Civic Education and Social Studies Education is unique. Civic Education no doubt is a dimension of Social Studies Education. Though, link also exists between Civic Education and other subjects in the school curriculum. There is a general agreement that Civic Education as a dimension of Social Studies Education is about the grooming of good citizens. The goal is build the young people so that they acquire the skills, knowledge and values necessary for active participation in societal activities. Important to Social Studies Education are the efforts that are directed towards bringing new meaning to citizenship participation in community and national development (Keene, Baamphatla & Moffat, 2013).

Social Studies Education in collaboration with Civic Education has been seen as a strong and effective tool that can facilitate the attainment of political ethics through the production of responsible citizens that will contribute totally to the growth of the society. This can be seen from the citizens' behavioural dispositions which may include honesty, dedication, forthrightness, hard work, and productivity. Social Studies teachers have a responsibility and a duty to refocus their classrooms on the teaching of character and political ethics (civic virtue) (Yusuf, 2009). They should not be timid or hesitant about working toward these goals. Thus, fate of the Nigerian experiment in democratization rest in no small ways on the store of political ethics that resides in the Nigerian people or citizens. The Social Studies professionals of this nation has vital role to play in keeping this well-spring of political ethics flowing.

The purpose of this study is to investigate Civic education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in attaining political ethics in Nigeria. In order to achieve this, the paper poses the following research question and hypothesis:

Research Question/ Hypotheses

R.Q.: What is the view of Social Studies teachers on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics?

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the opinion of Social Studies teachers on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between male and female Social Studies teachers opinion on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between urban and rural Social Studies teachers opinion Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.

Method

The study employed the survey research design using questionnaire. All the 1120 Social Studies teachers in Delta State constituted the population. Through the use of multi-stage sampling technique 580 Social Studies teachers from the three senatorial districts in Delta State selected for the study. The instrument for data collection was a twenty item four point scale questionnaire. The items in the questionnaire were rated on 4 points likerts scale as follows: SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree), and S.D (Strongly Disagree). Test re-test method of establishing reliability was employed to determine the reliability of the instrument. Cronbach Alpha was used in analyzing it; it gave an alpha value of 0.63. The statistical tool used for the computing and analysing the response score was the z-test. The level of significance was determined at 0.05 probability level.

RESULTS

The results have been presented below in accordance with hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the opinion of Social Studies teachers on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.

Table 1: Summary of z-Test Analysis Showing the Difference in the Opinion of Social Studies Teachers on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.

Variables	N	X	Sd	Df	z-Cal.	z-Crit.	Decision
Civic Education	580	6.61	1.40	578	-3.17	1.96	Accepted
Social Studies Education	580	6.81	1.32				

Result from the above table, the z-calculated of -3.17 is lesser than the z-critical of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore, meaning that there is no significant difference in the opinion of Social Studies teachers on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between male and female Social Studies teachers opinion on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.

Table 2: Summary of z-Test Analysis Showing the difference between male and female Social Studies teachers opinion on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.

Groups	N	X	Sd	Df	z-Cal.	z-Crit.	Decision
Male	282	22.24	2.86	578	4.50	1.96	Rejected
Female	298	20.87	4.32				

In the table above, the value of z-calculated was 4.50, which was found to be greater than the z-critical of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that there was

significant difference between male and female Social Studies teachers opinion on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference between urban and rural Social Studies teachers opinion Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.

Table 3: Summary of z-Test Analysis Showing the difference between urban and rural Social Studies teachers opinion on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.

Groups	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t.cal.	t-Crit	Decision
Urban	309	19.93	4.57	578	4.94	1.96	Rejected
rural	271	17.80	5.62				

The result in table 3 above shows the testing of urban and rural Social Studies teachers opinion Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics. The result revealed that the z-calculated value of 4.94 was greater than the z-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected, implying that there was significant difference between urban and rural Social Studies teachers opinion Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings have revealed that there was no significant difference in the opinion of Social Studies teachers on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics. This result does not demonstrate differences in the opinion of Social Studies teachers in secondary schools. That implies that the Social Studies students have a more positive opinion on Civic Education as an aspect of Social Studies Education to bring about the attainment of political ethics. The positive view might not be unconnected with their knowledge of Civic and Social Studies Education that have been introduced as a compulsory subject. This finding is in line with Keene, Baamphatla & Moffat (2013) who concluded that Social Studies teachers are aware of the interrelationship between Civic Education and Social Studies Education in the acquisition of values, critical skills and decision making processes. The finding is also consistent with Omare (1999) who concluded that Social Studies Education in form of Civic Education remains a training edge that provides a standard for the real practice of political ethics or values.

The result of this study also revealed that there is significant difference between male and female Social Studies teachers opinion on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics. This is not surprising given their propensity to protect the status quo as members of the male folk.

Male teachers seem to have the propensity to examine the place of Civic Education as an aspect of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics. This is could be as result of the fact that they are more abreast with political development and happenings in the country. The finding is in agreement with Yusuf (2009) who observed that the view of teachers is a function of many variables which include teachers' gender, location, experience and qualification including his orientation. The finding of this result is in line with Ezegebe (1993) that reported that gender has significance influence in teachers opinion of ethics. Thus, teachers opinion on Social Studies attainment of political ethics through Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education can be influenced by gender.

The findings of this study also demonstrated that there was a significant difference between in the opinion of urban and rural Social Studies teachers on Civic Education as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics. The results of the analysis of data in this study revealed that hypothesis three was rejected. In otherwords, urban and rural teachers held a divergent view. This finding is consistent with The finding is in agreement with Yusuf (2009) who observed that the view of teachers is a function of many variables which include teachers' gender, location, experience and qualification including his orientation. The finding is also consistent with Okilo (1993) who concluded that social and environment traits of an individual serve as the basis for influence of one's opinion. And that location of people generally and the adequate information receive constitute a factor in individual perception.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, it has been shown that Civic Education is a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in attainment of political ethics. This was asserted to by the findings of this study. Civic Education in form of Social Studies remains a training edge that provides a standard for the actual practice of political ethics. What this supposedly means is that the attainment of political ethics requires the seeing of Civic Education as an aspect of Social Studies Education.

Recommendations

1. Civic Education should not be seen as a rival but as a collaborative dimension of Social Studies Education in the attainment of political ethics.
2. Social Studies teachers should be made to understand that both Civic education and Social Studies Education are directed towards one goal of which the attainment of political ethics is one.
3. Multi - disciplinary approach should be used as a method of the implementation of Social Studies Education at all level of education.

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