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# FAILED EFFECTIVE CIVIC EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: BLAMEABLE ON THE CHILD'S FIRST PORT OF CALL

DR. (MRS.) NWOGA, ANAYOCHI N.  
Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling,  
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri,  
Imo State.

PROF. KEN A. MEZIEOBI  
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,  
Port Harcourt,  
Rivers State.

&  
EZE, ANASTASIA UKAMAKA  
Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education,  
Godfrey Okoye University,  
Thinkers Corner,  
Enugu.

## Abstract

*Effective civic education is the corner stone of sustainable national development. All manner of factors have been pinpointed by scholars and writers as the bottlenecks thwarting institutionalized and effective civic education. Of all the forces scuttling effective civic education and its sustainability, the family the births the child have been inadvertently relegated. This paper posits that whatever failure indices that have been instrumental to the non enjoyment of the dividends of civic education is shouldered by the child's first port of call – the family – in the society.*

**Keywords:** *Failed, effective, civic education, sustainable development, blameable, the child's first port of call.*

## Introduction

Civic education is as old as man in the geo-polity today referred to Nigeria. In indigenous Nigeria, all civic education, in its very sophistication entails today was rife and preponderantly held sway. There was latent teaching of civic education or all that comprised it. Civic education, even if it was not placed any premium on at the point in question, prepared the then Nigerians for effective membership and effective living. Irrespective of the fact that the concept: **civic education** is alien to our people, what made it up was accorded recognition and the converse could not be tolerated by the then Nigerians. The family, as the main port of call, where the socialization of the child begins was committed, body and soul, to that education that had civic dividends.

At the inception of colonialism in Nigeria, civic education began to be recognized as a curriculum artefact. This was couched in the curricula called civics and religious knowledge and taught in the primary schools. Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2012 p.28) informed

that "civics proper was taught in the Nigerian (colonial established) primary schools while in the secondary schools, it (civics) was taught in the garb of the discrete traditional disciplines of history, government...and religious knowledge".

Civics as a curriculum artefact was shown the way out of the Nigerian schools at Nigeria's flag independence. From 1960 till 2007, civics went into untold oblivion. It was not until 2007 that civic education was birthed or re-introduced with the introduction of the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum in which civic education is an integral component. From this point in time, civic education began to be taught as a distinct subject in lower (primaries 1-3), Middle (Primaries 4-6) and Upper Basic Education levels.

Whatever is said about civic education today in the Nigerian society, that indigenous educational practices had gems of it, and that civic education was taught in the canopy of civics, religious knowledge and government, and was formally birthed in Nigerian as a discrete subject in 2007, concerted thoughts have not been spared on where the effectiveness of whatever goal-objects of civic education are meant to achieve should commence and in fact the effective target audience of civic education ab initio if civic education must make its desired mark.

The burden of this paper, therefore, is to draw the attention of the educational stakeholders to the fact that effective civic education driven sustainable development must first focus on children beginning from their homes. The other forces will supplement or compliment the efforts of the homes in civic education. Otherwise, we would have civic education by sheer mention.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

In a social setting, such as Nigeria, where English language is not our mother-tongue and we must by writing or sheer verbal interaction communicate in it, coupled with the fact that the mass of Nigerians are in the illiterate class, added to the fact that educated illiterates are preponderating, it will be tantamount to delving into false English language propelled communicative interaction on the presumption that the communicatee will comprehensively share and understand the message of the communication. In the bid, therefore, to make for ease of communicative understanding and meaning-sharing and avoid possibilities of misinterpretations and ambiguities, conceptual clarifications become more than ever before very essential.

It is on the foregoing premise that four concepts: Civic education, sustainable development, the child and the phrase 'first port of call', need some brief explanations.

### **The Terminology: Civic Education**

Civic education refers to that "...education which is specifically designed in content and function to produce good, useful...informed, active, responsible (disciplined, effective, participative, good character and positive values' endowed) citizens" (Ukegbu; Mezieobi; Ajileye; Abdulrahman and Anyaoha, 2009 p.1) who, wallowing in positive values and virtues, have a full grasp of governmental functioning or governmental process, understand and habituate their fundamental rights and correlative responsibilities, are nationally conscious and substantially contribute positively to national development.

Civic education in sum is a socio-civic competence loaded tonic that not only truncates civic docility, it engineers socio-political order and drives national development to enviable height, positively affecting all aspects of a nation's life.

## **The Concept: Sustainable Development**

'Sustainable' is an improvement-gear word which in the context of this exposition means "holding tenaciously to (systematic transformational strides) maintaining it and continuously improving on it ordinarily for the better" (Mezieobi; Mezieobi and Nwosu, 2014 p.101).

## **The Child: Meaning**

The contextualization of the child is society-relative. In Nigeria, borrowing a leaf from the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, a child, according to Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2013 p.75) "is any person who is below the 18 years, age of franchise, in Nigeria and this spans from babyhood or infancy state (of human development)...to...the end of the (Nigeria's) senior secondary school...or (end of the) adolescence period".

## **First 'Port of Call: Conceptualized**

This is the first place or rather the port of entry into anything – the society or life. The child's first 'port of call' or entry into life or his/her society is the family. Obasi; Nwagwu; Anyaogu; Nwajiuba; Nzegbulem & Ohaeto (2016 p.152) elucidate this 'port of call' phenomenon when they posited that "the family is the place where the child's earliest education/socialization in society usually begins". Mezieobi in Mezieobi and Wali (2017 p.148) further lend weight to the child beginning his life and orientation in a family when he opined that "Socialization (of the child) begins in the family...(where) the socializee (the child) is supposed to be presented with recipe knowledge of his world-accepted norms and modes of conduct, values of his (family and) society – which may shape his later development" and contributions to societal development. In support of this stance, Jarimi & Danladi (2017 p.66) averred that "the human child first arrives or is birthed in a family...that ordinarily sets the socialization of the child in motion".

## **The Portrait of Civic Education in Nigeria From Flag Independence till Today**

In the introductory pages of this exposition, it is indicated, in clear terms, that all effective civic education stands for were preponderant in indigenous Nigeria unmindful of the fact that the nomenclature 'civic education' was non-existent. Civic education was the totality of Nigeria's indigenous education in another garb. At the inception of colonialism and the drive of the colonial administration to compartmentalize knowledge, with their establishment of schools, introduced civic education in the canopy of 'civics' and religious knowledge at the lowest wrung of the then educational system – the primary schools. Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2012 p.28) are emphatic to the effect that "civics proper was taught in the Nigerian (colonial) primary schools while in the secondary schools, it (civics) was taught in the garb of the discrete traditional disciplines of history, government, geography and religious knowledge".

There is no gainsaying the truism that in Nigeria's colonial era, the first attempt at teaching civic education in the tertiary institutions, beginning with the university, commenced at the University College, Ibadan that was established in 1948. What was taught then in the disparate disciplines of history, government, religious knowledge, even if they were in the taint of British culture, had gems of civic education.

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reflective of British culture, went into oblivion or where discarded with the physical exist of the colonial masters on Nigeria's attaining her independence status as a sovereign geopolity on the 1 October, 1960.

From 1960 till 2007 even if what was taught in government, history, religious education had gems of civic education, there was no discrete subject called 'Civic Education' until the Curriculum Development Centre of the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) became instrumental to the designing of the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum which included Civic Education at Lower (former primaries 1-3), Middle (former primaries 4-6) and Upper Basic (for Junior Secondary Schools) Education. Civic education, at this point became a core curriculum at the foregoing Basic Education levels.

By 2007 when Nigeria's Universal Basic Education took off, there was "no straight jacket discrete civic education curriculum (at the senior secondary school level), civic education content...(was) couched in, and taught as government, history and religious studies...the same...(was) true of the tertiary levels of Nigeria's educational system" (Mezieobi and Mezieobi, 2012 p.29).

Consequent on the Basic Education's curriculum overload, the desire to call quits the overload, eliminate content repetitions across subjects and make the curriculum reflect global standards or best practices (Asodike and Nwokamma, 2014; Awofala, 2013), the NERDC in August 2012 restructured or revised the UBE Curriculum and birthed the New Basic Education Curriculum, published in 2013 which is christened the New Basic Religion and National Values made up of five sub-units, namely: Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, Civic Education, Social Studies and Security Education (Mezieobi; Nwokeji and Ibekwe, 2016).

What is most gratifying in contemporary time, however, in Nigeria is that civic education is taught as a curriculum artifact in the lower, middle, Upper Basic Education levels, as a discrete subject in the Senior Secondary Schools, couched in government, history, religious studies in higher educational institutions as well being taught even with sparse gems of it as Citizenship Education in the General Studies Programmes of the tertiary educational institutions.

### **Dividends of Civic Education in Nigeria: The Surreal Picture**

The picture of civic education in Nigeria when perceived from the habituation of its desired dividends by Nigerians is, to put it straight, very surreal. The dividends of civic education holistically articulated include:

1. Culturized pervasive knowledge and practice of governmental workings or process which culminate in good governance;
2. Government functioning in high gear with emphases on adequate provision of welfare/social services and being catalytic to national development in all its ramifications;
3. Preponderating awareness or consciousness of the fundamental human rights, their non-abuse and protection as well as the people's commitment to the correlative obligations accompanying human rights' enjoyment;
4. Endowing people with the cognitive efficiency, problems-solving skills to cooperatively contend with civic life related problems and challenges;

When parents and guardians of children have no socialization time for their children, farm out this function to house-helpers or older siblings and family socialization, with carry over effect on civic education, becomes excessively indulgent, laissez faire and over

initial basic or foundational requirements of civic education. When parents and guardians of children have no socialization time for their children, farm out this function to house-helpers or older siblings and family socialization, with carry over effect on civic education, becomes excessively indulgent, laissez faire and over

able to resolve and which have thwarted the objectives and significance of civic education. Civic education motored socio-civic competence habituation, in our national context, is a far cry from reality.

One who has insider knowledge of all civic education entails and who is a participant witness of the goings-on in a society, such as ours, that has civic education or its gems in our schools will quickly conclude, that in practice or realistic terms, civic education exists in sheer name in Nigeria given all the bewildering array of civic debilities we have not been able to resolve and which have thwarted the objectives and significance of civic education. Civic education motored socio-civic competence habituation, in our national context, is a far cry from reality.

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Appropriately keying or making citizens fit adequately into their social habitat and become readily susceptible to making significant contributions attuned to development. Functional civic education truncates selfishness, societal disorderliness, and a plethora of problems which Okafor and Umezurike (2017 p.50) labelled "major local civic problems". They include poverty, corruption, electoral malpractices, illiteracy, unemployment, over-population, drug abuse and addiction, religious fundamentalism and fanaticism, trafficking in persons, armed robbery/kidnapping as well as terrorism and strained inter-personal and inter-ethnic relationships;

Instituting pervasive social order as well as a well ordered and stable society; the barest minimal level;

Engineering peace culture and reducing the intense conflict situational possibilities to and solidarity;

Active rational participation in governmental or socio-political process devoid of apathy, docility, sabotage, indiscipline, irresponsibility, being our worst enemies in the national developmental striving, throwing morality to the dogs, reveling in unpatriotic behaviours and eschewing civic virtues and ethno-integrative cohesion

permissive and the family is troubled with instability, coupled with the fact that parents are no longer role models to their children as they themselves are adult delinquency agents such that the socializers need as much re-socialization as the socializees (Mezieobi, 1994), it will be expecting too much to have the children from the homes equipped with solid take off practicalizable civic education skills, competences, positive values, attitude and character.

But if the child's family has woefully failed or backslided in giving the child 'recipe knowledge' of civic education in-house, what about the other agents of socialization such as the schools and peer groups to which the child is unavoidably associated with outside his family? The answer to this query is not far to seek.

With regard to the schools, they are toddlers or neophytes informal civic education implementation as this programme is barely in its infancy or childhood stage of development-barely twelve (12) years to be precise today. The impact of schools driven civic education is yet to be felt and ascertained. But will schools as the microcosm of the society not reflect the civic problems of the society?

As it relates to peer gang formation and civic socialization, the composition of the peer group is made up of children without civic virtues who have transited from their homes where they were robbed of the desired civic education-oriented socialization by their parents and guardians. The civic education ignoring of Nigerian parents in their homes is well described by Mezieobi (1994 p.59) when he dubbed that "...parents (in Nigeria)...have alienated themselves from active...(home-based civic) socialization of (their) children".

These children who are denied civic education in their homes, in order to help themselves in the peer groups to which their parents have transferred their civic oriented education to, call quits any civic-related education and take to all manner of counter-cultures that are at variance with dividends-prone civic education or socialization. Contemporary peer groups having nothing positive to show for civic education as according to Mezieobi (1994 p.60) "generally speaking, peer group socialization in Nigeria is largely negative and anti-social conduct-oriented".

Additionally, the mass media and the advent of social media in Nigeria have not substantially helped the promotion of civic education acquisition and habituation in our children. Mass media and social media content spare little or no time to civic education with their pervasive advertisement-oriented programmes that have hidden economic agenda to their favour. The mass and social media have nothing to commend them for civic education of our children. Their efforts in thwarting civic education in children were muted by Ukadike and Iwegbu (2015 pps.120-121) when they lamented that:

*Everyday since the emergence of social media such sites as pornographic web sites, social networking sites, chat rooms, sexual solicitation sites, sexting engines (engines that permit sending sexual messages and photos of oneself to a receiver), video games, console and computer games, online games playing etc...(are) having serious negative consequences in the life of the...(children) of today in both rural and urban communities...*

devoid of any sensitization to all civic education is all about.

Furthermore, as it affects religious institutions and socialization of children, we take cognizance of the fact that in their (religious institutions) commitment to the reinforcement of



religious tenets values and ideals, that are moral education loaded, through their evangelism, preachings, or sermonization on religious doctrines, dogma and commandments that they are directly or indirectly contributing to the good civic upbringing of our children. But everything told, these efforts are falling on the deaf ears of the children as their behaviours, attitudes, values and deep involvement in social deviance do not reflect civic education practicalization in real life.

**Conclusion**

This exposition has indptly shown that effective civic education, if its benefits should have widespread effect, should commence from the homes which are the children's first 'port of call' in life. Disappointingly though, the family has failed in its induction role to the children. The same is through of all other socialization agencies with regard to the children being keyed into the demands and benefits of civic education. This stance was amplified by Mezieobi and Walli (2017 p.154) when they wept that "the realities of the Nigerian experience in socialization (related to civic education) amply show that all the agencies of socialization in Nigeria have abysmally failed in their (civic) socialization functions that are not positively impacting on... (the children)". If, therefore, effective civic education must commence from the child's home in our context, government should take over civic socialization in the families of the children, make it a direct government's concern and relieve "socialization in Nigeria... (from its) being (currently) a private or family affair..." (Mezieobi, 1994 p.61). This is the practice in Russia.

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The image shows a dark green, textured background, possibly a book cover or endpaper. A prominent, bright yellow-green curved line sweeps across the lower right portion of the frame. The line has a glowing, ethereal quality. In the bottom left corner, the text 'ISSN: 3787-8753' is printed in a clean, white, sans-serif font. The overall aesthetic is modern and minimalist.

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