

THE INFLUENCE OF CIVIC LEARNING ON SOCIO-POLITICAL CHALLENGES AMONG UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN EKITI STATE UNIVERSITY, ADO-EKITI

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Abstract

For peaceful co-existence in a society, it is expected that a citizen should exhibit certain degree of civic responsibilities such as obedience to law, self-discipline, patriotism and respect for the right of others. These responsibilities are meant to be inculcated into the younger citizens. Hence, this study examined the influence of civic learning on socio-political challenges among university undergraduates in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. This study adopted descriptive research design of the survey type. The sample consisted of 150 respondents, which were randomly selected using simple random technique from the Department of Social Science Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. A validated instrument titled: Civic Learning Scale (CLS) was used to collect data. The instrument was subjected to test-re-test where reliability co-efficient 0.81 was obtained and found suitable for study. The data generated were subjected to inferential statistical analysis using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between civic learning and political challenges among university undergraduates. Based on this finding, it was recommended that in order to resolve the socio-political challenges among university undergraduates formal and informal civic learning should be consciously inculcated into children right from inception so that they can be a total citizen that will contribute to nation building. In addition, the approach to civic education should be learner-centered.

Keywords: Civic Learning, Citizenship, Undergraduates, Socio-Political Challenges.

Introduction

The goals of traditional Civic Education such as increasing civic knowledge and voter participation are the sub-sets of civic learning which focuses on students who are to be at the centre of learning and practise the civic norms of a society. Civic learning is the study of citizens right and their obligations to their fellow individuals and the society. Civic learning is the study of rights and duties of citizens (Wahab, 2011). It is also the association or fellowship between a citizen and the responsibility of that citizen to his or her country. Preparing students for responsible citizenship is a widely acknowledged purpose of higher education. Like other forms of application, civic inquiry requires the integration of knowledge and skills acquired in both the broad curriculum and in the students' specialized field, while civic preparation requires engagement that is practise in applying those skills to solve emerging civic issues.

Higher education is experimenting with new ways to prepare students for effective democratic and global citizenship. Virtually all of these efforts use experimental or field-based learning as a means to develop civic insight, competence in public affairs and ability to contribute to the common good. Higher education is needed to fulfil the mission of preparing students to be responsible citizens through new forms of engagement in civic society. Students should leave the university with the understanding that they can use the knowledge and

skills of their degree for a career and for the public good (Jake, 2016). Kahne, College and Spote (2007) reported that in order to promote democratic priorities schools should inculcate the skills and commitments students need in order for them to be concerned for the wellbeing of others. They also want schools to teach students how government works and how they can work with others on solutions to community problems. Inculcating norms like respect for law, respect for right of others, open-mindedness patriotism among others will enable undergraduates to become a better citizen that will make positive contributions to their society after graduation.

It was noted that Nigerian tertiary institutions have deviated from the original goals and objectives for which it was created. Such goals includes instilling compassion, patriotism, self-control, respect for others, civility, honesty, civic mindedness respect for law among others in producing individuals that are morally upright, individual of outstanding excellent performance in academics, creativity and among others. The omission of these values are the results of what Nigerian university undergraduates are displaying today, such as rape, armed robbery, assassinations, abuse of drugs, cultism and kidnapping among others.

Nigeria, as a developing nation, is saddled with burning problems of various dimensions. Events of the recent past have indicated that Nigeria is on the brink of losing its much cherished sense of

nationhood, cultural identity and hospitable spirit (Wahab, 2011). The prevalent trend of socio-political problems such as lack of the genuine spirit of patriotism, self-centeredness, ethnic settlement that overrides the national spirit and interest, insecurity, ethnic militia, kidnapping, electoral fraud among others (Ganiyu, 2011) call for urgent value reorientation in order to place our youths on the right track.

The socio-political challenges encountered by the society in recent times are many, they include youthful crime, poverty, kidnapping, technology-related robbery activities, yahoo plus, internet scam among others.

Youthful Crimes are immoral behaviors exhibited by children below the ages of eighteen. These acts are most often than not overlooked or ignored by their parents, government and law enforcement agencies, when children exhibit such acts because they are rated as immature; meaning that they are not permitted by the law to stand trial in the court of law. Youthful crimes can be caused by parents' neglect, fellowship with wrong gang, lack of parental guidance and over-pampering of youths, among others.

Poverty is one of the contemporary social problems affecting Nigeria. It is a state in which an average citizen cannot access the basic needs of life conveniently. Using the American standard of poverty assessment, about eighty-five percent (85%) of Nigerians are poor (George & Ukpong, 2013). This is one of the reasons why criminal activities such as corruption, bribery and all types of immoral conducts are on the high side. Poverty is a pressing issue in Nigeria today as a result of the sudden economic melt-down, devaluation of Naira, civil unrest, ethnic and tribal crisis, among others. The poor lacks the means to satisfy the basic needs of life. It is observed that an average Nigerian cannot afford three square meals in a day. Poor people are not only deprived of most material comfort of life but also they cannot attain their maximum emotional and social development (Thompson, 2008). It is not difficult to differentiate between a poor person from his rich counterpart using the yardstick stated above. Level of poverty ranges from an individual income falling behind his basic needs to not having access to the primary needs of life, such as, food, shelter, clothing and medicals.

Kidnapping is that act of forcefully taking someone hostage through the use of arms or weapons for purpose of collecting ransom from the family of the person kidnapped before or when released. Recently, this criminal act has become a very frequent act as a result of the monetary inducement of the process. Most often, the captured victims are usually kept in an unknown place and the victims' relatives are compelled to pay certain amount as ransom to secure the victim's release and failure to

comply within the specified time, the victim may be killed (Lambora, 2009). Even though, kidnapping is both legally and morally wrong, yet thousands of youths find it as a lucrative business; whether kidnapping for rituals or kidnapping for ransom. This can be checked by inculcating the right civic norms into the youths such as honesty, open-mindedness, transparency, self-control etc., and the provision of employment opportunities.

"Technology Related" robbery activity is the upsurge of new dimensional technological crimes such as internet scam, credit card robbery, other related bank offences and armed robbery. These activities in many parts of Nigeria have called for concern of the government and well-meaning Nigerians. Majority of those involved in these crimes are actually trained graduates in such related areas who are supposed to use such knowledge productively and in gainful employment but they turn around and use such knowledge negatively to pull down the society (George & Ukpong, 2013). These "technology related" robbery activities have spread into our higher institutions, such that undergraduates get involved in diverse forms of theft without remorse such as yahoo business, yahoo plus and internet fraud, among others.

Nigeria is made-up of over 250 ethnic groups. Ethnic conflicts will continue to erupt because of our different beliefs, norms, customs, individual personality traits, diverse up-bringing and so on. It reportedly common in recent times for ethnic groups to clash with one another and this is as a result of political, economic, communication and globalization factors.

Terrorism is a global issue that the whole world is battling with. Members of the terrorist groups are made up of extremist believers whose major focus is revenge on people that are against their beliefs. The recent bombings by suicide bombers have destroyed a lot of lives, properties and putting people in the state of psychological insecurity. Many people have been displaced resulting in community scarce resources to Internally Displaced People (IDP) and refugee camps.

Corruption in Nigeria is an act that is practiced in most of the sectors across the country. It is a medium through which people decide to satisfy their selfish interest by defrauding the masses of their entitlements not minding the situation the affected masses are exposed to whether unpleasant or deadly. It has been observed that law enforcement agents whose duty is to ensure maintenance of law and order in the state are reported to be part of the law breakers through the act of collection of forceful bribes from bus drivers and other road users.

Teaching of civic learning in Nigeria tertiary institutions will be beneficiary to undergraduates if the following factors could be considered:

- 1 The use of Civic learning in tertiary institutions will fosters civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This will promote civic equality that will improve school climate and lower school drop-out rate.
- 2 Civic learning broadens and deepens civic knowledge, home civic skills and nurtures civic attitudes which collectively prepare students for informed effective participation in the society.
- 3 Through civic learning youths will be able to connect with their immediate environment, learn respectful dialogue or communication, teamwork and appreciate diversity.
- 4 Civic learning will encourage teamwork among students that is, instil the ability to work well with one-another thereby enable them to contribute economically to the development of their immediate society.

Statement of the Problem

It was observed that youths in recent times neglect their civic duties as a result of the various socio-political challenges Nigeria is facing daily. The youths have the mentality that the country do not believe in their future. Therefore, there is no need for them to serve the country in their totality. Rather, all they want is how the country can serve them. In the past few years till date, the country had undergone and still undergoing different difficulties that do not make the youths to believe in their future and the future of the country. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the influence of Civic learning on the socio-political challenges among the university undergraduates in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between civic learning and social challenges among university undergraduates in Ekiti State.
2. There is no significant relationship between civic learning and political challenges among undergraduates in Ekiti State University.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this study could enhanced a wholesome way of living among the students and the entire citizenry. The findings could enlighten the youths in ways by which their positive contributions can assist in the development of their father land.

The findings will help to expose the University Administrators to the original goals and objectives that university education is noted for and how these objectives can help produce better leaders for the future.

Government at all levels who are passionate for quality education will also benefit from the outcome of the study: it will help them to provide factual and focused programs on the such enriching the concepts as civic learning, citizenship, socio-

political relationship and the influence of civic learning on socio-political challenges among undergraduates.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive design of the survey type. One hundred and fifty undergraduates of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique. Data for the study were generated using a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Civic Learning Scale"(CLS). The questionnaire comprises of two sections: - section A and section B. Section A contained personal data while section B is based on the formulated questions. The face and content validity were ensured by three experts in Social Science Education, Ekiti State University. The instrument was subjected to test-re-test where reliability co-efficient 0.81 was obtained and found suitable for study. Data generated were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analyses. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between Civic learning and Social challenges.

Variable	μ	X	SD	r^{cal}	r^{tab}
Civic learning	150	32.85	7.91	0.284*	0.195
Social Challenges	150	65.95	13.90		

*P < 0.05

Table 1 reveals that r^{cal} (0.284) is greater than r^{tab} (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected. This shows that there was a significant relationship between Civic learning and social challenges. This implies that if there is adequate knowledge of Civic duties, the social challenges in society will likely be minimized and vice versa.

Table 2:Person Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between civic learning and political challenges.

Variable	μ	X	SD	r^{cal}	r^{tab}
Civic Learning	150	31.56	5.58	0.293*	0.195
Political Challenges	150	65.95	13.90		

*P < 0.05

Table 2 reveals that r^{cal} (0.293) is greater than r^{tab} (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This shows that there was a significant relationship between Civic learning and Political challenges. This implies that if there is adequate knowledge of Civic duties, the political challenges being faced by the society will likely be minimized and vice versa.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that civic learning and social challenges are correlated, such that an increase in one will lead to decrease in the other and vice versa. In other words, an increase in the ability of the teacher to inculcate civic learning in the mind of the students could lead to drastically decrease in social challenges. This finding is in support of Kahne, College and Sporte (2007) who reported that in order to promote democratic priorities schools should inculcate the skills and commitments students need in order for them to be concerned for the wellbeing of others. They also want schools to teach students how government works and how they can work with others on solutions to community problems. Inculcating norms like respect for law, respect for right of others, open-mindedness patriotism among others will enable undergraduates to become a better citizen that will make positive contributions to their society after graduation.

The result also revealed that political challenges and civic learning are positively correlated. Numerous studies have found that levels of civic engagement in the United States are lower than desirable, particularly among youth (Galston, 2001; Macedo, S., Alex-Assensoh Y., Berry J. M., Brintnall M., Campbell D. E., Ricardo L. F., Fung A., Galston W. A., Karpowitz C. F., Levi M., Levinson M., Lipstiz K., Niemi R. G., Puntman R. D., Rahn W. M., Reeves K., Reich R., Rodgers R.R., Swanstrom T., & Walsh K. C. (2005) and Putnam (2000). This implies a decrease in civic awareness or learning will automatically resolve in diverse political challenges which could later affect the future of the society while increase of civic learning by our undergraduates will bring peace to our political terrain.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that, the lack of adequate knowledge of civic duties among university undergraduates is the major course of the socio-political challenges displayed by the university undergraduates. Adequate knowledge of civic duties will minimize the occurrence of socio-political challenges witnessed by the society.

Recommendations

1. There should be promotion of institutional commitment to high quality civic learning and to increase the public awareness of the vital role that educational institutions have in the development of a total citizen.
2. Policy makers should make policies and implement programs that will necessitate continuous instilling of civic learning in Nigerian youths to create citizens prepared to meet the demands of life outside school.
3. Higher education students should be encouraged to participate in community-based-work-study placement that are in line with their course of study and career

interest, this will enable the students to have better understanding of what is obtainable in their community.

4. Students should endeavour to practice all the civic norms that make one a responsible citizen of the society such honesty, truthfulness, respect for laws etc., right from homes through a conscious effort.

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