

Developing Leadership Capacity and National Consciousness in Children of Middle and Upper Basic Educational Levels in Okitipupa, Ondo State through Specialised Civic Awareness Learning

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ABSTRACT

The challenge of nation-building in Nigeria continues to demand the attention of all stakeholders as it constantly threatens political stability and sustainable national development. In addition to its critical role of helping the learner to imbibe requisite civic dispositions, values and skills for peaceful coexistence in a more integrated nation, formal civic education at the Basic Educational levels is expected to create national consciousness, develop and reinforce leadership capacity of learners to establish a much more enduring foundation for sustainable national cohesion. This research examined how civic education at the Middle and Upper Basic Education level has been effective in the realization of the set objectives. Survey and experimentation methodologies were adopted while questionnaires, interviews and role-play were the instruments used for data collection. The study found that the leadership capacity and national consciousness development component of the current civic education among learners within this scope of study is extremely inadequate. This research proposes new learning content and integrated learning methodology in the development and deployment of “the specialised civic awareness learning content for M&UBE learners. The study recommends a review of the civic education curriculum content, training of personnel and adoption of integrated learning methodology.

Keywords: Basic Education, Civic Education, Democracy, Leadership, Nation-building, Nigeria, SDGs.

INTRODUCTION

The role of civic education in nation-building cannot be overemphasised. In a democratic system such as is obtainable in Nigeria, civic education is expected to facilitate the formation of civil qualities on the basis of new knowledge, skills and values that help individuals to solve emerging problems; adapt to changing socio-economic and political conditions; represent and protect their rights and interests; and respect the interests and rights of others. These qualities are fundamental to national integration which is required for political stability, peaceful cohabitation and sustainable development. If Nigeria must maximise its political, social and economic potentials, then, national integration becomes a necessity which cannot be compromised. Considering the strategic socio-political and economic position that Nigeria occupies within regional and global contexts, achieving political cohesion within its borders is a positive development for the nation, region and the global community.

In the same vein, the realization of the global interdependent and interrelated goals under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria is a function of how the country is able to manage the issue of national integration. The United Nations (UN) SDGs are a set of 17 goals agreed upon in 2015 applying to all UN member states. The SDGs are intended to be achieved by 2030, and each goal has targets and indicators attached to it. The goals address issues such as poverty, equality, peace, education, employment, environment, living standards,

health, etc. Indeed, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) constitute the shared vision of humanity and a social contract between the world's leaders and their people. They are the checklist for the welfare of people and planet, and a blueprint for success (Adekeye, 2023).

However, the realization of the SDGs requires a socio-political atmosphere that fully supports and enables the said goals. Conflicts and violence are direct consequences of national disintegration, mutual hate, and ethnic prejudice (Agbakwuru and Opara, 2013). Conflicts undermine the ability of nations to achieve the SDGs through refugee crisis, economic downturn and social disorder. Recognizing this reality, Goal 16 of the SDGs is to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” (UN, 2015) with the targets to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths rates everywhere; and to promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development among other things.

Guaranteeing national integration in a bid to promote peaceful and inclusive societies,; and to reduce all forms of violence and foster democratic culture in Nigeria requires that education, and civic education in particular becomes more responsive by helping the child to imbibe requisite civic dispositions, values and skills for building and living in a more integrated nation as well as developing and reinforcing leadership capacity of learners to establish a much more enduring foundation for sustainable national cohesion. But the right leadership would not emerge without systematically developing the capacity of the people for political participation and governance because leadership could either be learnt or perfected through conscious effort of training or education of members of the society – beginning from childhood (Adekeye, 2022). This would only be possible with quality civic education which reflects in the content of the curriculum, qualifications and competence of teachers, methods of delivery and the overall learning environment of learners.

Against this background, this paper attempts to conceptualise the challenge of national integration in Nigeria and the impact of formal teaching and learning of civic education in developing leadership traits and skills among Basic Educational Levels (BELs) learners. The emphasis on children of Basic Educational Levels (Middle and Upper Basic) is due to the fact that the children population constitutes a special and delicate component of demographic composition of any nation. Of all the various segments of the population, the children group is considered as peculiarly sensitive and delicate because of the issues of vulnerability and dependence. Children are mainly the victims and casualties of religious crises, violence, molestation, forced labour and wanton development crisis in the country. More importantly, the struggle against the perpetuation of the current manifestations of divisive rhetorics and activisms along ethnic nationalities and religious identities would not only be holistic but also enduring if the children population is positioned at the center of this national project. In other words, it would be more productive if the negative tendencies of nepotism, xenophobia, and ethnocentrism are disapproved while patriotic values and national consciousness are reinforced at such early stage of personality development. The emphasis is on the assumption that it is easier to raise a democratic people than trying to break the entrenched rules of previous generations.

Finally, the paper notes that the painful gap between the proposed objectives of civic education as contained in the National Policy on Education and the real outcomes or impact on the young learners in Nigeria may necessitate a review of the effectiveness of the curriculum content, the pedagogical methods and the learning conditions in achieving the set objectives. The justification for this study therefore, is the need for a more impactful civic awareness programme for Nigerian children to develop necessary skills for personality development and leadership capacity for nation-building.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study include the following:

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of the current civic education (curriculum and methodology) in developing civic awareness, national consciousness and leadership qualities in M&UBE learners.
2. Propose and develop alternative civic awareness learning content and methodology for M&UBE learners.

3. Assess the extent to which Specialised Civic Awareness Learning Curriculum (SCALC) contribute to developing leadership traits in M&UBE.
4. Ascertain the role of extra-curricular engagements in developing leadership for nation-building and political participation in M&UBE learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem of nation-building in Nigeria is simply the attempt to get an identity out of the plethora of sub-national identities. It is an attempt to go beyond the mere co-existence of diverse ethnocultural groups to the realization of their unity and identity. It could be argued that the problem of nation-building is directly or indirectly associated with the understanding of what the concept “nation” means. It is important therefore, without necessarily engaging in rigorous philosophical debates, to examine the concept and to advance a conceptual framework that fits this study. Scholars have opined that the term “nation” is difficult to define (Seton-Watson, 1977; Anderson, 1991; Triandafyllidou, 1998; Obiefuna, 2011). Despite the difficulty in the definition of the concept “nation” and its corollaries (nationalism, nationhood, nationality, etc.) several attempts have been made to explicate this concept that has influenced the direction of human history. This paper considers two major perceptions or senses of nation which have influenced the thoughts of scholars and political analysts namely: the original sense, which is simpler, and a second sense, which is complex. The former conception of nation derives from its etymology. It means “a birth group”, “a blood-related group.” It is worthy of note that this original meaning of nation still persists in the modern world and it is still very much influential among scholars and thought leaders (Herder, 1965; Schlegel, 1981; Mises, 1983; Obi, 2001; Fichte, 2017). In the original sense, “nation” has come to be used to refer to a group or community of people who not only share a common culture, language, history, and possibly a territory but also believe that they hail from a common ancestral background and are therefore closely related by kinship ties (Adekeye, 2007).

The second perception of “nation” was espoused by scholars who construed the concept as political rather than ethnocultural. (Anderson, 1991) The term “nation” in its second meaning refers to a state- a political entity, like Great Britain, the United States or Nigeria. Nation, here, suggests the idea of the concentration of sovereign political power at the center. The primary features of a nation in this sense are political centrality or sovereignty and territory. But when we have a political community with a culturally homogeneous citizenry and a sovereign power concentrated at the center to which all the citizens are subject and owe loyalty, then, there is a nation-state. In the language of modern politics, “nation” is used synonymously with “state” or “nation-state”. The concept of nation has evolved from simple ethnocultural community to complex, ethnically and culturally plural political communities called states. A nation could be described as a named human population, a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members. This is clearly a comprehensive use of the concept, for the states themselves are almost invariably multi-ethnic, multinational, multilingual, and multicultural. (Gyekye, 1997) It is within the context of the latter perception of the term “nation” that this paper considers the issue of national integration and nation-building in Nigeria.

The current problems of mutual ethnic suspicion or hate, nepotism, tribal chauvinism, xenophobia, prejudice and consequences are traceable to the foundation of the colonial formation and creation of Nigeria (Mimiko, 1998; Obiefuna, 2011; Abejide, 2022). The nature, timing and purpose of the amalgamations of the diverse ethnic groups into one political and territorial entity remain relevant to the nation-building discourse and efforts by scholars and leaders of thoughts. Writing about the numerous indigenous ethnic groups whose amalgamations were completed in 1914 to become a national identity called Nigeria, Okoi Arikpo (1967) noted that it is almost impossible to either fit them into one single whole or divide them into well-defined areas of distinct identities, so diverse are they. Until the turn of the nineteenth century the areas embraced in whole or in part by the then geographical expression now named “Nigeria” were referred to by a variety of names”. Some of such names indicate a section of Nigeria or the kind of trade going on there or the kind of colonial occupation in the area. They include Colony of Lagos, the Niger Coast Protectorate, “Sudan or Nigeria”, “Hausa” states, Slave Coast, Niger Empire, Central Sudan, Guinea Coast, Niger Sudan and so on (Coleman, 1958; Obiefuna, 2011). As much as the diversity of the peoples is identified as a factor for consideration, it could not be regarded as the primary cause of setbacks in the quest for nation-building in Nigeria. After all, regardless of the palpable ‘difference’

and variations among the diverse ethnic groups, scholars and historians acknowledge the underlying affinity and consanguinity among them (Okoi, 1967; Obiefuna, 2011)

The much more fundamental problem that keeps plaguing the existence of Nigeria as a unified nation is that, at its creation, the interest of the variegated character of the component parts in terms of culture, religion, language and political systems were completely ignored (Obiefuna, 2011). The political entity that is Nigeria today was not properly prepared to be a “nation”. All the crises - religious, economic and political, that have bedevilled Nigeria in the past rest on this foundational error. As a result of this, despite decades of co-existence as a national identity, it has become very difficult for the people to project a common expression of thoughts and feelings or “common will” which supersede ethnic and sub-national interests. Other factors that have militated against nation-building in Nigeria include: problem of ethnic cleavages, lack of some core social values such as trust, cooperation, compassion, justice, and tolerance among the different interests and segments in the society, inequality and poverty, poor governance and corruption and security challenges (Ifeka, 2000; Oladipo, 2000; Ujomu, 2002; Oyeshile, 2005; Adekeye, 2014, 2019b)

Nation-building presupposes a feeling of national identity; an element that is visibly missing among Nigerians. This feeling of identity with the national group comes about naturally as a result of the nation’s ability to serve as a social resource to satisfy basic human needs. This is the basis for the possibility and rationality of nation-building especially in multi-ethnic states such as Nigeria.

Nation-building is the process of creating unity and a sense of belonging among heterogeneous groups in the state (Agi, 1989). It is “the desire and effort to achieve unity among multi-ethnic groups that make up a state” (Igwe, 2001). It is continuously and conscientiously pulling the various otherwise independent entities of a state to such a single identity that, though specific identities are internally respected, they are judged to have a common being by the outsider. It involves breaking down the walls of ethnocentrism which arouses mutual suspicion and distrust. While the bitterness and painful memories of past historical facts linger and handed down to younger generations, the reality of a united, peaceful and prosperous nation would remain elusive. On the contrary, if these historical facts are seen as “common experience” for common destiny, then nation-building would be a lot easier in Nigeria (Obiefuna, 2011).

The history of Nigeria is replete with transformations in all aspects of national life. The colonial rule that amalgamated diverse and autonomous cultural groups for administrative convenience; the nationalist struggles for independence; post-independence democratic experiments and military incursions, are some of the historical landmarks that have defined the socio-political landscape of the country. However, the major socio-political transformation in Nigeria is the prevalence of democracy as the ‘acceptable’ political system as well as a public culture. Therefore, understanding and acquiring the democratic ideals have become sacrosanct.

The role of education –and civic education- in birthing and managing social change or transformation cannot be overemphasised. It is a truism that education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world. Social change is mandatory because without it there would not be progress in the society. In the view of Dunfey (2019), social change is the way human interactions and relationships transform cultural and social institutions over time, having a profound impact on the society. Education is an activity or a process that consists of cultivating certain dispositions which include skills, abilities, knowledge, attitude, beliefs, values and character (Frankena, 2002). It could be described as the totality of mental, physical, psychological, social and the overall development of the individual person in relation to others and the society at large (Adeyeye and Adekeye, 2016). Likewise, Civic Education has been perceived as any formative endeavour to teach the knowledge, skills or dispositions required for citizenship (Peterson, 2011). Civic Education constitutes 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 (Aristotle, 1988) as well as regulates the direction and impact of social transformations.

Consequently, civic education can be defined as the provision of information and learning experiences to equip and empower citizens to participate in democratic processes. 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). It is a public, socially-oriented system of continuous education and upbringing aimed at building civic competence, democratic culture,

and satisfying the needs for socialization in the interests of the individual, civil society and the rule of law (Simwa, 2022; Smith *et al*, 2002). The main goal of civic education could be considered as the formation of civil qualities on the basis of new knowledge, skills and values that help individuals to solve emerging problems, adapt to changing socio-economic and political conditions, represent and protect their rights and interests, respecting the interests and rights of others (Aristotle, 1988; Finkel, 2002; Shabani, 2013; Crittenden and Levine, 2018; Enyiaka et al, 2018).

Leadership, according to Advanced English Dictionary is the ability to lead. Moreso, it is the capacity to establish direction, and to influence and to align others towards a common goal, motivating and committing them to action and making them responsible for their performance. The role of leaders is in the process of directing the individual's behaviour towards a desired goal (Adekeye, 2022). Leadership is a power- and value-laden relationship between leaders and followers/constituents who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes and goals (Rost, 1991). It is in this form of relationship between the leader and follower that the concept of 'influence' becomes both meaningful and possible. The true measure of leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less (Maxwell, 2007). The mark of a leader is how many people are willing to follow him or her, without any form of coercion or molestation.

Generally, leadership in the context of a people's socio-political life could be described as the ability of the individual to model others within his/her circle of influence to think, act or behave in a specific manner for the purpose of realizing the common good of the society. Leadership, in this wise, is a process that begins with the self and by influence, impacts on the other. Some of the attributes of a good leader include: competence and intelligence; vision and inspiration; compassion, courage, broad mindedness; imagination; integrity; and honesty.

Leadership for political participation is crucial and vital in providing direction that enables Nigerians to achieve shared aspiration of national integration. Leadership focuses on providing the kind of socio-political environment that enhances the right disposition and behaviours of the people. In democratic systems such as are obtainable in Nigeria and many parts of Africa, political leaders should share and demonstrate some of the values that pertain to living in a democratic society, such as accepting diversity, and seeking to respect the interests of all constituents and future generations, not just those who share one's political or ethnic alliances. They should also be people of integrity and probity since they are responsible for administering public monies and making decisions that have an impact on economic and social well-being (Morrell and Hartley, 2006). Moreover, political leaders are expected to display high level competence and knowledge in managing issues, people and institutions for the purpose of creating stable, viable and peaceful societies. Therefore, political leadership in Nigeria would require persons with requisite knowledge of the path to national cohesion and sustainable development as well as impeccable respect for democratic principles.

The journey towards the desired political experience in Nigeria would begin with developing leadership capacity of the individual through quality value and civic awareness education. Consequently, scholars have reiterated the need to incorporate civic education into leadership process (Bayeh, 2016; Enyiaka et al., 2018). It is important therefore, for Nigeria to review its philosophy of education and curriculum to reflect the urgent need to raise awareness for political participation as well as entrenching democratic and moral values in politics for the purpose of raising a generation of individuals with requisite capacity for political leadership.

There are noticeable concerns about the effectiveness of Civic education in Nigeria with regards to its ability to transmit and foster values that determine behaviours, attitudes, reactions specific of responsible citizens. The failure of civic education could be blamed on the critical components of the education system, which included: teachers, educational facilities, government and society. Pedagogical gaps, lack of appropriate professionals on the field of study, less emphasis and attention on developing proper skills of enquiry and communication of the learners, the absence of democratic simulations and learning at schools, lack of appropriate and updated teaching methodology and materials are real factors that have hampered the realization of the set of national ideals and aspirations of peaceful, united and prosperous nation.

The inability of the informal learning environment of the child to reinforce the expected outcomes of the formal civic education poses a major challenge to the effectiveness of civic education. The soundness and the essence

of any educational system depend upon the coherence and mutual interrelationship of its diverse component parts (Akinpelu, 2005). Accordingly, to talk of the nation's educational system in respect of only the formal school educational system, as it is the case presently, is to commit the fallacy of mistaking the part for the whole. Therefore, using the special civic awareness learning provides the golden opportunity to address some of the pedagogical gaps and methodological lapses already identified in this literature review.

Other challenges to effective civic education are: shortage of required funds which leads to obsolete texts, insufficient supplies, and restricted access to technology (Williams *et al*, 2019; Levy *et al*, 2023). The lack of financial resources also makes it difficult for schools (public and private) to get required resources for effective teaching of civic education (Igbokwe, 2015; Obiagu, 2019). The quality of teachers of civic education is of great importance. Some teachers who teach the subject are graduates of other unrelated disciplines. There is no regular training, workshop or conference for the civic education teachers. These platforms are necessary for teachers to remain updated, develop professional networks and enhance their capacities/ for increased productivity.

A Sketch of the Proposed Specialized Civic Awareness Learning Curriculum (SCALC) for Middle and Upper Basic Education Learners Comparing with Current Civic Education Curriculum for Middle and Upper Basic Education

Themes:

S/N	Themes in the Current Civic Education Curriculum (Source: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC))	Themes in the Proposed Specialized Civic Awareness Learning Curriculum (SCALC)
1	Theme 1: National Values	Theme 1: National Consciousness and Identity
2	Theme 2: National Consciousness and Identity	Theme 2: Citizenship
3	Theme 3: Leadership and Governance	Theme 3: Leadership and Governance
4	Theme 4: Citizenship	Theme 4: Human Rights and Rule of Law
5	Theme 5: Democracy	Theme 5: Democracy
6	Theme 6: Human Rights and Rule of Law	

Topics:

S/N	Topics in the Current Civic Education Curriculum (Source: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC))		Topics in the Proposed Specialized Civic Awareness Learning Curriculum (SCALC)	
	Theme	Topic	Theme	Topic
1	Theme 1: National Values	1. Valuing Nigerian Goods 2. National Values 3. National Values 4. National Values: Honesty 5. National Values: Cooperation 6. National Values: Self Reliance	Theme 1: National Consciousness and Identity	1. Nation 2. National Values I & II 3. Ethnicity and its Problems 4. Building our Nation 5. Meaning of Loyalty 6. Valuing Nigerian Goods

		<p>7. National Values: Integrity</p> <p>8. National Values: Contentment</p> <p>9. National Values: Discipline</p> <p>10. National Values: Courage</p> <p>11. National Values: Right Attitude to Work</p> <p>12. Negative Behaviour</p>		<p>7. Objects for National Consciousness</p> <p>8. The National Anthem and the National Pledge: Lyrics and Lessons</p> <p>9. Managing Discrimination and Stereotypes</p> <p>10. Enemies of our Nation: Terrorism</p> <p>11. Enemies of our Nation: Corruption</p>
2	Theme 2: National Consciousness and Identity	<p>1. National Values</p> <p>2. Nation</p> <p>3. Building our Nation</p> <p>4. Ethnicity and its Problems</p> <p>5. Meaning of Loyalty</p> <p>6. Objects of National Consciousness</p>	Theme 2: Citizenship	<p>1. National Honours Award</p> <p>2. Citizenship</p> <p>3. Rights and Duties of Citizens</p> <p>4. The Constitution</p> <p>5. Supremacy of the Constitution</p> <p>6. Patriotism</p> <p>7. Private-Public Lives Relationship</p>
3	Theme 3: Leadership and Governance	<p>1. Meaning and Importance of Good Governance</p> <p>2. Types of Government</p> <p>3. Meaning and Types of Leadership</p> <p>4. Leadership of Different Levels</p> <p>5. Good and Bad Leadership</p> <p>6. Arms of Government</p> <p>7. Nigeria as a Federation</p> <p>8. Relationship between Federal, State and Local Governments</p>	Theme 3: Leadership and Governance	<p>1. Meaning and Importance of Good Governance</p> <p>2. Types of Government</p> <p>3. Arms of Government</p> <p>4. Nigeria as a Federation</p> <p>5. Relationship between Federal, State and Local Governments</p> <p>6. Meaning and Types of Leadership</p> <p>7. Leadership of Different Levels</p> <p>8. Good and Bad Leadership</p> <p>9. Followership</p> <p>10. Myths about Leadership</p>

4	Theme 4: Citizenship	1. National Honours Award 2. Citizenship 3. Rights and Duties of Citizens 4. The Constitution 5. Supremacy of the Constitution	Theme 4: Human Rights and Rule of Law	1. The Rule of Law 2. Protection of Human Rights and the Rule of Law 3. Consumer Rights and Responsibilities 4. Fundamental Human Rights I & II
5	Theme 5: Democracy	1. Pressure Groups 2. Values (Hard Work) 3. Social Injustice 4. Democracy 5. Pillars of Democracy 6. Election and Voter Responsibilities 7. Electoral Malpractices 8. Elections and Electoral Bodies in Nigeria 9. Democratic Process	Theme 5: Democracy	1. Pressure Groups 2. Social Injustice 3. Democracy 4. Pillars of Democracy 5. Elections and Electoral Bodies in Nigeria 6. Understanding the Democratic Process 7. Political Apathy
6	Theme 6: Human Rights and Rule of Law	1. The Rule of Law 2. Protection of Human Rights and the Rule of Law 3. Consumer Rights and Responsibilities		

Content Progression According to Levels

Level	Topics	
	Current Civic Education Curriculum (Source: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC))	Proposed Specialized Civic Awareness Learning Curriculum (SCALC)
Middle Basic 1 (Pry 4)	Meaning and Importance of Good Governance	Nation
	Types of Government	National Values I
	National Values	Ethnicity and its Problems
	Nation	Building our Nation

	Building our Nation	The National Anthem and the National Pledge: Lyrics and Lessons
	Ethnicity and its Problems	The Constitution
		Meaning and Importance of Good Governance
		Types of Government
		Followership
		Fundamental Human Rights I
		Democracy
Middle Basic 2 (Pry 5)	Meaning of Loyalty	National Values II
	Meaning and Types of Leadership	Meaning of Loyalty
	Leadership of Different Levels	Managing Discrimination and Stereotypes
	Good and Bad Leadership	Patriotism
	Arms of Government	Arms of Government
	Pressure Groups	Meaning and Types of Leadership
	Values (Hard Work)	Fundamental Human Rights II
	Social Injustice	Pressure Groups
Middle Basic 3 (Pry 6)	National Honours Awards	Valuing Nigerian Goods
	Valuing Nigerian Goods	Objects for National Consciousness
	National Values	Citizenship
		Rights and Duties of Citizens
		Leadership of Different Levels
		The Rule of Law
		Social Injustice
Upper Basic 1 (JSS 1)	National Values	Enemies of our Nation : Terrorism
	National Values: Honesty	Supremacy of the Constitution
	National Values: Cooperation	Good and Bad Leadership
	National Values: Self Reliance	Protection of Human Rights and the Rule of Law
	Citizenship	Pillars of Democracy

	Rights and Duties of Citizens	
	Objects of National Consciousness	
Upper Basic 2 (JSS 2)	National Values: Integrity	Enemies of our Nation : Corruption
	National Values: Contentment	National Honours Award
	National Values: Discipline	Nigeria as a Federation
	National Values: Courage	Relationship between Federal, State and Local Governments
	Nigeria as a Federation	Consumer Rights and Responsibilities
	Relationship between Federal, State and Local Governments	Elections and Electoral Bodies in Nigeria
	The Rule of Law	
	Protection of Human Rights and the Rule of Law	
	Consumer Rights and Responsibilities	
	Democracy	
	Pillars of Democracy	
	Election and Voter Responsibilities	
	Electoral Malpractices	
Upper Basic 3 (JSS 3)	The Constitution	Private-Public Lives Relationship
	Supremacy of the Constitution	Myths about Leadership
	National Values: Right Attitude to Work	Understanding the Democratic Process
	Negative Behaviour	Political Apathy
	Elections and Electoral Bodies in Nigeria	
	Democratic Process	

Justification for the Proposed SCALC

1. The Specialized Civic Awareness Learning Curriculum (SCALC) for Middle and Upper Basic Education (M&UBE) classes is mindful of the fact that millions of Nigerian children do not proceed to Secondary education after their completion of primary education (UNESCO, 2018; Ikiyei, et al, 2022. Therefore, the SCALC, through the selected topics envisions that a child at any level of Middle and Upper Basic Education is minimally equipped to lead a successful private and public life.

2. The current economic, social and political realities in Nigeria which are inspired by various factors such as globalization, extremisms/intolerance, and unguarded materialism have manifested in terrorism, financial crimes, economic sabotage, political apathy and ethnic hate. Therefore, the SCALC assumes that the awareness

of these negative tendencies by the child at the basic education level is essential to preparing that child as a change agent in families, communities, and the nation.

3. The SCALC considers Civic Education in Nigeria as a purely secular formative, reformative and public oriented exercise that is directed towards the formation of the Nigerian Personality. Therefore, elements of private lives and private affairs are removed from the curriculum.

4. Some re-arrangements could also be noticed in the SCALC. For example it is better to expose a child to the knowledge and understanding of the concept of nationhood in order for that child to appreciate the various national values as tools for nation-building.

5. It is important that more space and time are allowed for the teaching and learning of some pressing national issues in the Civic Education. Therefore, some topics have been expunged from the proposed SCALC. Such topics are already accommodated in other subjects such as Social Studies, Religion and National Values.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design, random sampling/observation and experimentation were used for the study. The total population of the study was 268 which consisted of 213 middle and upper basic education learners, 22 teachers from selected primary and secondary schools in Okitipupa and Ilaje Local Government Areas of Ondo State, Nigeria and 33 selected parents of upper basic education learners from the same study area. At the first phase of data collection, a questionnaire was designed and administered by trained research assistants to 260 pupils and students of middle and upper basic educational levels in schools across major towns of Ondo South district: Okitipupa, Irele, and Igbokoda. The questionnaire was designed to:

- determine learners' knowledge of various group identities around them;
- measure the learners' civic knowledge of their communities and Nigeria;
- assess the impact of learners' exposure to divisive rhetorics and identity politics in the past;
- decipher leadership qualities in the learners of middle and upper basic educational levels;
- determine the research subjects' preferred methods of learning.
- determine the prevalent teachings methods used by civic education teachers in Okitipupa and its environs.

Only 213 copies of the questionnaire administered to learners were returned which represented 81.92% response rate.

Field samples were collected as we observed and interviewed 22 civic education teachers at different classes of civic education at the middle and upper basic education levels from selected private and public schools in Okitipupa. The purpose for this was to ascertain the prevalent teaching and learning contexts of civic education within the metropolis. Thirty (33) M&UBE learners from schools in Okitipupa metropolis were enrolled into a specialised civic education and awareness programme where an integrated approach of indoors and outdoors learning was used. Selection of learners reflected ethnic, religious and gender diversity of the Metropolis in order to expose learners to an environment that typified the cultural composition of Nigeria. The structured civic awareness teaching and learning took 10 weeks of the entire research period of 44 weeks. This was followed by a 3-month leadership internship where the schools were committed to assign the trained learners responsibilities for a period of three (3) months of which they were monitored and assessed. A post-engagement questionnaire was designed and administered to determine the outcome of the application of the specialised civic awareness learning programme.

RESULTS

Table 1 Extent learners in M&UBE levels in Okitipupa and environs possess civic knowledge of their communities and Nigeria.

Civics of communities and Nigeria	Very high knowledge (4)	Adequate knowledge (3)	Fair knowledge (2)	No knowledge (1)	Mean (X)/4
Contributions of Nigerian artists, musicians, writers, and other cultural icons to the country's identity.	28	113	51	17	2.73
Significance of the Nigerian police force in maintaining law and order.	44	67	72	23	2.64
Nigeria's educational system and the importance of education for national development.	41	65	81	23	2.59
Different levels of government in Nigeria (federal, state, and local).	46	44	83	39	2.46
Arms of government in Nigeria and their roles.	12	80	110	11	2.44
Importance of peaceful coexistence and resolving conflicts in a non-violent manner.	28	49	88	42	2.30
Roles and responsibilities of traditional rulers or chiefs in Nigerian communities.	13	71	51	72	2.12
Historical events and milestones that have shaped Nigeria.	12	58	40	103	1.90
Importance of accountability and transparency in governance.	12	53	30	118	1.81
Opportunities to promote unity and national cohesion in Nigeria.	12	33	41	97	1.78
Significance of national symbols such as the Nigerian flag and national anthem.	12	26	71	101	1.76
Importance of human rights in Nigeria.	12	23	76	102	1.74
Important national events or holidays in Nigeria.	12	39	33	118	1.73
Initiatives that promote sustainable development in Nigeria	11	37	47	115	1.73
Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage.	13	35	42	117	1.73

Community projects and initiatives that aim to improve my local area.	2	31	84	96	1.71
Importance of democracy and how it functions in Nigeria.	8	29	36	137	1.56
Nigerian Constitution and its significance in governing the country.	5	22	38	131	1.49
Activities or organizations that promote social inclusion and equality in Nigeria	3	31	33	132	1.49
Nigerian news about current events and issues affecting the country.	5	16	43	128	1.47
History and significance of Nigerian Independence Day.	7	12	38	123	1.46
Nigerian politics and policies.	7	16	32	142	1.43
Importance of civic duties, such as paying taxes and obeying laws, in building a strong nation.	7	16	32	141	1.43
Civic activities like voting or volunteering in my community.	2	3	72	127	1.41
Structure and functions of Nigerian political parties.	0	16	32	152	1.32
Roles and responsibilities of local government officials.	3	14	23	154	1.31
Role of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and their impact on improving communities in Nigeria.	3	12	21	173	1.26
Nigeria's foreign policies and its diplomatic relations with other countries.	3	8	21	172	1.23
Nigeria's economy and the different sectors that contribute to its growth.	7	14	24	168	1.23
Average mean					1.77
Criterion mean					2.5

Table 1 indicates that learners in M&UBE levels in Okitipupa and environs possess very low knowledge/awareness about community and national issues in Nigeria. Out of the 29 components of the civic knowledge of their communities and Nigeria, result shows an average mean higher than the criterion mean (2.5) in only three components: contributions of Nigerian artists, musicians, writers, and other cultural icons to the country's identity (2.73); significance of the Nigerian police force in maintaining law and order (2.64); Nigeria's educational system and the importance of education for national development (2.59). 103 (48.35%) out of 213 respondents claimed not to have any knowledge about historical events and milestones that have shaped Nigeria. 117 (54.92%) respondents have no knowledge about Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage. 137 (64.32%) respondents claimed not to have any knowledge about Importance of democracy and how it functions in Nigeria. 131 (61.50%) respondents claimed not to have any knowledge about Nigerian Constitution and its significance

in governing the country. 141 (66.20%) respondents have no knowledge about the importance of civic duties, such as paying taxes and obeying laws, in building a strong nation. 168 (78.87%) respondents have no knowledge about Nigeria's economy and the different sectors that contribute to its growth. **With the average mean of 1.77 which is lower than the criterion mean of 2.50, it can be affirmed that the civic awareness of learners in M&UBE levels in Okitipupa and environments is low.** This result was not expected considering the fact that many of the criteria that were tested are contained in the current Civic Education curriculum for M&UBE learners.

Table 2 Existence of leadership qualities in learners of M&UBE levels in Okitipupa

Expression of Leadership qualities	Leadership qualities	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Total (%)
Comfortable working in a team	Team work	128 (60.1%)	85 (39.9%)	213 (100%)
Enjoy taking leadership roles	Passion	102 (47.9%)	111 (52.1%)	213 (100%)
Feel confident with personal ideas and opinions	Confidence	104 (48.8%)	109 (51.2%)	213 (100%)
Good at motivating others	Motivation	95 (44.6%)	118 (55.4%)	213 (100%)
Coordinate responsibilities effectively	Coordination	52 (24.4%)	161 (75.6%)	213 (100%)
Adapt to changing needs and situations	Flexibility	104 (48.8%)	109 (51.2%)	213 (100%)
Delegate tasks effectively	Delegation	95 (44.6%)	118 (55.4%)	213 (100%)
Empathetic towards the needs and concerns of others	Empathy	111 (52.1%)	102 (47.9%)	213 (100%)
Communicate effectively with different types of people	Communication	90 (42.3%)	123 (57.7%)	213 (100%)
Resolve conflicts and settle disputes within a group	Conflict management	79 (37.1%)	134 (62.9%)	213 (100%)
Mentor and guide others to reach their full potential	Mentorship	72 (33.8%)	141 (66.2%)	213 (100%)
Seek opportunities for personal and professional growth	Personal development	69 (32.4%)	144 (67.6%)	213 (100%)
Courageously embrace challenges as opportunities	Courage	53 (24.9%)	160 (75.1%)	213 (100%)
Make critical decisions confidently and efficiently	Decision making	59 (27.7%)	154 (72.3%)	213 (100%)
Create a positive and inclusive environment within a team	Inclusivity	69 (32.4%)	144 (67.6%)	213 (100%)
Skilled at prioritizing tasks and managing time effectively	Time management	48 (22.5%)	165 (77.5%)	213 (100%)

Emotionally intelligent to work with different personality types	Emotional Intelligence	69 (32.4%)	144 (67.6%)	213 (100%)
Good at identifying and utilizing the strengths of individuals within a team	Human management	52 (24.4%)	161 (75.6%)	213 (100%)
Open-minded and value diverse opinions and perspectives	Open mindedness	96 (45.1%)	117 (54.9%)	213 (100%)
Demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior in my leadership role	Ethical leadership	102 (47.9%)	111 (52.1%)	213 (100%)
Responsible and accountable for my actions as a leader	Responsibility	92 (43.2%)	121 (56.8%)	213 (100%)
My environment provides me with opportunities for leadership roles	Environmental influence	28 (13.4%)	185 (86.6%)	213 (100%)
Aggregate prevalent leadership quality		37.80%	62.20%	100%

Table 2 reveals that **existence of leadership qualities in learners of M&UBE levels in Okitipupa is very low**. More than 50% of the respondents deny that they possess 20 out of the 22 leadership qualities that were tested. Only team work (128 and 60.1%) and empathy (111 and 52.1%) are leadership traits that respondents fairly agreed to possess. “Aggregate” leadership quality prevalence among the respondents is negative with a result of 37.80%.

Table 3 The preferred learning methods by learners of M&UBE levels in Okitipupa.

Learning methods	Most preferred (3)	Just preferred (2)	Not preferred (1)	Mean (X)/3
Visual aids such as diagrams, charts, and videos	114	96	3	2.51
Field trips and hands-on experiences outside the classroom	107	104	2	2.48
Multimedia presentations and interactive slide shows	95	112	6	2.40
Physical activities and movement-based exercises	84	117	12	2.32
Interactive online platforms and educational games	98	71	44	2.24
Case studies and analysing real-world examples	67	105	41	2.11
Role-play and simulations	63	109	41	2.09
Reading textbooks and written materials	52	129	32	2.09
Hands-on activities and experiments	41	121	51	1.93
Quizzes and self-assessment exercises	41	111	61	1.89
Group projects or assignments	38	113	62	1.88

Online research and independent study	22	148	43	1.88
Artistic and creative activities, such as drawing or painting	42	95	76	1.83
Discussions and engaging in class debates	28	114	71	1.79
Problem-solving and critical thinking activities	14	132	67	1.73
Listening to lectures and audio recordings	15	112	86	1.66
Personal experiences and reflection	12	109	92	1.61
Teaching others or explaining concepts to peers	8	117	88	1.61
Mnemonic devices and memory techniques	2	10	201	1.05
Average mean				1.95
Criterion mean				2.00

As revealed in Table 3, **the majority of learners in M&UBE levels in Okitipupa and environments (114/ 53.5%) and mean value of 2.51/3.00 indicated visual aids such as diagrams, charts, and videos as their most preferred learning method.** This is followed by field trips and hands-on experiences outside the classroom (2.48); multimedia presentations and interactive slide shows (2.40); physical activities and movement-based exercises (2.32); interactive online platforms and educational games (2.24); case studies and analysing real-world examples (2.11); role-play and simulations (2.09); reading textbooks and written materials (2.09). Other learning methods, in order of preference, fall below the average mean of 1.95 which is also lower than the criterion mean of 2.00.

Table 4 Extent civic education teachers in Okitipupa make use of teaching methods

Teaching methods	Very highly used (4)	Highly used (3)	Scarcely used (2)	Not used (1)	Mean (X)/4
Textbooks and notes	22	0	0	0	4.00
Personal experiences and reflection	6	9	7	0	2.95
Physical activities and movement-based exercises	4	6	12	0	2.64
Role-play and simulations	2	9	8	3	2.45
Discussions and engaging in class debates	2	9	7	4	2.41
Case studies and analysing real-world examples	0	8	14	0	2.36
Group projects or assignments	1	6	15	0	2.36
Problem-solving and critical thinking activities	0	4	14	4	2.00
Quizzes and self-assessment exercises	0	4	13	5	1.95

Hands-on activities and experiments	0	2	4	16	1.36
Field trips and hands-on experiences outside the classroom	0	0	5	17	1.23
Interactive online platforms and educational games	0	0	5	17	1.23
Multimedia presentations and interactive slide shows	0	1	3	18	1.23
Visual aids such as diagrams, charts, and videos	0	2	4	16	1.18
Artistic and creative activities, such as drawing or painting	0	0	3	19	1.14
Online research and independent study	0	0	2	20	1.09
Giving lectures and audio recordings to students	0	0	1	21	1.05
Mnemonic devices and memory techniques	0	0	0	22	1.00
Average mean					1.87
Criterion mean					2.50

Table 4 shows the extent at which Civic Education teachers in Okitipupa make use of teaching methods to achieve desirable learning outcomes. Twenty-two civic education teachers were interviewed. **The average mean (1.87) is lower than the criterion mean (2.50); an indication that the extent Civic Education teachers in Okitipupa make use of diverse teaching methods is low.** The result reveals that all the civic education teachers interviewed make use of textbooks and notes with a mean of 4.00. This is followed by personal experiences and reflection (2.95); physical activities and movement-based exercises (2.64); role-play and simulations (2.45); discussions and engaging in class debates (2.41). Notably, falling below the average mean (1.85) and criterion mean (2.50) are: hands-on activities and experiments (1.36); field trips and hands-on experiences outside the classroom (1.23); interactive online platforms and educational games (1.23); multimedia presentations and interactive slide shows (1.23); and visual aids such as diagrams, charts, and videos (1.18).

Table 5 Post engagement manifestation of leadership qualities in learners of M&UBE levels in Okitipupa

Expression of Leadership qualities after Research Engagements	Leadership qualities	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Total (%)
Enjoy taking leadership roles	Passion	33 (100%)	0	33 (100%)
Feel confident with personal ideas and opinions	Confidence	28 (84.8%)	5 (15.2%)	33 (100%)
Good at motivating others	Motivation	28 (84.8%)	5 (15.2%)	33 (100%)
Coordinate responsibilities effectively	Coordination	32 (97%)	1 (3%)	33 (100%)
Adapt to changing needs and situations	Flexibility	27 (81.8%)	6 (18.2%)	33 (100%)
Delegate tasks effectively	Delegation	30 (90.9%)	3 (9.1%)	33 (100%)

Empathetic towards the needs and concerns of others	Empathy	31 (93.9%)	2 (6.1%)	33 (100%)
Communicate effectively with different types of people	Communication	28 (84.8%)	5 (15.2%)	33 (100%)
Resolve conflicts and settle disputes within a group	Conflict management	28 (84.8%)	5 (15.2%)	33 (100%)
Mentor and guide others to reach their full potential	Mentorship	31 (93.9%)	2 (6.1%)	33 (100%)
Courageously embrace challenges as opportunities	Courage	31 (93.9%)	2 (6.1%)	33 (100%)
Make critical decisions confidently and efficiently	Decision making	29 (87.9%)	4 (12.1%)	33 (100%)
Create a positive and inclusive environment within a team	Inclusivity	33 (100%)	0	33 (100%)
Skilled at prioritizing tasks and managing time effectively	Time management	28 (84.8%)	5 (15.2%)	33 (100%)
Emotionally intelligent to work with different personality types	Emotional Intelligence	30 (90.9%)	3 (9.1%)	33 (100%)
Good at identifying and utilizing the strengths of individuals within a team	Human management	29 (87.9%)	4 (12.1%)	33 (100%)
Open-minded and value diverse opinions and perspectives	Open mindedness	30 (90.9%)	3 (9.1%)	33 (100%)
Demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior in my leadership role	Ethical leadership	32 (97%)	1 (3%)	33 (100%)
Responsible and accountable for my actions as a leader	Responsibility	30 (90.9%)	3 (9.1%)	33 (100%)
Aggregate prevalent leadership quality		90.60%	9.40%	100%

Table 5 reveals that **manifestation of leadership qualities in learners of M&UBE levels in Okitipupa after the introduction of some new learning content in addition to the current civic education curriculum for M&UBE learners, the adoption of learner-centric methods and the leadership internship at schools is very high.** Out of the 33 M&UBE learners that participated in the study, the table indicates that 33 (100%) – 27 (81.8%) of learners affirmed their manifestations of all the leadership qualities that were tested. “Aggregate” leadership quality prevalence among the respondents is positive with a result of 90.60%.

DISCUSSION

According to Abejide (2022), national integration could be accelerated if government is patriotic and liberal to all and sundry while bias and favouritism should be jettisoned. More importantly, national integration or nation-building in Nigeria requires a sound and quality civic awareness education especially for learners at the Basic Education levels. Formal civic education at the foundational levels is expected to help the child imbibe requisite civic dispositions, democratic values and leadership capacity for building and living in a more nationally integrated Nigeria. It should provide the foundation for acquiring the skills necessary to encourage positive change, hold fruitful discussions, and work for a society that is more equitable and peaceful (Lee et al., 2013). Civic education is an important tool for educating and inculcating in the future adults the ideal actions and

behaviours expected of them as good citizens (Ibe et al., 2023). It is found in this study that the current civic education/awareness in the M&UBE levels in Nigeria largely fails to satisfy these expectations.

The finding in this study confirms the suggestions of earlier studies which blamed the failure of civic education on the components in the education system which, include: teachers, educational facilities and government. Pedagogical gaps, lack of appropriate professionals and shortage of qualified teachers on the field of study (Agbor and Ashabua, 2019; Obiagu, 2019), less emphasis and attention on developing proper skills of leadership, enquiry and communication of the learners, the absence of democratic simulations and learning at schools, lack of appropriate and updated teaching methodology and materials are real factors that hamper the realization of the expected outcomes of civic education in Nigeria. The study reveals that the curriculum is largely deficient in addressing current societal issues and leadership capacity development topics for the young learners. The mismatch between the curriculum and national challenges has made civic education in Nigeria to be less successful at preparing students for civic engagements (Sele, 2020). The arrangement/structure of the content is another area of concern which the study identified and attempted to suggest an alternative in the proposed *Specialized Civic Awareness Learning Curriculum for M&UBE*.

On the issue of delivery and learning outcomes, it is worthy of note that the learners' most preferred learning methods are at variance with the teachers' mostly used teaching methods. Most often, teachers of civic education teach learners with methods that are least desirable to learners. This partly explains why learners' civic awareness and national consciousness are terribly low despite the array of relevant topics in the curriculum. The lack of modern teaching and learning technologies in schools had forced teachers to teach with available teaching aids and methods. Learners are also compelled to adapt to the learner's unfriendly methods which could not inspire the optimization of learning experience.

On the relationship between the learner's national consciousness and his immediate socio-political environment, the study reveals that there is a very high level of impact of past exposure to divisive rhetorics and identity politics on the personality and national consciousness of M&UBE learners. The divisive narratives had been part of the social and political realities that constituted the upbringing and socialization (Ajayi and Owumi, 2013) processes of most of the young children. Hence, it requires a strong and formidable collaboration of the formal and informal learning environments of the young learners to assist them to unlearn the negative, derogatory assumptions, and to learn and relearn the values for nation-building and national consciousness.

With the introduction of the proposed "*Specialized Civic Awareness Learning Curriculum for M&UBE*", new topics which are relevant to current national issues and are germane to developing national consciousness and leadership capacity for nation-building were brought to the consciousness of the learners. Such topics include: "Managing Discrimination and Stereotypes", "Enemies of our Nation: Terrorism", "Enemies of our Nation: Corruption", "Patriotism", "Followership", "Myths about Leadership", "Political Apathy" among others. The adoption of learner-centric teaching methods with appropriate learning aids and the incorporation of democratic and leadership simulations and learning at schools, led to remarkable improvement in the learners' personality and leadership capacity for national integration in Nigeria.

The finding of this study, having explored the interrelationship between the learners' formal environment (schools) and their informal social contexts, confirmed the veracity of the assertion that the soundness and the essence of any educational system depends upon the coherence and mutual interrelationship of its diverse component parts; and to talk of the nation's educational system in respect of only the formal school educational system, as it is the case presently, is to commit the fallacy of mistaking the part for the whole (Akinpelu, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The possibility of national integration and nation building depends solely on the quality of civic education. The quality however, is a reflection of the content of the curriculum, the quality of teachers, the quality of delivery and the learning environment for the children. Civic education should not be taught with students passing tests or examination as the priority. Rather, competent teachers should teach civic education as their own civic obligation towards national integration having been saddled with the responsibility to engender a new patriotic, democratic and ethical mindset in the Nigerian pupils and students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Only teachers with requisite qualifications, experience and competence should be engaged to teach Civic Education at the M&UBE levels.
- Civic Education is a dynamic subject, it is rapidly evolving and so are its methods of teaching. Regular orientation, training and development of civic education teachers should be prioritize by Governments, school administrators and school proprietors.
- Arising from current socio-political realities of Nigeria from domestic, regional and global perspectives, there is urgent need for the reassessment and review of the civic education curriculum.
- Schools should be encouraged to domesticate basic civic and democratic practices in the administration of the schools such as elections of students into offices; students representations in the decision-making organs of the schools; students judicial council for administration of justice among students.

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