

Effects of Contextual and Service Learning Strategies on Civic Attitudes of Junior Secondary School Students in Ijebu Land, Nigeria

by

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Abstract

Despite the introduction of civic education in basic and senior secondary, and citizenship education at the tertiary education levels, there still exists a decline in expected social values among the youths. This has been partly attributed to the use of teacher-centred instructional strategies in the teaching of Civic/Citizenship Education, the consequent inability of the students to make connections between what they have learnt and its application within the society. There is dearth of evidence on the adoption of Contextual Learning Strategy (CLS) and Service Learning Strategy (SLS) on civic attitudes of students in Nigeria. This study therefore, determined the effects of Contextual Learning Strategy (CLS) and Service Learning Strategy (SLS) on civic attitudes of Junior Secondary School (JSS) students in Ijebu land, Nigeria. The moderating effects of gender and school location were also examined. The study adopted a pretest-posttest, control group, quasi-experimental design with 3x2x2 factorial matrix. Six JS1, three each were purposively selected from Ijebu-Ode and Ijebu North-East local government areas. Treatment lasted 12 weeks. Civic Attitude ($r = .74$) Scale and Instructional Guide for each of the strategies were the instruments used for the study. Data were

analysed using Analysis of Covariance, and Scheffe Post-hoc test at 0.05 level of significance. Treatment had a significant main effect on students' civic attitude ($F_{(2,524)} = 18.62; \eta^2 = .07$). Thus, contextual and service learning strategies enhanced civic attitudes of junior secondary school students in Ijebuland, Nigeria. Both strategies are recommended for use in the teaching of civic education to promote civic attitude.

Keyword: Civic attitude, Contextual Learning Strategy, Service learning strategies, Junior Secondary School students, Ijebu land

Introduction

Various efforts had been made by well-meaning individuals in Nigeria to ensure that Nigeria remains an indivisible entity where every Nigerian will consider himself a Nigerian first before seeing himself as a Yoruba, Ibo or Hausa and so on. In other words, a Nigeria in which the national consciousness of her citizens will be high. Metzger (2000) is of the opinion that education is an effective instrument for citizenship and civic responsibility. In this present situation, where Nigerian unity and democracy is under threat, education can be used to foster much needed national consciousness, hence national unity for the survival of the nation in this 21st century. Increasing the national consciousness of citizens can be achieved through the teaching of civic education. Civic Education has become an increasingly important means for countries to educate their citizens about their rights and responsibilities. With the unfortunate inter-ethnic and religious clashes and leadership crises that have become common occurrences in Nigeria, it becomes imperative to introduce civic education as it relates to national consciousness and national unity (Yusuf, 2010). Civic Education is an important means of developing in citizens the acceptable attitudes in the society. According to Bechtel and Foundation (2013), civic attitudes can

defined as the citizen's traits necessary for a democracy (e.g. tolerance, public spiritedness, civility, critical mindedness and willingness to listen, negotiate and compromise). Civic attitude encompasses interpersonal and intrapersonal values, virtues, and behaviours, and it includes the following:

- i. Appreciation of difference
- ii. Tolerance and respect
- iii. Rejection of violence
- iv. Concern with the rights and welfare of others
- v. Commitment to balancing personal liberties with social responsibility to others
- vi. Personal efficacy
- vii. Sense of belonging to a group or polity
- viii. Readiness to compromise personal interests to achieve shared ends
- ix. Desire for community involvement
- x. Attentiveness (to civic matters, the news, etc.).

Quigley and Bahmucller (1991) stated that civic attitude includes a number of personal characteristics such as: "Civic consciousness (respect and civil discourse), individual responsibility, self-discipline, civic-mindedness, open-mindedness (openness, skepticism, recognition of ambiguity), compromise (principles of conflict, compassion, generosity) and loyalty to the nation and its principles". In other words, civic attitude includes human respect and interaction , individual responsibility, self-discipline, caring about community, open-mindedness involving openness, scepticism, recognition of ambiguity, compromise attitude involving principles of conflict, compassion, generosity and loyalty to the nation and its principles.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the efforts made by the Nigerian government to inculcate civic virtues into her citizens with the introduction of civic

education as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary education, there is still a deterioration of civic behaviour among Nigerians, especially the youths, which indicates lack of civic attitude. This had been partly attributed to the use of teacher-centred instructional strategies in the teaching of the subject, the consequent lack of interest among the students and their inability to make connections between what they have learnt and how the knowledge could be used. How teachers handle the teaching of civic education inspired the researcher in seeking for strategies that would better promote the learning of the subject, such that students will gain maximally from it and hence promote the civic attitude of the students. This study, therefore, considered the effects of contextual and service learning strategies on civic attitudes of junior secondary school students in Ijebu land, Nigeria. The study also examined the moderating effects of gender and school location on civic attitudes of the students.

Literature Review

The section reviews relevant literatures on the major variables and moderating variables in the study. They are contextual learning strategy, service learning strategy, civic education, gender and school location.

Contextual Learning Strategy

Blanchard (2001) and Bern and Erickson (2001) define contextual learning strategy as a teaching and learning strategy that helps teachers to relate the materials taught with the real world situation and encourages the students to make correlation between their existing knowledge and its application to their lives as members of families, society and the nation. Therefore, contextual learning enables the students to relate the material content with their daily lives context to discover the meaning of concepts (Johnson, 2001). Contextual Learning is based on constructivist theory of teaching

and learning, and it emphasizes that learning takes place when teachers are able to present information in a way that students are able to construct meaning based on their own experiences (Imel, 2000). Constructivist learning theory maintains that learning is a process of constructing meaning from experience. Contextual learning is useful for child development because it provides learning experiences in a context in which children are interested and motivated. Centre on Education and Works (2013) sees contextual learning strategy as the kind of teaching that places a real world emphasis on teaching. In other words, it involves relating what is being taught into the context of the real world, hopefully with the effect of engaging the students interactively, and thus eliminate the question of “Why do I need to learn this stuff?”. Blanchard (2001) added that students learn contextually when they consider issues from their lives in the context of their class lessons. The goal is to create lifelong learners who use critical thinking skills to tackle problems.

Sounders (1999) focused on five components that help in creating a meaningful Contextual Learning Strategy, which he called REACT, that is

- a. Relating: Learning in life experience context;
- b. Experiencing: Learning in searching and discovering context;
- c. Applying: Learning when knowledge introduced in the usage context;
- d. Cooperating: Learning through interpersonal communication and sharing context;
- e. Transferring: learning the use of knowledge in a new situation or context.

Service Learning Strategy

National Service Learning Clearing-house (NSLC) (2011)

defines service-learning as a teaching and learning strategy that engages young people in solving problems within their schools and communities as part of their academic studies or other type of intentional learning activity. Service-learning helps students to master some important curriculum contents by making meaningful connections between what they are learning and its many applications in the world around them. Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with the instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. In Human Right Education Associate (HREA) (2011), a manual on human rights and service learning, service learning is seen as a method of teaching whereby learners learn and develop through active participation in a service that is conducted in their communities. Service learning fosters civic responsibility, and it is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the learners.

Listed below according to Belisle and Sullivan (2007) are components that help in creating a meaningful service learning project.

- 1. Engaged Participation** – The learners are engaged in the process of determining what the service will be.
- 2. Collaboration** – This is a very important component of the partnership because the service provided should address a genuine need in the community.
- 3. Integration** – This is creating learning objectives that are tied to a curriculum and learning standards, which will help measure learning.
- 4. Preparation** – Here, the learners will be trained with a special skills and orientated on rules and regulations they will need to

follow while on-site of the project.

5. **Reflection** – After the project is finished, students are engaged in a reflection activity again because during the project a lot is going on, often too much to really assess all of the learning that is taking place.
6. **Evaluation** – After the implementation of the service, the teacher will re-visit the project, evaluating how the partnership worked, if expectations from all partners were met.
7. **Celebration** – At this point the students will celebrate with their partner organizations and their teachers. Teacher will celebrate herself for being an engaging influential educator.

Service learning provides an ideal forum for fostering healthy attitudes among learners and engaging them in socially responsible actions. Service learning strategy enables learners to apply the academic skills and knowledge they learn in the classroom to real-world situations. (Belisle and Sullivan, 2007).

Conventional Method of Teaching and Students' Learning Outcome

Adelekan (2010) stated that conventional method of teaching is a teaching method whereby the teacher comes into the class to deliver his lesson to his students making him the source of knowledge. Conventional method though most widely used in Nigerian schools, do not result in noticeable change in attitude, while retention of information is very poor (Falade, 2007; Akintunde, 2004). The conventional method of teaching involves the three steps- introduction, presentation and conclusion. At the introductory stage, the teacher briefly review the content of the day's lesson by either reading from a prepared note or through narration of story. The students on their part, listen to the

teacher and take down note. In this process, the teacher is hardly interested in finding out how much the learners have gained in the lesson since no questions will be asked either by the teacher or the students at this stage. The teacher is only interested in covering the lesson content within the stipulated time.

The conventional method is a teacher-centred teaching strategy. It is usually criticized for its insensitivity to students' needs, preferences, interest and values. It is also criticized on the ground that where ethical issues are involved, the conventional method will rather indoctrinate than educate (Ogunyemi, 1994 in Adediran, 2015). Consequently, the conventional method kills learners' initiatives and hinders their efforts to make independent efforts and decisions both within and outside the classroom setting (Falade 2007). In this method, the students are assumed to be the same without consideration, its one way traffic and the students are passive recipients of information.

Gender Differences, School Location and Students' Learning Outcome

The actual state of gender participation, causes of gender inequality and probable ways of restoring gender balance in various fields of human endeavours have received scholarly attention. The term "gender" is apparently not new. Gender refers to socially constructed roles and socially learned behaviours and expectations associated with males and females (Nwangbara, 2003). In the word of Olojede (2004), gender relates to the social, economic and political differences between men and women.

Problem of equitable gender representation in Nigeria has attracted considerable scholarly discourse (Adelekan, 2010). According to Adelekan (2010), gender refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of women and men. The concept of gender also includes the expectation held about the characteristic, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women

and men. Adigwe (1992) observed that gender has taken a central position as a factor in educational research. The differences in performances between males and females under different teaching conditions have been a recurrent one. Gender is a dimension on which individual scores can be widely differentiated and normally distributed since it is recognized that every child is unique and that all children differ from one another. This factor is observed mostly in schools and the Nigerian society generally as it is evident that men are more politically inclined than women as more men are elected into various elective posts (Abdullahi, 1993 and Agbajobi, 2000)

Besides the gender factor, it is also observed that school location plays an important role in determining the academic performance of students. This is as a result of the impression that schools located at urban areas are usually at the advantage of having better learning facilities and infrastructure. Students schooling in the urban areas are more likely to be more competent in civic education concepts than those schooling in the peri-urban areas. It is believed that those students in the urban areas are exposed to social and infrastructural amenities, they have access to good roads, ICT, television and conducive environment, while those in the peri-urban don't have the opportunities. Also many teachers would want to teach at the urban areas than peri-urban areas. Hence, it becomes imperative to investigate school location and gender as they affect civic attitudes of junior secondary students.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at $p < .05$ level of significance in the study:-

- H_{01} . There is no significant main effect of treatment on students' attitude to civic concepts
- H_{02} . There is no significant main effect of gender on students' attitude to civic concepts

H₀₃. There is no significant main effect of school location on students' attitude to civic concepts

Methodology

The study adopted the pretest-posttest, control group, quasi-experimental design. The independent variable (learning strategy) was manipulated at three levels, that is, contextual learning strategy (Experimental 1), service learning strategy (Experimental 2) and conventional teaching method (control). The moderator variables are gender, at two levels: male and female; and school location, at two levels: urban and peri –urban; while the dependent variable is the students' civic attitude.

Participants in the study were five hundred and thirty five (535) JS1 students from six public junior secondary schools selected from Ijebu-Ode local government (urban area) and Ijebu North-East local government (peri-urban) area in Ijebu land. Population density, availability of infrastructural facilities, availability of banks, availability of standard markets, availability roads, and level of information technology are the criteria considered for the selection of Ijebu-Ode as the urban area and Ijebu North East as the peri- urban area.

Three schools were purposively selected from each of the local government area. The schools selected were State Government owned and were co-educational schools, which allowed the inclusion of males and females students. The selected schools were also offering civic education; and the concepts that were covered during the study were human rights, types of human rights, obligations of citizens, traffic rules and regulations and road accidents in Nigeria (All these are topics in the third term syllabus of JS1 civic education).

Two intact classes were purposively used in each of the schools that were selected for the study. Two of the schools were randomly assigned experimental group 1 (one from the urban and

the other from the peri-urban). Two of the schools were randomly assigned experimental group 2 (one from the urban and the other from the peri-urban), while the remaining two of the schools were assigned control group (one from the urban and the other from the peri-urban).

Research Instruments

Four instruments were used in generating the data for this study. Three of these were stimulus instruments while the remaining one was a response instruments. **The stimulus instruments** are the treatment implementation teaching guides; and they are Guide on Contextual Learning Strategy (GCLS), Guide on Service Learning Strategy (GSLs) and Guide on Conventional Teaching Method (GCTM). The guide was designed to look at the activities of both the research assistants/facilitators and students, such that it helped them in conveying and learning the selected civic education concepts. GCLS was prepared in line with Sounders' model, (Sounders, 1999) which touched the five key elements of successful contextual learning: Relating, Experiencing, Application, Cooperation and Transferring: "REACT". GSLs was prepared using Kristine and Elisabeth's model (Kristine and Elisabeth, 2007), which touched the eight key elements of successful service learning projects: Engaged participation, Collaboration, Integration, Preparation, Action, Reflection, Evaluation and Celebration. The guide was used to sensitize and enlightened the teachers on what are expected of them at each period. GCMT was developed in line with common classroom teaching, which is a teacher-centred approach; it focuses more on the teacher and his activities in the classroom, where the learners are only passive receivers of the teacher's information.

Response Instrument refers to the means through which data was collected from the participants for the study. **Civic Attitude**

Scale (CAS) was a response instrument used to collect data for the study. It consisted 20 items based on 4 point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D). Section A elicits personal data of the participants such as gender, class, school location and school name. Section B contained 20 items scale questions. This questionnaire was designed and modified to measure students' awareness of and attitude towards civic issues in the society.

The validation of the questionnaire was done using face and content validity through peer/expert review. To ensure the validity of the instrument, it was also administered to thirty (30) students of Molusi College in Ijebu North local government area of Ijebu land to determine its reliability. The reliability co-efficient was determined using Cronbach Alpha method, all the items showed high reliability and it generated $\alpha = .641$. This showed that the instrument was reliable.

Summary of the Procedure

First and second weeks were for training of the research assistants. Third week was for the administration of pre-test to the participants.

Fourth–eleventh week (8 weeks) were for the treatment and follow-up.

Twelfth week (last week) were for post-test administration.

Total: Twelve weeks

Research Findings and Analysis.

H₀₁: There is no significant main effect of treatment on students' attitude to civic concepts.

To test this hypothesis ANCOVA was computed and the result is presented in Table 1

Table 1. : Summary of Analysis of Covariance of 3 x 2 x 2 Factorial Analysis on Students Attitude

Dependent Variable: post attitude

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4677.09 ^a	12	389.758	7.621	.000	.159
Intercept	9203.657	1	9203.657	179.961	.000	.271
preatt	1076.847	1	1076.847	21.056	.000	.042
TREATMENT	1904.570	2	952.285	18.620	.000	.072
Gender	92.127	1	92.127	1.801	.180	.004
School Location	9.565	1	9.565	.187	.666	.000
TREATMENT * gender	69.535	2	34.768	.680	.507	.003
TREATMENT * Location	393.768	2	196.884	3.850	.022	.016
Gender * Location	4.135	1	4.135	.081	.776	.000
TREATMT*gender*locatn	47.261	2	23.631	.462	.630	.002
Error	24701.891	524	51.143			
Total	1698271.000	537				
Corrected Total	29378.982	536				

a R Squared = .159 (Adjusted R Squared = .138)

Treatment has significant main effect on attitude ($F_{(2, 524)} = 18.62$; $p < 0.05$; $\eta^2 = .07$). H_{0b} is rejected.

Table 2 : Estimated Marginal Means on attitude across the Groups

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Error
INTERCEPT			
Pre attitude Score	537	56.31	-
Post attitude score	537	58.06	.35
TREATMENT			
Experimental Group 1 (contextual)	163	57.65	.60
Experimental Group 2 (service)	178	60.96	.67
Control Group (conventional)	196	55.58	.57
GENDER			
Male	258	57.59	.50
Female	279	58.53	.49
SCHOOL LOCATION			
Urban area	334	57.91	.40
Peri-urban	203	58.22	.59

Those exposed to service learning had highest attitude mean score (60.96); followed by those exposed to contextual (57.65)

while those exposed to conventional strategy had the lowest mean score (55.58).

However to determine the actual source of the significant difference obtained in the ANCOVA in Table 1 , Scheffe Multiple Range Test was employed as a post-hoc measure. The summary is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of Scheffe’s Post Hoc Pair-wise Comparison on Attitude

Groups	Contextual	Service	Conventional
Contextual		*	*
Service	*		*
Conventional	*	*	

The significant main effect of treatment on attitude is as a result of significant difference between:

- i. Experimental 2 and experimental 1
- ii. Experimental 2 and control
- iii. Experimental 1 and control

This implies that those exposed to service learning strategy performed significantly better than those exposed to contextual learning strategy; and contextual learning group performed significantly better than those of conventional strategy.

Effect of Gender on Students’ Attitude to Civic Concepts

Ho₂: There is no significant main effect of gender on students’ attitude to civic concept.

Table 1 shows that gender has no significant main effect on students attitude ($F_{(1,524)} = 1.80; p>0.05; \eta^2 = .00$). Therefore, Ho₂ is not rejected. This means that male and female attitude to civic issues are not differed significantly. The estimated marginal means in Table 2 shows that female students had slightly higher

positive attitude to civic education concepts $\bar{x} = 58.59$ than their male counterparts, $\bar{x} = 57.59$. Although this difference is not significant, it might occur due to chance.

Effect of School Location on Students' Attitude to Civic Education Concepts

Ho₃: There is no significant main effect of school location on students' attitude to civic concept.

Table 1 shows that school location has no significant main effect on students attitude ($F_{(1,524)} = 0.19$; $p > 0.05$; $\eta^2 = .00$). Therefore, Ho₃ is not rejected. This means that students from peri-urban and urban areas are not differed significantly in term of their attitude to civic education concepts. The estimated marginal means in Table 2 shows that peri-urban students had slightly higher positive attitude to civic education concepts with the mean score of $\bar{x} = 12.33$ than their urban counterparts with the mean of $\bar{x} = 12.21$. Although this difference is not significant.

Students exposed to service learning strategy exhibited more positive attitudes to the selected civic education concepts than those exposed to contextual learning strategy and conventional method of teaching respectively. Students had an in-depth understanding of civic issues in the society, as a result of active engagement of students in the teaching and learning process. This indicated that students demonstrated better attitude to civic education concepts when exposed to service and contextual learning strategies. Marx (2005) states that contextual learning strategy promotes cooperative learning, which in turn enhances the development of courtesy and respect of differences.

The findings of the hypotheses as shown in Table 1 indicated that gender had no significant difference on students' civic attitude. This means that gender had little or no effect on students' acquisition

of civic attitude, and that what really determine the acquisition of civic attitude of students are teaching and learning strategies adopted by the teachers. This implies that irrespective of whether students are males or females the experimental treatment is more effective than the control. The result is in agreement with the reports of Balogun (2003) who reported that gender had no effect on students' achievement but method of teaching determines students' achievement.

School location was found to have no significant effect on students' civic attitude. However, peri-urban students had more positive civic attitude than those students in urban area, although the difference was not significant. The result might be attributed to the fact that peri-urban students were more dedicated to their studies and their mastery of civic education concepts was better than the urban students. Again, urban students might be distracted by what was going on in their environment which may also cause low concentration in the classroom or outside the classroom learning process. More so, the low population of students at peri-urban areas really helped facilitators, they were able to manage the strategies with the students effectively and adequately without much stress. This finding is against the report of Yusuf and Adigun (2010) that peri-urban schools were inferior with high staff turnover and suffered from lack of continuity in their curriculum.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have shown that the use of the two learning strategies (contextual and service learning strategies) had been found to be effective in enhancing and fostering students' civic attitude. The two strategies offered ways to extend young students' attention beyond the classroom to the real world situation, and to engage them in the process of devising solutions to civic problems they will confront as they grow older in the society. Also, it was discovered that gender and school location

were not strong determinants of students' attitude to civic issues. Hence, contextual and service learning are very effective in the teaching and learning of civic education concepts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. Civic Education Curriculum should be reviewed to incorporate the use of contextual and service learning as strategies for teaching and learning of civic education concepts.
2. Training and re- training programmes at the national and local levels should be organised for both junior and secondary school civic education teachers on the effective use of contextual and service learning strategies.

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