Exploring the Virtues of Civic Education for Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria

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Abstract
This paper examines the place of Civic Education in the actualization of a sustainable economic development in Nigeria. It presents a fairly in-depth knowledge of the major concepts of the discourse such as Civic Education and Sustainable Economy. Issues involved in economic sustainability are also discussed. Based on this, the paper showcases the Virtues of Civic Education as necessary tool for economic advancement of the nation. Conclusion was drawn and the following recommendations are made. Government should abide by the UNESCO declaration of 26% budgetary allocation to education sector, employment of qualified Social Studies teachers to teach the curriculum of Civic Education, and adequate provision of instructional resources in schools.

Key Concepts: Virtues, Civic Education and Sustainable Economic Development
Introduction

National development has become almost, if not a mirage in Nigeria. This assertion is based on the failure of certain efforts in the past and present meant to engender new life for the citizens. For instance, several economic plans have been made and failed. Notable among these are Structural Adjustment and Poverty Alleviation programmes. Because of unbearable situation and the quest for survival in Nigeria, armed robbery, kidnapping, money laundry, internet scam, killing, stealing of government properties, political assassination, etc, remain the hallmark of events in the country. Accordingly, education sector has not been fairing well. Many educational policies have been formulated, shabbily implemented and later abandoned, haven being found inappropriate to produce the desirable change.

Similarly, an over view of the political situation leave much to be desired. Instead of the politicians to unveil their manifestoses, they are busy displaying their posters across the nooks and crannies of the communities without a single agenda. While peace and security are child play, political thuggery and civil unrest are seen as characteristics of a normal life in the country. In this context, one begins to wonder where we, as a people, have gone wrong. With abundant natural resources and intellectual ability required for national development, we are still far to reach the desired destination. Perhaps it is pertinent to state emphatically that Nigeria is bedevilled with attitudinal problem to harness and manage its resources for accelerated growth and development. Thus, Nigerians lack attitude to pursue well articulated policies and programmes. Therefore, for positive change of character, there should be a massive orientation in form of Civic Education to conscientize the minds of the teeming population of Nigeria on the gains of cultivating a desirable political and economic culture. This form of education constitutes an important element for social change. Civic education would impart worthwhile knowledge, skills and desirable behaviour needed for a united and effective political and economic system in Nigeria. In view of the above, this paper is confronted with a task of showcasing the relevance of Civic Education as a tool for sustainable economic development bringing into focus, a fairly detailed conceptual clarifications of the major components that form the basis of the discourse.

Conceptualizing Civic Education

Civic Education has become a global content of making the citizens of the countries aware of their political, economical and social rights and obligations with the sole aim of fostering active participation in governance. Tijani, Musa and Abubakar (2011) opined that Civic Education can be said to have emerged as a desire for good governance and national development. Bennett (1993) referred to civic education as “a process of creating a political culture which would be instilling in all citizens the attitude to protect the good values of their society”. Similarly, Glickman (2003) opined that Civic Education prepares the citizens for the acquisition of rights and the fulfilment of obligations in order to sustain a system of government in which one citizen cannot fear another citizen. Okam in Abdulhadi (2010) viewed Civic Education as a field of study
that focuses on the human person, his community, government and governance. Furthermore, Mbwe in Oladiti (2010) conceived Civic Education thus “a subject that creates awareness to the pupils on civic matters such as politics, governance, human rights which is introduced among others to develop a sense of responsibility among citizenry and equip learners with knowledge, skills and values.

Bye and large, it is obvious from the above expositions that the central theme of Civic Education is building a culture of responsibilities through effective participation in national affairs. In politics, civic education creates an avenue for constructive criticism of political situations haven inculcated into the citizenry, the necessary knowledge and skills for decision making on governmental policies and programmes. Some people feel that civic education is limited to only successful democratic governance. It goes beyond that as it also has unprecedented role to play in military form of government. Thus, if the citizens are aware of their rights and obligations, absolute lack of respect for constitution of the land characterized by the military rule would become a past event if at all they are allowed to rule, thereby giving way to stable political system that recognizes and implements the wishes of the majority.

Objectives of Civic Education

The goal of civic education is to bring up effective citizens committed to good governance and notion of nation building in all its ramifications. Accordingly, Fagbeyinbo (2006) averred that Civic Education by nature, scope and contents gives priority to political education of the citizens. As a discipline, the curriculum emphasizes acquisition of relevant knowledge, attitudes, habits and skills that make the learners become functional citizens”. Talking about political socialization, MAMSER in Philphogoh (2010: 171-173) presented objectives which have corresponding value in civic education. Some of them are as follows:

- Educating Nigerians to realize that democracy is an indispensable pre-condition for rapid national development;
- educating Nigerians about their rights and duties;
- raising the consciousness of the Nigerian masses to realize that their poverty derives exploitation, domination and lack of democracy in the nation;
- educating Nigerians to view government as their agency and government officials as public servants, and not “masters”, and that, it is their own national duty to intervene and correct such officials when they do wrong or abuse their office or position;
- removing institutional obstacle to popular participation of the masses in public affairs and development process;
- educating and mobilizing Nigerians against ethnic, religious and sectional intolerance and manipulations;
- educating and mobilizing Nigerians to identify, expose and reject corruption in all spheres of Nigeria’s national life, among other objectives.
From the foregoing, it becomes apparently clear that Civic Education is packaged with laudable plan to mobilize the citizenry against bad governance and social injustice. Thus, Civic Education remains an integral part of Social Studies which is geared towards social reconstruction and national productivity. However, even though the above objectives are well articulated for effective change in the polity, what happens in the classroom is another discussion of its own. One therefore hopes that purposeful efforts would be made by the government and other stake holders to provide necessary facilities and other achievement mechanism for the realization of these noble objectives at the classroom level.

**Sustainable Economic Development**

First and foremost, economic development connotes the ability of a given country to utilize the available resources to raise the living standard of its citizens. It implies the industrial growth and productivity. It means the increase in purchasing power of an individual and the appreciable interaction between resources and human wants. Before a country can be said to be developed, there must be a robust relationship between politics and economic activities. This is because; on these two elements depend other social progress. Therefore, economic viability constitutes a key determinant of national development. In an economically developed nation, poverty, low level capacity of industrial sectors, inflation, unemployment, etc are brought to the minimum level if not totally eliminated. Besides, it is one thing for a nation to develop and another to sustain it. In this regard, Obi (2008:106) referred to sustainability as:

*a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of the technological development and institutional change are all in harmony; and enhance both current and future potentials to meet human needs and aspirations.*

Economic sustainability is a process which largely depends on the quality of governmental decision to manage the resources of the land and impact positively on the lives of the governed.

The concept of Sustainable Development was presented for the first time in 1987 by the *World Commission on Environment and Development*, in the report *Our Common Future*. The commission was created by the United Nations, and was made of 21 nations. The commission, headed by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, said that the planet needs “a new era of environmentally sustainable and sound economic development.” Dr. Brundtland further stated that "government must strongly support a new political approach to environment and development, where economic and fiscal policies, trade and foreign policies, energy, agriculture, industry, and other sectorial policies, are all aim to induce development that is not only economically but ecologically sustainable." The technical definition of Sustainable Development was given as being:
a sound balance among the interactions of the impacts (positive and/or negative), or stresses, on the four major quality systems: People, Economic Development, Environment and Availability of Resources.

The non-technical definition was given as being:

a sound balance among the interactions designed to create a healthy economic growth, preserve environmental quality, make wise use of our resources, and enhance social benefits. (p4).

People need a healthy environment and resources for industry. Businesses cannot thrive without people or resources. Economic stability depends on people, resources, and good businesses, and all of the above cannot exist without environment. The four interacting circles are a simplistic expression of our need for one another, our interaction, and the thoughtless damage we can cause. We are worlds within worlds orbiting in and through each other's space. This interaction can be planned and executed in a caring, considerate manner so that all may exist and not destroy the other. The following is the design depicting the impact interactions.

![Diagram of Sustainable Development](http://www.globalcomunitywebnet.com/globalcomunity/measurment)

The above design underscores the importance of interaction among the basic elements of a sustainable economic development. Thus, one element cannot survive without others.

**Issues Involved in Economic Development**

Economic development does not occur over night rather it is a product of positive decision, purposeful and careful plan to eliminate certain inimical forces. Some of these are briefly discoursed below:-

**Good Governance:** Governance implies a process of managing the affairs of a state for the sole aim of improving the standard of living of the citizens. Anthony (2010) affirmed that good governance is a term used in development literature to describe institutions,
conduct public affairs and manage public resources in order to guarantee the realization of human rights”. In this process, human and natural resources are co-ordinated for socioeconomic wellbeing of the nation. This is why Tijani, Musa and Abubakar (2011) asserted that act of governance is an interaction between the possessors of power and authority; the general public and resources. Therefore economic development is a product of good governance. Thus, failure of the leadership to map out favourable policies supported by the appropriate implementation mechanism will automatically affect economic viability of the nation. What the Nigeria of today lack is effective, responsive and responsible leadership. Corroborating this view, Theresa in Tinja and Tijani (2014: 55-64) postulated that:-

Economic growth is not a panacea to all national development problems. This is because a dynamic economy depends largely on a vibrant and purposeful leadership. Economy and leadership are two inseparable factors in national development. Therefore, education must as of necessity, address leadership question in Africa (Nigeria inclusive) without which progress in national development would be stagnant.

Political Stability: A link has been made between politics and economy in a section of this paper. This is because the two concepts are inseparable. In fact, effective political system is a tool for socio-economic and technological advancement of any nation. Based on this, political stability becomes a prerequisite for economic development. A lot of social havoc caused by political instability either as a result of political struggle or religious crises has been experienced in Nigeria. Therefore, to have stable political system, social justice and adequate security must prevail to allow the economy of the nation to thrive.

Power and Energy: The pivot of industrialization without any doubt is stable electricity supply. In Nigeria’s case, power supply is almost becoming an insurmountable problem. Only God knows how many businesses and industries that have collapsed due to epileptic power supply. Although, government is making efforts to stabilize the sector, the solution is still far to be reached. Jimoh (2008) asserted that no group of people whether developed or developing can attain meaningful transformation without adequate supply of water and power. This underscores the significance of electricity in economic development. Without adequate power generation, economic development will be elusive.

Virtues of Civic Education

Civic Virtues involve having interest in one’s nation for active participation in national affairs. It relates to developing vital behavioural disposition with a view to creating a strong and united Nigeria. It equally refers to the process of developing desirable attitude needed for national growth and productivity. In line with this, Kogi (2010) viewed Civic virtues as characteristics necessary to preserve and improve democracy. The Civic Virtues include self-adjustment, harmonious living, civility, respect for the worth and dignity of labour, religious tolerance, service above self, attaching less importance to ethnicity, corruption, embezzlement, but cultivating high
spirit of national consciousness. Similarly, Tijani, Musa and Abubakar (2010) enumerated some of the distinctive values in Social Studies which occupies the central nerves of Civic Education as follows: respect for constituted authority, willingness to live together as people of Nigeria, tolerance of others and consideration for people’s opinions, high level of co-operation for national development, love and broadmindedness, justice, productivity and fair play, etc. This is so because the former constitutes an integral part of the latter in its quest to produce effective citizens in Nigeria as a democratic entity.

Accordingly, NERDC (2007) itemized the critical values enshrined in Civic Education as: honesty, co-operation, self-reliance, integrity, contentment, discipline, courage, right attitude to work and correction of negative behaviour among citizens. Okam in Abdulhadi (2010) is convinced that the inclusion of Civic Education as a separate subject in the Basic Education Curriculum was to inform the Nigerian youth and inculcate in them good behaviour and patriotic attributes” In the same vein, Amy in Oladiti (2010) asserted that “Civic Education is a political education which entails the cultivation of the virtues, knowledge and skills necessary for political participation” The philosophy behind inculcating Civic Virtues into the young ones is to empower them with socio-personal attributes required of a politically and economically vibrant nation, peaceful and egalitarian Nigerian society. However, it is pertinent to state at this juncture, that for proper dissemination of Civic virtues, the Nigerian schools have indispensable role to play. Therefore, the schools should be well equipped with qualified teachers and adequate facilities in order to attain the desired result.

Civic Education and Economic Sustainability

Perhaps the following fundamental questions should be put forward as a framework to explain the unprecedented and critical roles which Civic Education can play in realizing a sustainable economy. How would Nigeria ensure economic development in a state of anarchy and unrealistic political struggle?, in a state where the citizens do not know their rights and fight for them?, state where culture of bad governance, vote robbery and other political problems reign supreme? and in a state where injustice, lawlessness, religious crisis, civil unrest, vandalism of government properties, abduction of oil workers, embezzlement, and political godfathers are highly celebrated? Without any doubt, the above descriptions are obviously forces against meaningful development in the country. Until these social ills are dealt with in the life of the citizens, economic development would be an unrealizable dream.

Therefore, the concern in Civic Education is to systematically empower the young ones who have been adjudged as leaders of tomorrow with knowledge, skills and worthwhile values to eliminate these inimical forces in the life of the society that has the potential requirements to be a great nation in the committee of developed countries. Thus, Civic Education will equip the citizens to deal with the national issues especially as it affects leadership, followership and effective utilization of resources for national development. Man’s influence on the environment cannot be underrated. This is because;
it has both positive and negative implications. The recent events in the country show that many Nigerians are ignorant of their civic responsibilities, thus they engage in anti-social and criminal activities like pipeline vandalism in the South-South and unlawful killing in Jos, Maiduguri in the central and Northern part of the country. All these activities are capable of threatening the corporate existence of the Nigerian society, politically and economically. Indeed, Nigerians need value re-orientation embedded in Civic Education for harmonious living in the society, protection of national resources and making vital contributions towards sustainable economic development.

In addition, culture of perseverance, co-operation, tolerance, trustworthiness and high social responsibility are the basic requirement to create enabling situation for good governance on which economic development is hinged. Similarly, Amy in Oladiti (2010) opined that this subject area is capable of preparing people of a country especially the young to carry out their roles as citizens. Civic Education makes the citizens to be vigilant, law abiding and imbibe national consciousness as necessary impetus for a sustainable economic development. Since the core value of Civic Education according to Green in Oladiti (2010) is “critical citizenry”, it inculcates into the young ones virtues needed to be functional citizens. In support of this, Adebisi (2010) stated that there is no more important task than the development of an informed, effective and responsible citizenry. Sustainable economic development therefore, sufficiently lies on the level of patriotism among the citizens. Therefore, the overall goal of Civic Education is to create enabling environment for socio-economic and political survival of the people as well as effective political system.

Conclusion
Civic Education without any doubt, is an instrument for positive change of attitude that is capable of developing and sustaining a viable economy in Nigeria if properly implemented in our school system. To bring about informed and responsible citizens for economic development, government must invest massively on education sector for change of attitudes in the best interest of all.

Recommendations
From the above discussions, the following recommendations are made for proper dissemination of the Curriculum of Civic Education in our schools:

- Government should abide by the UNESCO decision of 26% budgetary allocation to education sector;
- employment of qualified Social Studies teachers to teach the curriculum of Civic Education;
- Government should provide adequate instructional resources and other facilities in the schools to facilitate effective teaching and learning of Civic Education.
References


