
**DEVELOPING CIVIC SKILLS AMONG SOCIAL STUDIES
UNDERGRADUATES IN NIGERIA UNIVERSITIES**

Idayat N. **BALOGUN**
*Department of Social Sciences Education
University of Ilorin Nigeria*

Abstract

Youths' possession of a minimum civic skill can increase their mindset for the common good in society. This study examined the categories of civic skills being developed among undergraduates in a University in Nigeria. A descriptive research design is being adopted for this study. A university in North-central Nigeria was used for this study. All undergraduate Social Studies students in the selected University were the population of the study. A sample of 326 undergraduate Social Studies was selected using purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The study data were collected using Researchers'-constructed Civic Skills Scale (CSS). The content validity of the Instruments by the Social Studies and test and measurement experts shows that the functionality of items of CSS was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha with the reliability value of 0.84. The data were analysed using rank order and independent t-test. The results show that the undergraduate mean scores on civic skills (96.7); (80.2%) descriptive analysis indicated that undergraduate possessed high level of civic skills. There is no statistically significant difference between the ranking of civic skills of undergraduates based on programme and status of studies. It was recommended

among others that, there is a need to pay more attention to developing civic skills in undergraduates in a practical way.

Keywords: Undergraduates, Social Studies, Civic Skills, Nigeria, University.

Introduction

Equipping students with a variety of skills for the betterment of themselves, others, and society can best be developed and promoted during the tertiary level of education. At this level, students should be equipped with the necessities to contribute to their community; see to workings of their community; able to choose those who make decisions on their behalf as citizens, and so on. All these became imperative to incorporate service-learning into tertiary education courses to link what is learned with serviceability. Students who are privileged to study Social Studies are prepared to incline to certain skills as they inquire about society. Nevertheless, civic skills depict 'know-how' meaning what students should be able to do mentally and physically (Fine, et al., 2007). These skills are required by citizens for the improvement of the communities. Therefore, citizenship skills should be taught systematically in an explicit manner at every level of education. It is expected that these skills will be taught through specific school subjects and courses. These are the social sciences-related subjects, specifically Social Studies and other civic-related subjects. These skills could also be integrated into general courses at the tertiary level. Students are to be provided with opportunities to practice the skills being developed in them during the teaching and learning process in the class. It could avail the students to bear in mind how to make contributions to achieve better leadership, thereby promoting a democratic way of life in them. A study posited that students who engage in service learning tend to have benefited from the knowledge of civic connection than non-service students (Kelly, 2008; Prentice & Robinson, 2010). This implies that the civic learning of students became an essential step in creating a functioning society. Studying Social Studies as coined out of Nigerian National document {Federal Republic of Nigeria-FRN (2013)}

provides for good citizenship; development of critical thinking; positive social attitudes; enlightened patriotism; applying necessary skills; and so on.

Many individuals and groups suggested that willingness to practice civic skills is as essential as content knowledge for effective citizenship. However, it appears that higher education is doing little on civic literacy in general, for instance, both university provosts and students have expressed their exaggerated views on the skills acquired by college graduates. They indicated that undergraduates learn very little during their university years, thereby rendering their civic literacy to be extremely low; presenting a university education not capable of exerting influence on engaging undergraduates and graduates in the political process beyond voting (Hamilton, 2015).

The consequence of unequal civic learning experiences leads to a lack of civic skills on the part of disadvantaged students. Many researchers agreed that those individuals with well-developed civic skills are likely to be active participants in their communities; therefore, developing civic skills is important (Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2017). Social Studies as a school programme have a critical role to play because developing civic skills is part of the basis of Social Studies courses as it is targeted at raising students who are informed while taking decisions. In essence, undergraduate students' acquisition of skills helps them make a deliberate contribution to society where they find themselves. For instance, Social Studies at the higher level is based on socio-cultural, political and economic cultivation of honesty, fair play, hard work, patriotism, ideas of dedication, discipline, respect for the rule of law, self-confidence and so on. Learners who are equipped with these are prone to develop possess leadership qualities to function reasonably.

Furthermore, some Social Studies courses at the university level aimed at cultivating the concepts of nationalism, patriotism, unity, and interdependence among the diverse group in Nigeria. These made the indicators of the conscious use of Social Studies as an element to accelerate the realization of nation-building in Nigeria. Thus, civic skills are being imparted through the instructions in Social Studies education programmes to contribute to national

development in Nigeria. Skills such as self-confidence, initiative, power of imagination, resourcefulness, respect for the right and differences of others and so on. These skills are taught consciously for students to internalize democratic values such as the dignity of labour, equity and justice for all, a sense of responsibility and so on. The B.Sc. (Ed.) and B.A. (Ed.) Degree programmes are designed based on the philosophy that the teacher is the mainstay of the educational enterprise, so they must be fully equipped mentally, physically and emotionally for their expected role in that capacity. The B.Sc. and B.A. (Ed.) Degree programmes in the Department of Social Sciences Education is a combined honours degree programme in teacher education where Social Studies is selected as one of the major subjects combined with Education, therefore education is the first major subject while Social Studies is the second major and teaching subject. What differentiates the B.Sc. and B.A. (Ed.) programmes is the areas where the students offer their minor courses, The B. Sc. Students minor in pure humanity courses while the B.A. minor in Art related courses. It must be noted that, students from other Departments in the Faculty of Education offer Social Studies as a minor course thereby serving as an avenue for them to acquire citizenship skills and values through the selected courses they minor from. Although, literature has established that developing civic skills is beyond a single course taken in school. Rather, it is a gradual development using classroom experiences and activities in students' unionism (Elvi & Alessandra, 2007). Studies have also revealed that skills that are needed for democratic life develops over time, which begins from the formative stages through maturity stage, for instance, Carretero, et al., (2016) recognized cognitive skills as the potentialities that equip citizens to analyze issues and sieve it to separate what is right from wrong from public issues. Stephanie (2011) posited that participatory and social skills enables the teachers and learners communicates how government operates, including what citizenship entails during the classroom instructional delivery.

Adebayo, et al., (2017) also corroborate the position put forward by the earlier authors on citizenship skills when they stated it as the ability to communicate and attentiveness, that is, the communica-

tion must be clear and polite to serve as a means by which information could be passed between individuals or groups which aim at getting to a level of agreement. Other scholars described these skills as necessary skills to think critically, to come up with a solution to a difficult issue; participatory skills, this type of skill refers to several abilities to work with others to change the existing order of things positively for the better. Participatory skills are the ability to speak openly on public issues, including proactive activities that can bring about positive changes as the need arise; therefore, acquiring communication skills became necessary for youths to function well in society; socioemotional skills (non-cognitive skills) and it refers to the carefulness of an individual in handling relationships among others to bring about harmonious peaceful co-existence that can translate to acceptable democratic culture (Fine, et al., 2007). All of these are being taught with the best pedagogical and instructional practices by Social Studies Lecturers at the University levels, including group assignments, project work, and written and oral presentations by the Social Studies undergraduates. This necessitates the reason for this study.

Objectives of the Study

The study examined the categories of civic skills that are being developed among undergraduates in a University in North-central Nigeria. In a specific term, this study investigated:

- i. the categories of civic skills being developed among undergraduates in the University of Ilorin;
- ii. whether there is a difference in the Civic skills of Social Studies undergraduates in a University in North-central Nigeria based on programme of studies; and
- iii. whether there is a difference in the Civic skills of Social Studies undergraduates in a University in North-central Nigeria based on the status of study.

Research Question

The only research question raised for the study is:

What are the categories of civic skills being developed among undergraduates in the University of Ilorin?

Hypotheses

The following Hypotheses were tested in the study:

H₀1: There is no significant difference in the civic skills being developed among Undergraduates based on the programme of study.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in the civic skills being developed among Undergraduates based on the status of study.

Methods

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study consisted of all undergraduates who offered Social Studies as major or elective course in the selected University. The research instrument which was an unstructured questionnaire were validated by experts in Evaluation Test and measurement and Social Studies specialists. The validated questionnaire was administered on an equivalent sample to 40 undergraduates who were not part of the study. The Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. The reliability value was 0.84 which indicates that the instrument is fit for the study. This is because, literature has established that alpha value close to 1.0 is considered as high internal consistency reliability but if less than 0.6 it is to be considered poor. Also, Cronbach alpha of 0.7 is an acceptable value and values above 0.8 are thought to be good (Ramraini & Siti, 2016). A total of 326 made up of 136 and 190 undergraduates who were majoring and minoring in Social Studies education in University of Ilorin were used as sample for the study adopting purposive and a simple random sampling method. The collected data were analysed using mean and independent t-tests.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the categories of civic skills being developed among undergraduates in the University of Ilorin?

Table 1: Mean value of Intellectual skills of Undergraduate Students

S/N	Items Measuring Intellectual Skills	Mean	Ranking
1	How often do you do the following: Give oral presentations in the class	2.99	6th
2	Discuss political issues	2.80	8th
3	Learn to support your opinions with facts	3.62	1st
4	Learn to analyse issues, and make a conclusion	3.12	10th
5	Separating fact from fiction to form an opinion	3.35	3rd
6	digesting the news involving political issues	2.73	9th
7	Critically examine information on issues	3.27	4th
8	Communicating orally to champion arguments	3.50	2nd
9	Exploring media platform to pass media content	2.93	7th
10	Give a significant meaning to patriotism as a concept	3.09	5th

Table 1 shows the mean values of the intellectual skills being developed among undergraduates in a University North-central Nigeria. The result indicates the order of the civic skills built in them due to what has been practised through the Social Studies courses and other related factors. This can be viewed in the table of the intellectual skills they often practised. Learning to support opinions with facts, communicating orally to champion arguments and Separating fact from fiction to form an opinion were having the highest mean values in that order.

Table 2: Mean value of Participatory skills of Undergraduate Students

S/N		Mean	Ranking
11	Handling conflict situation as a relationship issue	3.61	1st
12	Monitor government policies	2.69	9th
13	Influence decisions through voting	2.70	8th
14	Form part of a union to cooperate to achieve a purpose	2.87	7th
15	Participate in peaceful protest	2.44	10th
16	Contribute as a member of a voluntary organization	3.08	4th
17	Display democratic leadership	2.98	6th
18	Handle religious, gender, and ethnic differences	3.07	5th
19	Engage in community services	3.13	3rd
20	Engage in protecting the environment	3.30	2nd

The responses of the Social Studies Undergraduates on participatory skills show that resolving conflicts peacefully, engaging in community services and protecting the environment better than other items of measuring their civic skills, as indicated in Table 2 as they were rated 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively. This means Undergraduates often engaged in these items more than other items.

Table 3: Mean value of Socio-Emotional skills of Undergraduates

S/N	Items on Measuring Socio-Emotional Skills	Mean	Ranking
21	Actively listen to points of view that are different from my own	3.72	2nd
22	Find common ground with people who disagree with me	3.21	9th
23	Working with other students with whom I have a disagreement	2.95	10th
24	Ready to accept responsibilities	3.71	3rd
25	Punctuality in any form of work	3.69	4th
26	Patient with others	3.75	1st
27	Understand body language	3.61	6th
28	Confidence in the ability of others	3.37	8th
29	Embracing changes	3.64	5th
30	Admitting limitations	3.53	7th

Table 3 shows the mean values of Socio-emotional skills of Social Studies Undergraduates. The result indicates that patients with others; actively listening to points of view other than their own and readiness to accept responsibilities have the highest mean values respectively.

Hypothesis 1

H₀ 1: There is no significant difference in the civic skills of Social Studies Undergraduates based on the programme of study.

Table 4: Analysis of the difference in the civic skills of Social Studies Undergraduates based on the programme of study

Programme of Study	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig	Remark
B.A.(Ed.)	191	97.2199	9.6072				
				1.763	324	.079	NS
B.SC.(Ed.)	135	95.2889	9.9242				

The analysis of civic skills in reference to programme of study of Social Studies undergraduates appear in Table 4. Those who offers Education and Social Studies based on B.Sc (Ed.) and B. A. (Ed.) programmes has a t-value of 1.76 at 0.05 alpha level and sig-value (.079 > 0.05). This means that the statement of hypothesis one in this study is retained. That is no significant difference existed in the civic skills of Social Studies undergraduates based on the programme of study. In other word the civic skills being developed in B.sc (Ed) and B. A. (Ed.) Social Studies undergraduates are alike.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the civic skills of Social Studies Undergraduates based on the status of study

Table 5: Analysis on the civic skills of Social Studies Undergraduates based on the status of study

Status of Study	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig	Remark
Major	136	98.0588	8.67330				
				2.584	324	.010	NS
Minor	190	95.2474	10.35031				

The analysis of the difference in the civic skills of Social Studies undergraduates appear in Table 5. The report shows no statistical difference in the civic skills of Undergraduates who offers Social Studies as major or minor course, therefore has a t-value of 2.58 at

0.05 alpha level. sig-value (.010 > 0.05). This implies that the statement of the hypothesis two in this study is retained. This means offering Social Studies as major or minor course has no direct influence on the rated items of civic skills of the undergraduate students.

Discussions

The analysis of this study examines how the civic skills develops in Social Studies Undergraduates, using three categories of civic skills, the study reports the high level of civic skills of undergraduate students. This shows in the mean values of all the items measuring intellectual, participatory and socio-emotional skills as none has less than the threshold of 2.50. This means Nigerian undergraduates possess intellectual, participatory and socio-emotional capabilities to contribute to finding solutions to societal problems in Nigeria (Adebayo, et al., 2017). This result indicates the opinion of Torney-Purta & Wilkenfeld (2009) that undergraduates have been equipped sufficiently to express themselves on any societal issues. Also, The responses of the Social Studies Undergraduates on participatory skills show that they have been peacefully resolving conflicts, engaging in community services and protecting the environment better than other items of measuring their civic skills, The mean values of the highest rated responses are not surprising because the Social Studies Undergraduates have been exposed to the opportunities for learning experiences of the three items directly, so it is expected of them to engage in practical demonstration of those items of measuring participatory skills. For instance, in SSE 212 (Social Studies Education and Patterns of Nation-Building), a 200-level course, Undergraduates have been taught passionately that conflict is inevitable and is not necessarily negative but a by-product of social change which may lead to constructive transformation. Also, there are many ways they have been engaged in community services during the lecture, in the department and at the faculty level, all these took place in the immediate community where they acquired the skills, while the meaning and scope of Social Studies have communicated to them that they have responsibilities to their social, political,

physical, and economic environment and the rest. Researchers agreed that those individuals with well-developed civic skills are likely to be active participants in their communities; therefore, developing civic skills is important (Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2017).

Also, the study found that being patient with others; actively listening to points of view other than their own and readiness to accept responsibilities have the highest mean values respectively. This demonstrates the strength they have probably garnered from dynamic content in various courses they have been exposed to. For instance, cooperation is one of the contents of Social Studies that the respondents have been exposed to and on several occasions, these set of respondents have been contributing to the political analysis of events as they unfold in Nigeria where in the end, they demonstrate different opinion and conclusion were drawn. Also, they have been assigned the responsibilities of searching for a better lecture venue other than the one officially assigned, and many other deliberate actions from the lecturers to test the undergraduates' reactions collectively or individually. This finding is not in agreement with that of (Hamilton, 2015) who reported that undergraduates learn very little during their university years, thereby rendering their civic literacy to be extremely low; presenting a university education not capable of exerting influence on engaging undergraduates and graduates in the political process beyond voting. The finding of the study has shown that, University and University education is the right place and level to develop civic skills in students.

In addition, there is no statistically significant difference among undergraduates offering Social Studies as major or minor course and the nomenclature of the degree being pursued in the way civic skills is being developed among the undergraduate in the university. This means the department where B.A. and B.Sc. Social Studies undergraduates offered their minor courses perhaps contributed to their level of civic skills. Also, the level of civic skills of Undergraduates who offered Social Studies as a major and minor course is high, this implies that they all benefited sufficiently from the civic instructions in Social Studies class. The findings of this study generally support the statements of the two hypotheses tested in this study.

Conclusion

It could be concluded from the discussion of the revelation of this study that the intended outcome of this study was archived to an extent, it is believed that public schooling through university education can contribute significantly to the development of civic skills of undergraduates even if there are other contributory factors. Also, the result of this study has shown that Undergraduates who have acquired relevant skills are potential groups that can be targeted to give opportunities to use their civic skills to engage in civic responsibilities to provide solutions to societal challenges as the case may be.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that, Social Studies programmes should be directed at assisting undergraduates' acquisition of civic skills, there is a need to pay more attention to developing these skills in learners and strengthen the practicability in every activity within the university to replicate the same in the future, this can contribute meaningfully to the progress of building the nation.

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