



STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF POLITICAL EDUCATION CONCEPTS IN SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM AS A DETERMINANT OF THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN EDO STATE

Uzamere Rasak Okunzuwa (PhD)

Department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology, University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria.

E-mail: rasakuzamere17@gmail.com

GSM: +234-8135821210

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated the knowledge of concepts of political education in the Social Studies curriculum on students' knowledge and attitude to political participation in Edo State. Over time, there has been expressed dissatisfaction by the Edo people that the government officials and representatives do not reflect public choice. There are also situations where individuals show up for voters' registration and still fail to vote when the time comes. Nigeria has continuously been plagued by election malpractices and a whole lot of electoral misconducts which gives the impression that Social Studies education has not made a remarkable impact. The purpose of this study is to examine if the knowledge of the concepts of political education in the Social Studies curriculum can influence students' knowledge and attitude to political participation in Edo State. Four research questions were raised to guide the study and two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design while the population comprised all JSS I-III students from the public Junior Secondary Schools in the seven (7) local government areas in Edo South senatorial district. The Edo South senatorial district has a total of one hundred and thirty-eight (138) public Junior Secondary Schools with a population of seventy-four thousand, four hundred and forty (74,440) Junior Secondary School students. The multi-stage sampling procedure was used to draw a sample size of eight hundred and forty (840) students used for the study. The instrument for data collection was an achievement test titled, "Knowledge of Political Education Test (KPET). Its reliability was ascertained using the Kuder- Richardson 20 and it gave a value of 0.95. The data obtained were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation. The findings from the study indicated that political education has the capacity of influencing students' attitude toward voters' registration and the voting exercises. It also revealed that political education can significantly influence the attitude of students towards the rule of law, electoral process and political participation. Based on the above findings, it was recommended that Social Studies curriculum content be broadened to address the issues of political education.*

KEYWORDS: *Political education, knowledge, political participation, curriculum.*



INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has witnessed a prevalence of military rule as well as an independent struggle by the Eastern region, which led to a civil war. The country has equally been torn between powerful military power holders of Northern Nigerian extraction and civil right activists of Western extractions agitating over the June 12 annulled presidential election. One would have expected that the advent of democracy in May 1999 would eradicate political and social conflicts, corruption, disrespect to elders and the rule of law, indiscipline and misuse of political power. Despite the Federal Government's efforts to combat political conflicts and violence, ethnic loyalty at the expense of national unity and disrespect to the rule of law, past and present Nigerian Government have been unable to solve this issue through policy actions. Nigeria being a multi-ethnic and multi-political country, the occurrence of ethno-political conflicts are expected, a more and concerned effort is needed to guarantee continuity and harmony in the society. Using the curriculum process could be a better option because of its potential to the young before they are corrupted. To this end, restructuring of the curriculum for Social Studies content at the junior secondary level in line with the prevailing political and social problems in the country would have served a better purpose. Social Studies is a problem-solving discipline. It is designed to assist man proffer solutions to problems whether political, psychological, cultural, geographical, historical and sociological (Inkoba & Kumokor, 2011). Opoh, Sunday and Ogbaji (2014) asserted that the purpose of Social Studies curriculum design meant to build a sound and balanced mind, which is fundamental for functional political and social education intended to develop knowledgeable, responsible and self-directing citizens.

Over the years that Social Studies has been taught in Nigerian schools, most of the teachers have presented the subject curriculum in excessively and avidly academic manner at the expense of political, social, moral and personal value. The academic approach makes the learning challenging to the negligence of the political culture. Okwuosa (1992) noted that the emphasis of the Social Studies curriculum has been on knowledge acquisition and excludes the opportunity to help learners imbibe political, moral as well as social skills. A close look at the scheme of work for the Junior Secondary Schools in Edo State, Social Studies, Volume III, shows that, out of about eighty-one (81) concepts contained in it, sixty percent of the content is on the physical environment, thirty percent on the social environment while the remaining ten percent is on political education concepts. The themes that make up the ten percent are: Civic right and responsibility, responsibilities and attitude to work, citizenship and functions of the Nigerian passport, national anthem, the national passport, leadership, followership, consequences of not fulfilling obligations, the role of communication in Nigeria's economic and political life, the role of the individual in social institutions and other types of institutions.

This observed short-fall on the part of the subject may be responsible for the subject failure in realizing its objectives with regard to civic and citizenship matters and hence, the Nigerian youths still indulge in different forms of unending anti-social behaviours including political unrest and violence which have today marred democratic processes in Nigeria. Now that Nigeria is under democratic rule, there is a need to restructure the Social Studies curriculum to reflect extensively on political participation through political education in Nigeria.

Political participation in democratic governance, according to Linz and Gunther (2004) as noted by Ejere (1998), is to enable the governed to make necessary input into the governmental process. Political participation provides the citizenry the opportunity to have a say in the determination of societal affairs and making the political leadership responsible to his followers



in the conduct of governmental affairs. Politics is an important and inalienable part of man's existence. It is concerned with power, rule or authority. However, the level of Nigerian's participation in political activities is low to the extent that it results in a low political culture, frustration and political instability. Education and politics are mutually reinforcing. Thus, in order to rearrange the national scale of preference, the Robinson Report of Britain (1963) opined that political education is not just a condition for realizing our material position but an essential condition for realizing in the modern age, the ideals of a free and democratic society. To Ejere (1998), political education tends to champion a feeling of political awareness, civil obligation as well as increase the likelihood of exposure to political information and provide stimuli to political participation.

The intensity of political participation varies from one individual to another and from country to country and is largely a function of political education. Hence, Yesufu (2013) argues inter-alia that the role of political education is to understand, control, alter and redesign the human environment in its widest sense, to the end of achieving a better life. Political education represents a mechanism for enunciating policies for the orderly conduct of the society. Citizens' participation in the affairs of their community goes beyond a mere involvement in their affairs; it also requires democratic participation which understandably comes handy with political education.

Also contributing, Ikelegbe (2005) opined that the citizens' political activities, as a group or individuals are meant to determine the political process. He added that political participation connotes citizens' definite involvement in a direct or indirect manner, directions and governance style, or more specifically as the political process output or outcomes. Political participation can also be taken to mean the process by which the electorates take part in making the basic decisions as to what the community's shared goals are, as well as to the most appropriate means of attaining them.

Nigerians need to have a proper grasp of the concept of democracy. This will provide guidance and direction for their conduct of civic duties, which are necessary for active participation in democratic activities. Based on this, the National Orientation Agency (2006) posits that for the sustenance of democracy, citizens need to possess the essential skills, showcase values and demonstrate the behaviour that reflect democracy. Democracy is imbibed and preserved solely if the minds and actions of citizens are enshrined with values of democracy. Idada and Uhumwangho (2012) proposed that "at the level of students, it is a requirement to have behaviours supportive of democratic consolidation." Thus, it is important for students of Social Studies to acquire attitudes essential for Nigerians to participate in democracy.

Citizens' decision to partake or not in democracy is dependent on their level of awareness, adherence and internalization of political education concepts and polity in general. On the flip side, this is defined by the attributes of political culture, civic education as well as the society in perspective political experience. The poor growth in attitude of democracy is a main problem which has marred Nigeria's democratic consolidation (Ojo, 2014). The preparedness that results in the ethos of democracy are learned by means of political education and not inherited genetically. It is expected that every student of Social Studies in the society learns civic proofs, explores ideas of democracy as well as connects these ideas to citizenship responsibility. Therefore, Social Studies as a field of study is most crucial in facilitating this learning and sustaining democratic ethos.



Political education is the knowledge which makes every individual to comprehensively participate in a proper democracy (The Institute for Democratic Education in America, 2005). Basically, it is meant to equip persons in making genuine choices about basic aspects of their lives. Also contributing, Bach (2007) defines political education as a collaborative process between students and teachers towards ensuring improvement in their society. The aim of political education is the empowerment of the citizens to be autonomous as well as to be responsible members of their community and the larger world. It helps individuals and communities to find their bases.

The focus of political education is to produce leaders who would have become united during their school days and transform such relationships into political coalitions with a view to moving the country forward. Nigeria is characterized by diverse cultural values, which therefore means that political education is germane for both the sociocultural and political stability of the society. If citizens are deprived of access to political education in a society, such society is bound to fail politically. To Fischer (2002), politics and democracy must be learnt if we desire a good and peaceful nation. He described political education as the process whereby young persons are prepared for the social and political world, and schools of today, families, religious and other institutions of socialization must take the concerns that necessitated it in other political communities of the past very seriously.

Corroborating the above assertions, the National Orientation Agency (2006) asserted that the success of democracy requires active and not passive citizens. This is based on the fact it is their collective responsibility if the government succeeds or fails. Citizens should ensure that the government is shaped by them through political education. In Nigeria, citizens as individuals, groups or by different civil organizations can be involved or mobilized in citizenship and governance. They can join political parties and contest for elective positions so as to have the capacity to influence policies and programmes of government.

Many studies have been carried out on political education and democratic values. For example, Iyoha, Aghayere and Oviasuyi (2003) carried out a study in Edo State to establish if the youths form the bulk among the Nigerian citizens and if they are the group making the country's decision. The finding of the study revealed that the youths form the bulk of the citizens in Nigeria and that they are the decision-making group in the country. Also, Abba and Imam (2016) reported that violence is often instigated and executed by the youths. They are active participants in antisocial and destructive behaviours which include demonstration, fighting between and among political parties, and other forms of violence that are politically orchestrated, ritual killings, kidnapping and hostage taking, arson and cult violence.

On their part, Owede, Ayakeme and Arunah (2016) assessed faith-based youth organizations' level of political participation in Bayelsa State using a sample of 150 and reported that generally, the degree of political participation by members of the Anglican Youth Fellowship (AYF), Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON) and Baptist Youth Fellowship (BYF) within Yenagoa metropolis was very low. Adejumobi (2007) carried out research work on political education in Ogun State. He concluded that for over ten years that Nigeria has started experiencing political rebirth, the project of democracy still seems elusive or in crises in large parts of Nigeria. He came up to conclude that, gradually, there is an indication of a steady, but unpalatable re-institutionalization of regimes marked with autocratic and authoritarian outlook disguised as democracy.



Rokeach (2011), on political education carried out in Lagos, noted that political education was the kennel of accountability in politics and a medium which ensures reciprocity and change between government and the people. The extent of power concert authority gets from being elected, the more efficient they would be in the utilization of scarce resources. Falade and Orungbemi (2010) also carried out a study on political education and voting in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State of Nigeria using a sample of four thousand voters, and noted that political education connotes the right grooming of young persons to assume roles and responsibilities when they come of age. It is the implanting of the morals, skills and competence needed for participation in political activities and it has moral primacy over other purposes of public education in a democratic society. They however concluded that in a society where democracy is practiced, political education grooms the citizen to be fully active.

In another development, Falade (2007) carried out a study work on political education in Ondo State using a sample of 900 and it was a correlational study; he concluded that successful school outcome entails not just students obtaining high grades but on the quality of their thought process and value. It equally entails the level of their analytic and critical reasoning and the manner they interrogate and reflect.

According to the findings of Agu, Okeke and Idike (2013) in the South Eastern part of Nigeria on the attitudes of Nigerians toward voting, the result of low turnout during voting was based on some factors. Four main factors relating to voters' apathy were studied which are: (a) incompetence of INEC (b) the political environment (c) unemployment and (d) electoral violence. In another development, Akpekpe and Ejere (2001) carried out a study in Benin Metropolis titled, Education and Political Participation: A Correlational Study, and found that many educated persons stand aloof from active politics because of the defects in the political institutions, structures, personnel and processes which pave way for rigging, blackmail, hooliganism and thuggery; they therefore suggested ways that could make active participation in politics attractive to all, particularly the educated.

Statement of the Problem

Experience has shown that the level of internalization of democratic concepts in Social Studies education by many Edo indigenes during and after election is uncertain. This has an implication on the Social Studies curriculum, democracy and the entire nation Nigeria.

Overtime, there have been expressed dissatisfaction by the people and complaints that the government officials and representatives do not reflect the public's choice. There are also situations where individuals show up for voters' registration and still fail to vote when the time comes. Nigeria has continuously been plagued by election malpractices and a whole lot of electoral misconduct which gives the impression that Social Studies education was not alive to its responsibilities.

Hence, apprehension arises whenever one assesses the undemocratic attitude, uncivil behavior prevalent among many Nigerians especially students, and ultimately the exhibition of inappropriate attitudes like rigging of election, kidnapping, sponsorship or writing of defaming publications, destruction of campaign materials of opposing parties and political opponents, joining cult groups which would function as kin-pins of party, and so forth. The end result of the above stated vices had been ineffective governance, increased election litigation, poor basic infrastructure, increased unemployment and under-development. This is why knowledge



acquisition of concepts of political education in Social Studies is important to help resolve all these anti-social vices that have marred the democratic practices and discouraged political participation among many Nigerians. The concern therefore is on how the influence of knowledge in political education can influence political participation.

Rationale for the Study

The study is important because its results could provide an empirical basis for the development and improvement of the Nigerian political systems in general and Edo State in particular. The findings from this study will provide a basis to improve and to develop appropriate political values that will lead to the development of appropriate political attitude in students.

This study's outcome would also benefit immensely political parties, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), State's Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC), election administrators and the government in general. It would serve as a guide to INEC, election administrators and policy makers to come up with policies that will improve the entire electoral process in Nigeria. The study would be beneficial to researchers and also provide clues to further research in the future.

Research Questions

The following research questions were advanced to guide the study:

1. What is the pattern of achievement of the Junior Secondary School students on political education concepts?
2. What is the mean score of the attitude of Junior Secondary School students towards political participation?
3. What is the relationship between students' knowledge of political education concept in Social Studies and their attitude towards voters' registration exercise in Edo State?
4. What is the relationship between students' knowledge of political education concepts in Social Studies and their attitude towards voting?

Hypotheses

To further guide the study, research questions 3 and 4 were hypothesized:

1. The knowledge of political education will not correlate significantly with the attitude of students towards voters' registration exercise.
2. The knowledge of political education concepts in Social Studies curriculum will not correlate significantly with the attitude of the Junior Secondary School students.



METHODS

The survey research design was adopted for the study. Its population is made up of all the JSS I-III students in the public junior secondary schools in Edo South senatorial district of Edo State. The Edo South senatorial district is made up of seven (7) local government areas and has a total number of one hundred and thirty-eight (138) public junior secondary schools with a total population of seventy-four thousand, four hundred and forty (74,440) junior secondary school students. The multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted to get the sample size of eight hundred and forty (840) students used for the study.

Data were collected using an achievement test titled, “Knowledge of Political Education Test (KPET)” which was developed by the researcher and administered to the students in order to assess their knowledge of political education concepts in the Social Studies curriculum on attitude to political participation in Edo State. The achievement test was made up of 25 items. The development of the items was based on the political concepts in the JS I-III Social Studies curriculum in Edo State. The achievement test was a multiple-choice type with five options. The achievement test was validated by two experts in curriculum and instructional technology as well as a teacher of Social Studies in one of the public junior secondary schools in Benin City.

Thirty copies of the instrument were administered to students outside the sampled schools. The Kuder-Richardson formula 20 was used, and it gave an index of 0.95. This indicated that the instrument was reliable. The achievement test was conducted by the researcher and his assistants. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to analyse the data. The benchmark mean was set at 2.50; any mean above 2.5 indicated a positive response while any below 2.5 indicated a negative response.

RESULTS

Research Question One

What is the pattern of achievement of the junior secondary school students on political education concept?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Political Education knowledge

Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	686	81.66%
Moderate	140	16.67%
Low	14	01.67%
Total	840	100%

Key: 0-8 – Low, 9-17 – Moderate, 18-25 - High



Table 1 shows 81.66%, 16.67% and 01.67% for high, moderate and low levels of political education knowledge respectively. This implies that the junior secondary school students in Edo State have knowledge of political education.

Research Question Two

What is the attitude of junior secondary school students towards political participation in Edo State?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Attitude of Students towards Political Participation

S/N	Statement	N	Mean	Cut Off Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1.	I like to take part in discussions.	840	2.97	(2.50)	.875	Positive
2.	I am always interested in new political developments.	840	2.97	(2.50)	.868	Positive
3.	I often show interest in legislative activities.	840	2.91	(2.50)	.869	Positive
4.	The national legislators are not truly representing the constituencies; therefore, I care less about political participation.	840	2.83	(2.50)	.998	Positive
5.	Most political leaders are not responsive to the needs of our rural people and so, I often abstain from voting for them.	840	2.95	(2.50)	.958	Positive
6.	I pay deaf ear to most politicians because of their neglect for our rural area.	840	3.04	(2.50)	.963	Positive
	Cluster	840	17.70	(2.50)	3.18	Positive

Table 2 shows 6 items related to the attitude of junior secondary school students towards political participation. The table reveals a mean level higher than 2.50. The cluster mean of 17.70 is higher than the table value mean which is 2.50. This indicated that the junior secondary school students have a positive attitude towards political participation.

Hypothesis One

Knowledge of political education concepts in the Social Studies curriculum will not correlate significantly with the attitude of the junior secondary school students towards the voters registration exercise in Edo State.



Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Political Education and Attitude of Students towards Voters' Registration

	N	'r'	Sig. (2-tailed)
Knowledge of Political Education: Attitude towards Voters' Registration	840	.097	.001

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 3 shows a calculated r-value of .097 and a p-value of .001. Testing at an alpha level of .05, the p-value is less than the alpha level, so the null hypothesis which states that the knowledge of political education will not significantly influence the attitude of students towards the voters' registration exercise is rejected. Consequently, political education significantly influences students' attitude towards the voters' registration exercise.

Hypothesis Two

Knowledge of political education concepts in Social Studies will not correlate significantly with the attitude of students towards voting exercise in Edo State.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment correlation of Political Education and Attitude of Students towards Voting Exercise

	N	'r'	Sig. (2-tailed)
Knowledge of Political Education: Attitude towards Voting	840	.133	.000

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 4 shows a calculated 'r' of .133 and a p-value of .000, testing at an alpha level of .05. Since the p-value is less than the alpha level, the null hypothesis which states that knowledge of political education will not significantly influence the attitude of students towards voting exercise is rejected. Consequently, political education significantly influences the attitude of students towards voting exercise.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of research question one shows that the junior secondary school students in Edo State have knowledge of political education. This could be due to the non-transfer of knowledge gained in Social Studies classes outside the school system. Also, the political concepts in the Social Studies curriculum at the junior secondary school level are not enough to match and prepare the young ones against the political problems which are prevalent in the Nigerian political situation; hence, Adejumobi (2007) noted that the main victims in democracy are elections and the electoral process. The precepts, structure and process of election are usually confronted by insane manipulations, politics of brinkmanship and subversion. Thus, elections, which are the means of political change and conferring legitimacy on democratic government, are highly compromised. Supporting the above idea, Falade (2007) also noted that political education and democratic culture among Nigerians is poor due to schooling,



stressing more on education for jobs; hence, he concluded that education for democratic culture essentially must rise above functional and vocational based perspective of school (education for jobs) to that of the traditional model, whereby schooling is for pedagogical transformation.

The finding of research question two reveals that the attitude of students towards political participation in Edo State is positive. This disagrees with the work of Akpekpe and Ejere (2001) in their study titled, *Education and Political Participation: A Correlational Study*; they discovered that many educated persons stand aloof from active politics because of the defects in the political institutions, structures, personnel and processes which pave way for rigging, blackmail, hooliganism and thuggery, and therefore suggested ways that could make active participation in politics attractive to all, particularly the educated.

The finding shows that political education was capable of influencing students' attitude towards the voters' registration exercise. This is in agreement with Falade and Orungbemi (2010) who carried out a study on political education and voters' registration exercise in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State of Nigeria and noted that voter's registration is the appropriate means of preparing young persons for future roles and responsibilities. They see political education and voters' registration as the implanting of the morals, skills and competence needed for participation in political activities which has moral primacy over other purposes of public education in a democratic society. They however concluded that voters' registration in a democratic society prepares citizens to participate fully in a democracy in the society. It is pertinent that voters' registration is one of the most effective means of preparing people for true democracy. Also contributing, Agu, Okeke and Idike (2003) noted that voters' registration period is the period when all Nigerians equip themselves with the prerequisite to determine their democratic leader. Hence, all Nigerians must be made to be educated and this remains of importance to voters' registration in a democracy. It is the right of all citizens who are eligible to actively participate in the government's affairs. It provides them with the ability to decide who leads them for a tenure as well as to check corrupt practices. Ojo (2009) supported the views noted above and added that it is expected that INEC should help to checkmate fictitious and multiple registrations, thereby ensuring that the democratic principle which gives an individual only one vote in an election is safeguarded.

Hypothesis two showed that political education significantly influences the attitude of students toward voting exercise. This is in agreement with the findings of Agu, Okeke and Idike (2013) on the attitude of Nigerians toward voting and the result of low turnout during voting was based on some factors. Four main factors relating to voters' apathy were studied, which are: (a) incompetence of INEC (b) the political environment (c) unemployment and (d) electoral violence.

Also commenting on the voting exercise, Richard (1998) wrote that political education is the kernel of accountability in politics and a medium which ensures reciprocity and change between government and the people. She concluded that almost all citizens voting right, and many the right to vie for public offices in an election. The researcher is in support of the view that political education can significantly influence the attitude of students towards voting exercise. With political education concepts being taught in Social Studies, it will help to build in the students' appropriate values that will help to improve our voting pattern and ensure good democratic principles, and through this, political apathy will be minimized.



CONCLUSION

On the basis of the research findings, the researcher concludes as follows: that the students of the junior secondary schools in Edo State have knowledge of political education and this knowledge of political education can be further enhanced for better efficiency and participation when more political concepts are incorporated into the Social Studies curriculum. The study also revealed that junior secondary school students have a positive attitude towards political participation and that they can do better when abreast with political education concepts through Social Studies curriculum at their youthful age. The study further showed that political education concepts in Social Studies curriculum can significantly influence students' attitude towards the voters' registration exercise and voting when they are taught political education concepts in the junior secondary schools. This study also established that political education concepts in Social Studies curriculum are capable of influencing students' attitude towards the rule of law.

The study also revealed that political education concepts in Social Studies curriculum can influence students' attitude towards the electoral process as they will be guided by the rules and regulations of the electoral processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are advanced as a fall out of the research findings:

1. There will be the need for more political education concepts in the Social Studies curriculum as it will help a long way in refining the students when they are of age to actively participate in political activities.
2. Introducing more political concepts in the Social Studies curriculum at the secondary school level will help to increase and prepare the students for greater political participation in the state.
3. Additional political concepts in Social Studies will help to sensitize the students politically and encourage their attitude towards voters' registration.
4. The inclusion of more political education concepts will help to improve and eliminate apathy in students when they are of voting age.

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