

**THE USE OF CONTEXTUAL AND SERVICE LEARNING STRATEGIES  
IN ENHANCING CIVIC KNOWLEDGE OF JUNIOR SECONDARY  
SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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**Abstract**

Civic Education was introduced to Nigerian basic and senior secondary education level in order to equip the young Nigerians with necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to be effective, active and functional in the society. Despite this, there still exists a decline in expected civic and social roles among the youth; and this has been partly attributed to the use of teacher-centred instructional strategies in the teaching of the civic education, the consequence inability of the students to make connections, between what they have learnt and its application within the society. This study, therefore, determined the effects of Contextual Learning Strategy (CLS) and Service Learning Strategy (SLS) on civic knowledge of junior secondary school (JSS) students in Ijebuland, Nigerian. 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

JS 1,three each were purposively selected from Ijebu-Ode and Ijebu North East local government area. Treatment lasted 12 weeks . Civic knowledge scale (KR = 690) and Instructional Guide for each of the strategies were the instruments used for the study. Data were analyzed using Analysis of Covariance, and Scheffe Post-hoc-test at 0.05 level of significance. Treatment had a significant main effect on students' civic knowledge ( $F_{(2,524)} = 58.08$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $C^2 = 18$ ). Contextual and service learning strategies enhanced civic knowledge of junior secondary school students in Ijebuland, Nigeria. Both strategies are recommended for use in the teaching of civic education to promote civic knowledge of students.

**Keyword:** Civic knowledge, Contextual learning and Service learning strategies, junior secondary school student.

## **Introduction**

The success of any democratic society is built on the citizens that is civically informed and engaged. Civically informed citizens enjoy economic well-being of the society and the psychological well being of its members (Coley and Sum, 2012). Despite the obvious importance of civic knowledge, many reports express concern about its level; in particular, adolescences' and young adult's knowledge of and engagement in the civic process are below desirable levels (Galston, 2001). The of knowledge by the citizens has been a concern to many. Robelen (2011) noted that the habits of citizenship must be learned, and this could be achieved through the teaching and learning of civic education concepts; but this been neglected and the results are predictably dismal.

Civic knowledge refers to citizens' understanding of the working of the political system and of their own political and civic rights and responsibilities such as the rights to freedom of expression and to vote and run for public office, and the

responsibilities to respect the rule of law and the rights and interests of others. It also means citizens' understanding of their political and civic rights, social and economic rights as well as citizens' understanding of their roles, rights and responsibilities (Debbie and Stacey –Anne, 2016).

Civic knowledge refers to citizens' understanding of the workings of the political system and of their own political and civic rights and responsibilities (e.g. the rights to freedom of expression and to vote and run for public office, and the responsibilities to respect the rule of law and the rights and interests of others) (Johnson and Morris, 2010). According to Bechtel and Foundation (2013), civic knowledge includes both core knowledge and the ability to apply knowledge to different circumstances and settings. Bechtel and Foundations further expatiate that civic knowledge is the following:

- Key historical periods, episodes, cases, themes, and experiences of individuals and groups in the history of his country.
- Principles, documents, and ideas essential to constitutional democracy.
- Relationship between historical documents, principles, and episodes and contemporary issues.
- Structures, processes, and functions of government; powers political change.
- Mechanisms and structure of the U.S legal system
- Relationship between government and other sectors
- Political and civic heroes
- Social and political networks for making change
- Social movements and struggles, particularly those that address issues as yet unresolved
- Structural analysis of social problems and systemic solutions to making change.

Civic knowledge can be acquired through the teaching of civic education. Civic knowledge may not be developed unaided or without active stimulation, they have to be learned. While a certain amount of citizenship may be picked up through ordinary experience in the home or neighborhood, it can never in itself be sufficient to equip citizens for the sort of active role required of them in today's complex and diverse society.

Meanwhile, Civic education is a subject through which we prepare young people with their roles as citizens by providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in the democratic process. Ajiboye (2008) defines Civic Education as an explicit and continuing study of the basic concepts and values underlying democratic community and constitutional order. Civic Education has been an important aspect of education that helps citizens to be functional and active by using their rights and discharging their responsibilities with necessary knowledge and skills (Adediran, 2015).

As a subject, Civic Education covers a wide range of issues and topics that impact on people's lives and daily living at all time. The subject teaches young people how to get the best out of their world. It teaches them to stand up for their rights and opinions and how to help others people do so. The main justification for teaching Civic Education according to Azebamwan (2010) derives from the very nature of our nascent and fledgling democracy. If citizens are to become genuinely involved in public life and affairs, a more explicit approach to the teaching of civic education is required.

## **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, junior and senior secondary levels of educations, there is still a deterioration of civic behavior among Nigerians, especially the youths, which indicates lack of civic knowledge. This had been partly attributed to the use of teacher centered instructional strategies in the teaching of the subject, the consequent inability of the student 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 civic attitude of the students. This study therefore, considered the effects of contextual and service learning strategies on civic knowledge of junior secondary school students in Ijebu land, Nigeria.

The study also examined the moderating effects of gender and school location on civic knowledge of the students. Gender to considered, here because of the differences in performance of males and females under difference teaching conditions have been a recurrent one. 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 factors, 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 area are usually at the advantage of having better learning facilities and infrastructure. Also, students schooling in the urban areas are likely to be more exposed to civic education concepts than those schooling in the peri—urban areas. It is also believed that those students in the urban areas are exposed to conducive environment while those in the peri-urban don't have the opportunities. Also many teachers would

prefer to teach in the urban areas to teaching in the peri-urban areas. Hence, it becomes imperative to investigate school location and gender as they affect civic attitude of junior secondary students.

### **Contextual and Service Learning Strategies**

Contextual and service learning strategies are based on the constructivist's instructional theory. Formalization of the theory of constructivism is generally attributed to Jean Piaget, who articulated mechanisms by which knowledge is internalized by learners. Constructivism is a theory of knowledge (epistemology) that argues that human generate knowledge and meaning from an interactive between their experiences and their ideas (Hein, 1991). Constructivism is a theory describing how learning happens, emphasizes that learners use their experiences to understand a teaching. The theory of constructivism suggests that learners construct knowledge out of their experiences. It maintains that learning is a process of constructing meaning from experience. Constructivism is often associated with pedagogic approaches that promotes active learning, or learning by doing. The central idea in constructivism is that human learning is constructed. This view of learning is participatory and sharply contrasts with one in which learning is the passive transmission of information from one individual to another (Piaget, 1973).

Contextual and service learning strategies in the teaching of civic education concepts for the enhancement of civic knowledge in student are developed based on constructivism philosophy assuming that knowledge is a result of human construction with objects, phenomenon, experience and environment .Knowledge is accepted to be true if knowledge could be useful in facing and solving the appropriate problem or phenomenon Glasserfeld (1996). Thus, the benefit of constructivism is that students learn more and enjoy learning when they are

actively involved. Education works best when it concentrates on thinking and understanding, rather than on rote memorization; and these are what contextual and service learning emphasize.

Blanchard (2001) and Bern and Brickson (2001) define contextual learning strategies 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 take place when teachers are able to construct meaning based on their own experiences (Imel, 2000). Contextual learning is useful for child development because it provides learning experience in a context in which children are interested and motivated. Centre on education and Works (2013) sees contextual learning strategy s teaching that places a real world emphasis on teaching, on other words, relating what is being taught to the context of the real world, hopefully with the effect of engaging the students interactively, and thus eliminating the question of “Why do I need to learn this stuff?” The goal is to create life-long learners who use critical thinking 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 is 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 (Kelly-Detwiler(2013). Service learning helps student to master some important curriculum contents by making meaningful connections between what they are studying and its many applications in the world round 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 Rights Education Association (HREA) (2011), a manual on human right 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 is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum pf the learners.

Listed below according to Belish 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 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 revisit 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 organization 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).

## **Hypotheses**

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

H<sub>01</sub>. There is no significant main effect of treatment on students' knowledge of civic education concepts.

H<sub>02</sub>. There is no significant main effect of gender on students' knowledge of civic education concept.

H<sub>03</sub>. There is no significant main effect of school location on students' knowledge of civic education concepts.

## **Method**

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 per-urban, while the dependent variable is the student's civic knowledge.

Participants in the study were five hundred and thirty five (535) JS 1 students from six public junior secondary schools selected from Ijebu-Ode local government (urban area) and the 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 of 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 selected from each of the local government areas. The schools selected were State Government owned and were co-educational schools, which allowed the inclusion of male and female students. The selected schools were also offering civic education; and the concepts that were covered during the study were human rights, types of human right, obligation of citizens, traffic rules and regulations and road accidents in Nigeria (All these are topics in the third term syllabus of JS 1civic education).

Two intact classes were purposively selected and 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 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).

Four instruments were used in generating the data for this study. Three of these were stimulus instruments while the remaining one was a response instrument. The stimulus instruments are the treatment implementation teaching guides; and they are Guide on Contextual Learning Strategy (GCLS). Guide on Service Learning Strategy (GSLC) and Guide on Conventional Teaching Method (GCTM). The guides were 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 the 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 Elizabeth's model (Kristine and Elizabeth, 2007), which touched the eight key element of successful service learning projects: Engaged participation, Collaboration,

Integration, preparation, action, Reflection, Evaluation and Celebration. The guides were used to sensitize and enlighten the teacher on what are expected of them at each period. GCMT was developed in line with common classroom teaching, which is a teacher-centered approach; it focuses more on the teacher and his activities in the classroom, where the learners are only passive receivers of the teachers information.

**Responses Instrument** refers to the means through which data was collected from the participant for the study. **Civic Knowledge Achievement Test (CKAT)** was a response instrument used to collect data for the study. It contained twenty (20) items multiple choice objective test questions. This instrument consists of two sections: section A comprises of the demographic data of the participants, such as gender, class, school location and school name; section B was designed to elicit information on students' knowledge on civic education concepts. This was used to collect pertinent data on the level of students' knowledge of the selected civic education concepts that was taught during the course of the study.

The instrument was validated using face and content validity through peer/expert review. It was also ministered to thirty (30) students', at Molusi College in Ijebu North local government area of Ijebuland to determine its reliability.

The validation of the instrument was done using face and content validity through peer/expert review. To ensure the validity of the instrument, it was also ministered to thirty (30) students of Molusi College in Ijebu North Local government area of Ijebuland to determine its reliability co-efficient was determined using Kuder Richardson formula (KR 20) and it generated  $\alpha = .690$ . 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 week – eleventh week (8 weeks) were for the treatment and follow up.

Twelfth week (1 week) were for post test administration

Total: Twelve weeks

## Treatment and Student Knowledge of Civic Concepts

**HO<sub>1a</sub>:** there is no significant main effect of treatment on students' knowledge of civic concepts

In testing this hypothesis, analysis of covariance was computed and the result are presented in tables 1.

**Table 1: Summary of Analysis of Covariance of 3x2x2 Factorial Analysis on Students Knowledge.**

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	3138.559	12	261.547	62.146	.000	.587
Intercept	1602.148	1	1602.148	380.687	.000	.421
Prekat	444.683	1	444.682	58.080	.000	.168
TREATMT	488.864	2	244.432	58.080	.000	.181
Gender	1.889	1	1.889	.449	.503	.001
School Location	.935	1	.935	.222	.638	.000
TREATMT * Gender	8.876	2	4.438	1.054	.349	.004
TREATMT * location	289.889	2	144.945	34.440	.000	.116
Gender * location	6.992	1	6.992	1.661	.198	.003
TREATMT * gender * location	11.701	2	5.851	1.390	.345	.013

Error	2205.289	524	4.209			
Total	86191.000	537				
Corrected Total	5343.847	536				

Treatment has significant main effect on knowledge ( $F_{(2,524)} = 58.08; P < 0.05; C^2 = .18$ ).  $H_{01a}$  is rejected.

**Table 2: Estimated Marginal Means on Knowing across the Groups**

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Error
<b>INTERCEPT</b>			
Pre Knowledge Score	537	11.07	-
Post Knowledge Score	537	12.27	0.09
<b>TREATMENT</b>			
Experimental Group 1(contextual)	163	13.89	.19
Experimental Group 2 (Service)	178	11.82	.17
Control Group (conventional)	196	11.10	.15
<b>GENDER</b>			
Male	258	12.33	.14
Female	279	12.21	.13
<b>SCHOOL LOCATION</b>			
Urban area	334	12.22	.12
Peri-urban	203	12.32	.16

**Table 3. Summary of Scheffe's Post Hoc Pair-wise Comparison on Knowledge**

Group	Contextual	Service	Conventional
Contextual		*	*
Service	*	*	*
Conventional	*	*	*

Pairs of groups significantly different at  $p < 0.05$

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

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

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

### **Effect of Gender on Students' Knowledge of Civic Concepts**

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant main effect of gender on students' knowledge of civic concepts.

The summary of the ANOVA shown in Table 1 indicates that gender has no significant main effect on students' knowledge ( $F_{(1,524)} = 0.45$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ;  $\eta^2 = .00$ ). Therefore, H<sub>02a</sub> is not rejected. This means that male and female knowledge of civic education concepts do not differ significantly. The estimated marginal means in Table 2 shows that male students obtained slightly higher civic knowledge  $\bar{x} = 12.33$  than their female counterparts.  $\bar{x} = 12.21$ . Although this difference is not significant, it might occur due to chance.

### **Effect of School Location on Students' Knowledge of Civic Concept**

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant main effect of school location on students' knowledge of civic concept.

The summary of the ANOVA in Table 1 shows that school location has no significant main effect on students' knowledge ( $F_{(1,524)} = 0.22$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ;  $\eta^2 = .00$ ). Therefore, H<sub>03</sub> is not rejected. Table 2 shows that students from the peri-urban had

higher skills acquisition mean score (12.32) than their counterparts at the urban area (12.22). This means that students from the peri-urban area acquired more civic knowledge than their counterparts at the urban area.

## **Discussion of Results**

The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant main effect of treatment on students' knowledge of civic education concepts. The findings showed that the two experimental strategies were more effective than conventional methods of teaching in improving students' knowledge in civic education. These strategies gave the opportunities for students to relate learning with real world situation. They are participatory in nature and allowed learners to make connections between civic education concepts and its applications to their world. This finding is also in support of Komalasari (2009) view that contextual teaching and learning approach should be developed as one of the alternatives for competence based curriculum in civic education. In the control group however, the students were passive listeners to the teachers' reservoir of knowledge as teachers dominated the lesson. This teaching method encouraged learners to learn by rote and they were unable to master what they learnt. It also resulted in poor feedback.

The findings indicated that gender had no significant impact on students' civic knowledge. This means that gender had little or no effect on students' attainment of civic knowledge, and that what really determine the acquisition of civic knowledge of students are the teaching and learning strategies adopted by the teacher. This implies that irrespective of whether students are males or females, the experimental treatment is more effective than the control. Also, from the findings, it was observed that though gender had no significant difference in determining the civic knowledge of the students, male students performed better in civic



knowledge achievements test. This is in line with Akintunde's (2004) findings, who asserted that male students had a better understanding of political education concepts than their female counterparts.

School location was found to have no significant effect on students' civic knowledge. However, peri-urban students' performed better than urban students' in civic education concepts, although the differences were 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 concept were 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. Moreover, the population of students' at peri-urban area was small. This really helped facilitators in managing the strategies with the students effectively and adequately. It was also gathered that teachers were receiving inconvenient/rural allowances. This measure encourages the teachers to stay at their peri-urban stations and not influencing their transfer out of the area. It also reduces the rapid change of subject teachers and promote continuity in the teaching-learning process. It also then helps students' to concentrate and not to lose focus in their minds

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study have shown that the use of the two learning strategies (contextual and service learning strategies) have been found to be effective in developing and enhancing student's civic knowledge. 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' knowledge of civic concepts. Hence, contextual and service learning are very effective in the teaching and learning of civic education concepts for the promotion of civic knowledge in students.

## **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that 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. Training and re-training programmes at the national and local levels should be organized for both junior and secondary school civic education teachers on the effective use of contextual and service learning strategies in the classrooms.

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