
**PERCEPTION OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS TOWARDS INTRODUCTION OF COMMUNITY
SERVICE LEARNING IN CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAMMES**

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Abstract

Changing the perception of students on their roles in community and national development will take more than the teacher engaging the students in the classroom to achieve. The teacher will need to engage the students in community services that have impact in the life of the community they reside in. This study assessed the perception of the Civic Education pre-service teachers on their engagement in community service during the course of their study. The study set out to examine the perception of pre-services Civic Education teachers on the usefulness of community service and identify the contributions of community service projects to pre-service teachers' development of personal skills. Two research questions were raised for the study. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised 300 level Social Studies students of a public tertiary institution in Ogun state, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty five (125) students were selected to form the sample for the study using stratified sampling technique. The main instrument used to obtain

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information for the study was a fourteen (14) item questionnaire titled “Students’ Perception on Community Service Questionnaire” (SPCSQ) ($r = 0.89$). Data collected were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings showed that the urge to contribute to a better society encourages majority of the students to participate in the project, community service is very useful to the community, addresses the community need and relevant to Civic Education programme. It also helps to develop major degree of competency in the participants. Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers of Civic Education should always engage the students in services that are beneficial to the community and Civic Education teachers should always earn the potentials of community service as it can help students to develop positive skills and gain more knowledge while on their field work.

Key words: Perception, Community service, pre-service teachers, Civic Education programme

Introduction

The major focus of Civic Education in Nigeria is to train the students to become better, participatory and effective citizens; develop in children positive attitude to citizenship; development of skills of making personal positive contributions to the creation of a virile and united nation; encouraging the development of social responsibilities towards themselves and the world around them and develop values, attitudes, skills and understanding necessary to live in society. However, one of the major concerns of stakeholders in Nigeria today is that Civic Education has failed in achieving her salient objectives of developing positive attitudes in the citizen using Civic Education programme as a vehicle.

Furthermore, Civic Education objectives and the development of skills of offering selfless services to the community the students resides in cannot be achieved in Nigeria if we continue to center our teaching and learning activities solely in the classroom, which is most common in Nigeria Civic Education classroom today. Therefore, to change students’ attitude there will be need to engage the students in activities that will make them contribute

to the development of their community right from their school days. The teachers need to engage the students’ in services that have impact in the life of the community they reside in. These will in-turn change the perception of the students on their roles in community and national development.

Governments across the nation are already overwhelmed by the enormous responsibilities that they are to render to the nation. Therefore, Civic Education should prepare the students to play an active selfless role in their society and national development. Our Civic Education curriculum (classroom engagements) must not only centre on teaching the theory as this has been the practice over time but change the focus of teaching of Civic Education from theory to practical. Engaging the students outside the classroom must be one of the focuses of Civic Education if we are striving towards attitudinal change. Teachers must equip the students with the skills of critical thinking, reflective enquiry and participatory instincts towards solving their communal and environmental challenges.

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Recently, in many schools in the world over, community service participation is becoming an integral part of a student's education. Some schools are requiring community service as a graduation requirement, and others are considering doing so (Walter, 2010). However, Civic Education teaching and learning in Nigerian classrooms still focus on the teaching of the students on their roles in societal development without practically engaging them in putting theory into practice and making services to the community an integral part of the educational system at all levels. One of the major problems that the nation is facing today is negative attitude of the youths towards their community and national development. At the local level, everybody is always expecting the government to provide factually everything without the citizen's roles in nation building. For a nation to develop citizens must be ready to perform their social responsibilities and being useful to the community by performing selfless services to the community and this should be an integral part of our educational system. Educational institutions must embrace community service as a means for developing civic attitudes and behaviours among the youths which will also help to prepare them for the adulthood.

Community Service Learning (CSL) is an experiential model of learning in which students are sent from their home institutions to volunteer their time, energy, skills, expertise and enthusiasm in a diverse range of non-profit community organizations, schools and other community-based initiatives, both local and international. Community

service learning helps the students to develop a better sense of self, test and deepen knowledge gained in classroom settings, develop as active citizens, and contribute to a more equitable society (Walter, 2010). Community service can be termed as a method under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organised community service experiences. It involves effort made to meet the needs of the community. Community service learning are ways by which students help others by volunteering their time, effort, or talents, and is performed to benefit at least one other unrelated person within their community without compensation (Somerset School Department, 2008). In other words, it's a selfless service because the services rendered are not paid for and it benefits individuals or the community. Community service is defined as participation in the community outside of school. It is a term that is used to describe the integration of community service into the curriculum in such a way that the community benefits and the students learn skills that are relevant to their future profession (Parker, et al., 2009).

Community service activities include environmental restoration, community leadership, work towards racial understanding, helping others, affecting social values and politics, and working with a community action programme etc. volunteering for youth and social service organizations are the two most common areas of interest for young people (Bonnet, 2008). Students may at times supply mostly their volunteer labour to local communities, and in fact learn more than they teach. CBL is primarily designed to meet the

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learning objectives of their university curriculum, and is course-, project- or task-based. Community service learning is a form of work-integrated learning. Many institutions require and/or give incentive to students or employees alike to volunteer their time to community service programmes. From volunteering to participate in such charity events like walks or runs, institutes continue the practice or requiring their employees or students to grow in camaraderie while giving back to various communities. Many institutions also provide opportunities for employees and students to work together, and most student groups participate in their own form of community service. Each is unique in its own right; all are incredibly popular with employees; and in all of these programmes, human resources play an integral role.

CSL's primary aim is to put students' theoretical learning to the test of practical application, and secondarily to contribute students' labour and expertise to the community (Walter, 2010). Community service learning focuses on responsibilities of good citizenship and community responsibility as well as how students can contribute responsibly to endeavours beyond the classroom through independent ventures and/or school sponsored activities (Camara, 2012). The main focus of CBL is on the education of students rather than communities. Community service learning at the university is not just about volunteering; it is about providing a service while also ensuring that learning happens (Parker et al., 2009). It helps the students to contribute to the

development of It also aims at developing positive attitude in the students that makes them to think about how they can make difference in others' lives and the community. Community service-learning (CSL) strengthens connections between the institutions and the local communities (Taylor, 2014). CSL helps to concretize teaching and learning. The purpose of the service is to help the community while also helping students to gain professional skills that they might need in the future. CS allows those participating to reflect on the difference they are making in society. With each new community service project, some participants may gain insightful experience in a variety of areas. Participants may also internalize the information that they found personally insightful for future use. Students engaging in community service often find it beneficial to pause and reflect on how they are changing society for the better.

Engaging in community service provides students with the opportunity to become active members of their community and has a lasting, positive impact on society at large. Community service enables students to acquire life skills and knowledge, as well as provide a service to those who need it most. CS increases overall life satisfaction, increases social awareness and responsibility and helps students enhance their personal knowledge, grow from new experiences, and develop better interpersonal communication skills. CSL responds to a growing public demand to provide students with relevant knowledge and skills for employment and experiences of active citizenship along with

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more direct community engagement (Webb & Burgin, 2009). CSL can provide access to new ideas and approaches, valuable university resources and enhanced organizational capacity (Lucas, Sherman, & Fischer, 2013).

Theoretical framework that supports this study is situated in John Dewey's contention that learning is a process and must begin with experience and related to the student's interest (Dewey, 2001) and this could support involvement in community service and Experiential learning theory promulgated by Kolb, (1984). Kolb (1984) explained that learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience and Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience. Salandanan (2012) defined experiential learning as a basic means of obtaining knowledge or skills through experience. It is referred to as learning by doing, learning through action, learning through experience, discovery and exploration. It encourages progression and improvement of critical thinking, skill in solving problems and decision making among learners inside and outside the classroom. Also, Northern Illinois University (2011) described experiential learning as learning through action, learning by doing, learning through experience, and learning through discovery and exploration. Community service is a form of experiential learning model in which the students put into practical application their classroom theoretical learning.

Clinton and Thomas (2011) examined the relationship between business students and community service learning and found that the community service was a positive experience for business students, increasing their confidence and their ability to work with others. Camara, (2012) examined the effects of community service on the academic performance of students at a Massachusetts middle school. Findings showed that middle school students who performed community service had higher GPA scores and higher mandated Massachusetts State testing scores in grades 6, 7, and all but one category in grade 8. Therefore, for Nigeria nation to achieve her national objectives efforts must be geared towards increasing civic participation, including student's selfless services as a means of developing our societies and strengthening our democratic system. This study therefore assessed the attitudes of pre-service Civic Education teachers towards the introduction of community service learning in Civic Education educational programme. Chan, Ngai and Kwan (2017) assessed implication mandatory service learning at university on less inclined students and found no differences in the effects of mandatory voluntary programs in students civil, social and personal domains. Meyer, Neymar and Rameder (2019) examined the students' community service in respects to self selection and effects on participation. Findings show no participation effects on community service self efficacy, generalized trust, empathic concern and attributions for poverty and students that join community service differ significantly from non

participants with regards to their self efficacy, generalized trust and empathic concern

Statement of problem

Community service learning has been integrated into the educational programme of most of the developed world, but its only gaining little recognition within the curriculum of Nigerian schools, where it existed, it is not an integral part of the Nigerian school system but only incorporated as co-curricular activities. Institutions of higher education are turning to community service as a compelling avenue for developing citizenship among youths, as well as instilling in students a lifelong commitment to service. This study therefore assessed the attitudes of pre-service Civic Education teachers towards the introduction of community service learning in Civic Education programme.

Objectives of the study

1. Examine the attitude of pre-services Civic Education teachers towards engaging in community service
2. Identify the contributions of community service project to pre-service teachers' development of personal skills

Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes of pre-services Civic Education teachers towards participating in community service?
2. How has the pre-service Civic Education teachers' participation in the community service helped to develop personal skills in the students?

Method and Materials

The study employed a descriptive research design. This study was conducted on third year Social Studies students of Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun state, Nigeria during the first semester of 2018/2019 academic session. 300 level students were purposefully selected for the study because students offer Civic Education at this level. Participants were selected using simple random sampling procedure. Students were allocated to different activities within the school and outside school community. Activities approved are those that have direct benefits to the people within and outside the university community. After the exercise, students were given a questionnaire tagged "Students' Perception on Community Service Questionnaire" (SPCSQ) to get their feedback on the community services they took part in. The content and face validity of the questionnaire was established by presenting two copies of the draft questionnaire to two experts in the field of test and measurement for further scrutiny and modification. This was to ascertain the suitability of the instrument in terms of language, presentation, clarity and applicability. Based on their comments necessary modifications were made. The verified copy of the questionnaire was trail tested on the respondents that were not part of the real study. Split half was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument which was found to be 0.89. Data Collected were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics.

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Result and Discussion

Research Questions: What are the attitudes of pre-services Civic Education teachers towards participating in community service?

Table 1: Distributions on the attitude of pre-service Civic Education teachers towards participating in community service.

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage
	Would you have taken part in the project if it is optional?		
Yes		109	87.2
No		14	11.2
	Total	123	100
	What motivated you to take part in the project?		
	To contribute to a better society	117	93.6
	To help/work with others	0	0
	To put course content into practice	6	4.8
	Total	123	100

The table above present the students' opinions on their reactions to the community services activities they embarked on. In responding to the question which stated that "Would you have taken part in the project if it were optional?" 109 (87.2%) of the respondent's state that they would have been part of the project even if it were optional while 14(11.2%) were of the opinion that they would not participate in the project if it were optional. This showed that most of the respondents are willing to participate in community service related projects. In responding to the question on What motivated the respondents to take part in the project?, 117(93.6%) stated that they embarked on the project to contribute to a better society, while 6(4.8%) of the respondents picked to put course content into practice as what motivated them to take part in the service. This implies that majority of the respondents are motivated to participate in the community service by the zeal to contribute to a better society.

Table 2: Distributions on the opinions of respondents on the usefulness of community service.

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	To what extent the community activities you embarked	124	4.77	.639	Very Useful

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on are useful for inclusion in Civic Education

course content?

2.	To what extent the project has contributed to your learning in Civic Education?	125	4.71	.551	Very Useful
3.	To what extent have the community activities you carried out addressed the needs of the society.	125	4.79	.572	Very Useful
	Grand Mean		4.75	.587	

The above showed the respondents' opinions on the usefulness of community service. The result showed that item 1 which address question on the extent the community activities the students embarked on are useful for inclusion in Civic Education course content? recorded the mean score of 4.77 (SD = .639), responses to question 2 on the extent the project has contributed to the students learning in Civic Education recorded mean score of 4.71 (SD = .551) while item 3 which raised the question on the extent to which the community activities the students carried out addressed the needs of the society recorded mean score of 4.79 (SD = .752). All the three items showed major effects of the respondents' opinions on the usefulness of community service. The grand mean of 4.75 (SD = .587) also showed a major effects. This implies that community service is very useful to the community, address community needs and relevant to Civic Education programme.

Research Question 2: How has the pre-service Civic Education teacher's participation in the community service helped to develop personal skills in the students?

Table 3: Distributions on the opinions of respondents on the degree of contributions of community service to competency.

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Organizing and planning	124	4.46	.966	Very Useful
2.	Taking decision	125	4.46	1.004	Very Useful
3.	Solving problem	125	4.65**	.721	Very Useful
4.	Team working	125	4.79**	.482	Very Useful
5.	Developing ethical commitment	125	4.42	.985	Very Useful
6.	Thinking critically	125	4.34	.899	Very Useful
7.	Developing awareness of social and environmental impact of actions.	125	4.60**	.718	Very Useful
8.	Being creative and innovative	125	4.56	.807	Very Useful
9.	Leading others	125	4.46	.884	Very Useful

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Grand Mean	4.53	.829
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Table 3 showed the respondents' opinions on the contributions of community service to skills development. The respondents were of the opinion that community service programme embarked upon has helped them to develop the skills of team work 4.79 (SD = .482), Solving problem 4.65(SD = .721 and Developing awareness of social and environmental impact of actions 4.60 (SD = .718). The three items recorded the highest mean score in the distribution. Also, the least mean score of 4.34 (SD = .899) was recorded by items 6 which stated that community service leads to development of critical thinking, this is followed by item 5 which stated that community service leads to development of ethical commitment with the mean score of 4.42(SD = .985). The grand mean of 4.53 (SD = .829) showed that community service can help to develop competencies in students.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

The study examined the perception of pre-service Civic Education teachers towards the introduction of community service learning in Civic Education programme. The results on what motivated the students to participate in the community service project showed that the urge to contribute to a better society encourages majority of the students to participate in the project. This finding supported the views of Webb and Burgin (2009) that community service provides the students opportunity to become active citizens and make them positive impacts in the society. This finding might be due to the fact that the activities embarked on by the students are the ones that have direct impacts on the society. The finding of research question two showed community service is very useful to the community, address the community need and relevant to Civic Education programme. This is supported by the finding of Clinton and Thomas (2011) who found out that community service leads to positive experience for the students and society. This finding might be due to the positive experience recorded by the students while on their field work and the positive feedback they got from the community after the field work. The finding of research question 3 showed that community service helps to develop major degree of competency in the participants. This is in line with the findings of Lucas, Sherman and Fisher (2013) and Taylor (2014) whose findings showed that community service helps students to develop various skills they might need in future. This finding might be due to various activities embarked on by the students before, during and after the service which helped them to develop various degrees of competencies. This finding also supports the views Kolb (1984) and Salandinan (2012) on experiential learning theory that knowledge can be acquired through experience.

Community service learning is found to have positive impact on the attitude of pre-service Civic Education teachers towards contributing to the development of the society they belongs to and as well develops in them various degrees of competences.

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Recommendation

Teachers of Civic Education should always engage the students in services that are beneficial to the community. This will help the students to translate theory into practical and develop the positive attitude of contributing to a better society in the students.

Civic Education teachers should always identify services that are beneficial to the community which will help to strengthen school community relationship and contributes to Civic Education teaching and learning

Civic Education teachers should always earnest the potentials of community service as it can help students to develop positive skills and gain more knowledge while on their field work.

Civic Education teachers should incorporate practicals into their teaching as it can help to develop positive attitude through learning by experience.

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