

Research Article

Teachers' Perceptions of Civic Education as a Catalyst for Citizenship Development in Senior Secondary Schools in Nigeria

Olaitan Idowu Ademola^{*} , Fidelia Ngozi Iwuamadi ,
Nwakaegbo Marian Ohadiugha 

Department of Curriculum & Instructions, Alvan-Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Nigeria

Abstract

In a world increasingly threatened by civic erosion and democratic disengagement, the role of teachers as catalysts for responsible citizenship has taken center stage. This study explores the perceptions of secondary school teachers in Nigeria on the effectiveness of Civic Education in fostering citizenship development among students. Grounded in a survey research design, data were collected from a purposively selected sample of 200 senior secondary school teachers across diverse educational districts. To ensure reliability and internal consistency, a pilot study was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, confirming the robustness of the research instrument. The findings reveal a strong consensus among teachers that Civic Education holds transformative potential for shaping active, informed, and responsible citizens. However, recurring challenges such as inadequate instructional materials, limited teacher training, and curricular constraints were identified as barriers to effective delivery. Despite these limitations, teachers perceive themselves not merely as conveyors of content but as pivotal agents in nurturing democratic values, critical thinking, and national consciousness among Nigeria's youth. This study elevates the voices of educators who operate at the intersection of pedagogy and nation-building, emphasizing the urgent need for systemic reforms, pedagogical innovation, and sustained investment in Civic Education. In amplifying the perspectives of those on the frontlines of educational transformation, this research contributes to a global dialogue on citizenship education and underscores the vital role of teachers in anchoring democratic resilience in an increasingly polarized world.

Keywords

Civic Education; Citizenship Development; Democratic Values, Teachers' Perceptions

1. Introduction

Civic Education is widely acknowledged as a fundamental pillar of democratic societies, serving as a structured means of cultivating informed, responsible, and participatory citizens. Across both developed and emerging democracies, Civic Education has been linked to the promotion of democratic values,

political literacy, social cohesion, and respect for the rule of law [1-3]. Scholars argue that effective Civic Education equips young people with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to engage meaningfully in public life, sustain

^{*}Correspondence: Olaitan Idowu Ademola (adexventures03@gmail.com)

Received: 30 October 2025; **Accepted:** 14 January 2026; **Published:** 18 August 2026



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democratic institutions, and address societal challenges constructively [4, 5]. In contemporary societies marked by political polarization, declining civic trust, and youth disengagement, Civic Education has therefore assumed renewed significance as a strategic response to democratic fragility and civic erosion [6]. In Nigeria, the relevance of Civic Education is particularly pronounced given the persistent challenges confronting the nation's democratic development. Issues such as political apathy, electoral malpractice, corruption, ethnic tension, and weak civic consciousness among youths continue to undermine democratic consolidation and national cohesion [7, 8].

In response, the Nigerian government integrated Civic Education into the senior secondary school curriculum with the aim of fostering democratic awareness, respect for human rights, national unity, and responsible citizenship [9]. The subject is designed not merely to transmit civic knowledge but to shape attitudes, values, and behaviors that support democratic participation and social responsibility [10]. Teachers play a central role in determining whether the goals of Civic Education are realized in practice. As frontline implementers of the curriculum, teachers mediate between policy intentions and classroom experiences through their perceptions, pedagogical choices, and instructional competence [11, 12]. Research consistently shows that teachers' beliefs about Civic Education influence how the subject is taught and how civic values are modeled for students [13, 14]. Despite its importance, the practical impact of Civic Education in Nigerian secondary schools remains limited due to inadequate teacher preparation, insufficient instructional materials, and an examination-driven education system [8, 11, 15]. This study therefore examines teachers' perceptions of Civic Education as a catalyst for citizenship development.

2. Literature Review

Recent scholarship increasingly positions Civic Education as a foundational mechanism for cultivating democratic citizenship, political consciousness, and social responsibility among young people, particularly within emerging and consolidating democracies such as Nigeria. Contemporary studies emphasize that Civic Education extends beyond the transmission of civic knowledge to the internalization of democratic norms, civic values, and participatory competencies required for sustainable national development [1-3]. In contexts marked by political apathy, governance deficits, and declining civic trust, Civic Education is increasingly viewed as a strategic tool for democratic resilience and social cohesion [4, 5]. Within this framework, teachers are consistently identified as critical mediators between curriculum intentions and learner outcomes, as their beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices shape how civic ideals are interpreted and enacted in classroom settings [6]. Ogunyemi [7] argues that teachers' pedagogical orientation, value commitment, and classroom prac-

tices significantly determine whether Civic Education functions as transformative civic learning or degenerates into rote, examination-driven instruction. Similarly, Eze [8] highlights that when Civic Education is delivered through participatory methods, such as debate, simulations, community engagement, and real-life civic problem-solving, it enhances youth empowerment, political efficacy, democratic engagement, and social responsibility. However, empirical evidence from Nigerian secondary schools suggests that the transformative potential of Civic Education is often undermined by limited instructional resources, insufficient professional development opportunities, and weak institutional prioritization, resulting in a persistent disconnect between policy objectives and classroom realities [9, 10].

More recent studies further reveal that teachers' perceptions play a decisive role in shaping the effectiveness of Civic Education delivery and its impact on citizenship development outcomes. Research indicates that while teachers generally acknowledge the importance of Civic Education for nation-building and democratic consolidation, many feel constrained by curricular rigidity, large class sizes, inadequate time allocation, and an education system that privileges high-stakes testing over value formation and experiential learning [1, 2, 11]. These structural and systemic constraints often contribute to surface-level teaching approaches that limit students' opportunities for critical civic inquiry, reflective dialogue, and meaningful civic participation [12]. Ogunyemi [7] reinforces this position by demonstrating that teachers who perceive themselves as civic role models and agents of social change are more likely to integrate contemporary civic issues—such as governance, corruption, human rights, and national unity, into classroom instruction despite prevailing institutional challenges. Eze [8] and Adeyemi [13] further argue that strengthening teachers' professional capacity, pedagogical autonomy, and institutional support is essential for repositioning Civic Education as a catalyst for democratic consolidation and citizenship development. Collectively, these studies reveal a critical gap in the literature: while the outcomes, challenges, and curricular dimensions of Civic Education have been widely examined, there remains limited empirical focus on teachers' lived perceptions and self-conceptualized roles in shaping citizenship development within Nigeria's senior secondary school system. Addressing this gap is essential for aligning curriculum policy, teacher practice, and national civic objectives in a manner that strengthens democratic culture and responsible citizenship among Nigerian youths [14, 15].

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, appropriate for examining teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding Civic Education and citizenship development in senior secondary schools [16, 17]. The target population comprised 6,956 Civic Education teachers across

North Central Nigeria, from which a sample of 400 respondents was selected using Yamane's formula to ensure representativeness and statistical adequacy [18]. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Teachers' Perception of Civic Education Curriculum (TPCEC), designed to assess teachers' perceptions of Civic Education, their perceived roles in citizenship development, and the challenges affecting effective implementation. The instrument was validated by experts in curriculum studies and educational measurement, and a pilot study conducted outside the main sample area yielded a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.813, indicating strong internal consistency and suitability for educational research [19, 20].

Questionnaires were administered with the assistance of trained research assistants following approval from relevant educational authorities, and all ethical standards—including informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality—were strictly observed in line with best practices in educational research [21]. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics, including t-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), with hypotheses tested at a 0.05 level of significance, which is conventionally accepted for social science research to ensure rigor and validity of findings [22].

Table 1. *How teachers perceived Civic Education in senior secondary schools.*

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Civic Education is an essential subject for preparing students to become responsible citizens.	2.74	1.127	Agreed
2	The current Civic Education curriculum addresses key societal and national issues effectively.	2.45	1.127	Disagreed
3	I believe students show genuine interest and engagement in Civic Education lessons.	2.56	1.060	Agreed
	Sectional Mean	2.58	1.105	

Source: From Field survey 2024

The results in Table 1 show that teachers perceive Civic Education as an important subject for preparing responsible citizens [Mean = 2.74, SD = 1.127]. They, however, disagreed that the current curriculum effectively addresses key societal and national issues [Mean = 2.45, SD = 1.127], pointing to

gaps in content depth and relevance. Teachers moderately agreed that students show interest and engagement in Civic Education lessons [Mean = 2.56, SD = 1.060]. With a sectional mean of 2.58, the overall perception is positive but tempered by concerns over curriculum adequacy and learner motivation.

Table 2. *The role they see themselves playing in citizenship development.*

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
4	As a Civic Education teacher, I see myself as a key agent in shaping students' civic attitudes and responsibilities.	3.15	1.155	Agreed
5	I regularly incorporate real-life civic issues and discussions into my teaching to promote active citizenship.	2.69	1.110	Agreed
6	I feel adequately empowered and supported by the school system to promote citizenship values among students.	2.57	1.026	Agreed
	Sectional Mean	2.80	1.097	

Source: From Field survey 2024

The findings in Table 2 indicate that teachers strongly see themselves as key agents in shaping students' civic attitudes and responsibilities [Mean = 3.15, SD = 1.155]. They also agreed that they incorporate real-life civic issues and discussions into their teaching to encourage active citizenship [Mean

= 2.69, SD = 1.110]. However, their sense of empowerment and support from the school system appears relatively low [Mean = 2.57, SD = 1.026], suggesting institutional gaps. With a sectional mean of 2.80, teachers view their role in citi-

zenship development positively, though constrained by limited systemic support.

Table 3. *Factors hinder effective civic teaching.*

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
7	Lack of adequate instructional materials limits my effectiveness in teaching Civic Education.	2.52	1.124	Agreed
8	Civic Education receives less attention and priority compared to other subjects in the school.	2.59	1.065	Agreed
9	Large class sizes and limited time make it difficult to engage students meaningfully in civic topics.	2.51	1.050	Agreed
	Sectional Mean	2.54	1.080	

Source: From Field survey 2024

Table 3 shows that teachers agreed lack of instructional materials hinders their effectiveness in delivering Civic Education [Mean = 2.52, SD = 1.124]. They also noted that the subject receives less attention compared to others in the school curriculum [Mean = 2.59, SD = 1.065]. Large class sizes and limited time further reduce opportunities for meaningful engagement with students [Mean = 2.51, SD = 1.050]. With a sectional mean of 2.54, the results highlight structural and systemic barriers as major obstacles to effective civic teaching.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study provide clear evidence that teachers perceive Civic Education as a vital instrument for fostering responsible citizenship among senior secondary school students in Nigeria. Results addressing Research Question One indicate that teachers strongly acknowledge the importance of Civic Education in preparing responsible citizens, although they express reservations regarding the adequacy of the curriculum in addressing contemporary national and societal issues. Teachers also reported that while students show moderate interest in Civic Education lessons, such engagement is often weakened by the examination-driven culture prevalent in Nigerian schools. This pattern aligns with earlier studies, which observed that Civic Education in Nigeria is frequently reduced to theoretical instruction with limited opportunities for practical civic engagement and participatory learning [1, 2]. Similarly, prior scholarship emphasizes that for Civic Education to effectively nurture active citizenship, curricular content must be contextually relevant and delivered through participatory rather than rote approaches [3]. These findings therefore underscore the need for curriculum reform aimed at aligning Civic Education content with present-day civic realities while simultaneously addressing issues of student disengagement.

Findings related to Research Questions Two and Three further highlight the duality of teachers' perceptions. While teachers see themselves as crucial agents of value orientation

and report incorporating civic issues into their teaching, their capacity to effectively fulfill this role is constrained by institutional and systemic barriers. The relatively low perception of empowerment and support from the school system suggests that many teachers lack the resources, training, and institutional encouragement necessary for effective Civic Education delivery. These results are consistent with studies which found that although teachers demonstrate strong commitment to fostering democratic values, their effectiveness is undermined by inadequate professional development, poor instructional support, and limited prioritization of Civic Education within the school system [4, 5]. The implication is that teacher commitment alone is insufficient to guarantee meaningful civic outcomes; rather, structural reforms are required to provide the resources and institutional support needed to transform Civic Education into a truly catalytic force for citizenship development.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that Civic Education is widely perceived by teachers as a vital instrument for fostering responsible citizenship, democratic values, and civic consciousness among senior secondary school students in Nigeria. While teachers recognize the subject's potential to nurture informed and participatory citizens and perceive themselves as key agents in this process, the realization of this potential remains constrained by persistent structural and institutional challenges, including inadequate instructional materials, limited professional development, weak policy prioritization, and an examination-oriented school culture. These constraints significantly limit teachers' effectiveness despite their commitment to civic instruction. The findings therefore highlight the need for coordinated reforms that strengthen curriculum relevance, enhance teacher capacity, and provide sustained institutional support in order to reposition Civic Education as a transformative rather than purely theoretical subject. Consistent with existing scholarship, meaningful citizenship development

through Civic Education requires an enabling educational environment that aligns pedagogy, curriculum, and policy with democratic aspirations and national development goals [1, 4].

6. Recommendations

- 1) Strengthen professional development programs to improve teachers' knowledge and skills in civic pedagogy.
- 2) Review and enrich the curriculum to ensure it addresses contemporary national and societal issues.
- 3) Provide adequate instructional materials, teaching aids, and resources for effective classroom delivery.
- 4) Allocate sufficient time and attention to Civic Education
- 5) within the school timetable and policy priorities.
- 6) Foster collaboration among government, schools, and communities to support the effective implementation of Civic Education.

Abbreviations

TPCEC Teachers' Perception of Civic Education Curriculum

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The research was conducted independently, and no financial, personal, or institutional relationships influenced the design, data collection, analysis, interpretation of findings, or the decision to publish the results.

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