

POLITICAL EDUCATION, AN EMPOWERMENT TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN ANAMBRA STATE.

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Introduction

The importance of education cannot be over emphasized. Education in this context, is the process through which an individual is socialized to acquire the skills and knowledge to participate in all spheres of life. Education is a mobile treasure that travels with an individual throughout life and it enables one to grow, develop and be empowered to participate in all phases of life including politics. This fact was emphasized by Ojobo (2005) in his observation that, Educational empowerment of people is the foundation of all other forms of empowerment, be it, social, economic, technological and political.

For any nation to attain its full developmental levels, there must be political consciousness on the part of the citizens; Therefore in political participation, political education is of cardinal importance in the political process of the nation. It is an educational process that provides for the study of the political situations in the community, the nation and the world at large. Political education exposes the citizen to the political culture of the state. The purpose of political education is to develop in the citizens, more rational attitudes and responsible behaviours towards improving the quality of politics. The main goal of political education is to develop in the youths and adults adequate skills and sensitivities necessary to enable them take decisions concerning political matters. It offers children the opportunities to learn their civic rights, duties and privileges. Through political education a nation achieves the consent of, and political consensus amongst the led. It sensitizes people on the political situations of the community, nation and the entire world, and offers the citizenry a more rational attitude and responsible behaviours towards politics. It helps to identify the role of both genders. It is the vital instrument that helps in political transformation of a country and gives room for a stable, reliable and peaceful nation. It is a potent force that

can transform the attitude of Nigerians towards politics. It is an important component of the national policy and objectives.

Political issues which political education seeks to redress are many and include such issues as ethno religious quarrels and clashes, marginalization of individuals and minority groups, gender issues etc. These factors tend to run counter to national integration and development and political education addresses them. Political education also includes voter education, civic education and assertive education, which aim at teaching the citizens their rights and privileges.

Ganiyu (2011) education in support of the electoral process has become known as voter education” with the primary target being the voters. There are a number of other areas of education required if an election is to be successful, but these may variously be conducted by political parties and election administration officials. Voter education is considered to play separate and discreet function. It is usually identified as a function of the electoral authority and is occasionally subcontracted by them to the private sector and civil society organizations. It is also fostered by public interest organizations independent of any mandate by election authority. At its core, voter education is an enterprise designed to ensure that voters are ready, willing and able to participate in electoral politics. This entails election literacy and confidence that the electoral process is appropriate and efficacious in selecting governments and prompting policies that will benefit the individual voter. Voter education is essential to ensuring that voters can effectively exercise their voting rights and express their political will through the electoral process.

Voter education involves providing information on who is eligible to vote, where and how to register, how electorate can check voters lists to ensure that they have been duly included; what type of election is being held, where, when and how to vote; who the candidates are: and about identifying election malpractices and to handle them as a voter and how to file complaints. Voter education therefore empowers the voters to know the advantages and disadvantages of participating in elections and making informed decision.

Civic education on the other hand, is a broader concept which refers to a process of conveying knowledge of a country’s political system and context. Civic education might include information on the system of government, the nature and power of the offices to be filled in an election: the principal economic, social and political issues facing the nation: the value of democracy; equal rights of women and men and the importance of peace and natural reconciliation (Uche, 2001). Civic education refers to the process of educating citizens on their rights, duties and responsibilities (Zimmer, 2009)

Civic education helps to empower and motivate the citizens to identify what areas of the political and governance processes they can effectively participate in, what they can do to influence political outcomes and thereby improve the quality of governance at both local, state and national levels. At the core of civic education are the values and principles of transparency, participation, responsiveness, accountability, empowerment, and equality. Communication and access to information are also integral part of civic education. It is a critical and effective empowerment tool for promoting citizens' participation in the democratic and development process of any nation (Welch & Hibbing 2002). It helps citizens to be active participants in the affairs of the nation by informing them about their rights, roles and responsibilities as citizens. Civic education empowers citizens both as individuals and as part of the collective grouping in the society with the knowledge, requisite skills, motivation and confidence to assert and exercise their rights and responsibilities in holding the government accountable. This enhances transparency and contributes greatly to its credibility and public confidence in the government and its system. It is geared towards producing responsible and law abiding citizens. Ukaegbe, Mezieobi, Ajileye, Abdulahaman and Anyaocha (2009) outlined objectives of civic education to include:

- i. Developing and transforming the Nigeria youths into effective and responsible citizens by making them law abiding.
- ii. Creating awareness of one's rights, duties and obligations as citizens of this great nation and also to appreciate the rights of other citizens.
- iii. And helping the young people to acquire a sense of loyalty, honesty, discipline, courage dedication, respect, patriotism, hard work. It inculcates in students, spirit of nationalism and desirable habits, values and attitudes.

It is imperative that in every election, voter and civic education are intensively carried out to ensure that all constituents males and female are alike to understand their rights, political system, the contests they are being asked to decide and how and where to vote. This to a very high extent will increase political participation and also create adequate consciousness. For an election to be successful and democratic, voters must understand their rights and responsibilities and must be sufficiently knowledgeable and well informed to cast ballots that are legally valid and to participate meaningfully in the voting process. Voter and civic education are even more critical in post-conflict countries where political situations may be volatile and where elections may have an unprecedented impact on the countries future.

Political education also empowers citizens of a society with assertive skills (Okeke, 2005). This enables competency skills in the areas of decision making, interpersonal communication skill and cognitive skills. Assertive education helps to shape a persons' civic orientation which is important in political participation. Assertiveness has been proven to be the most effective communication skill for building win-win relationships based on mutual trust and respect. Assertive skills will enable one to increase ones confidence, share ideas openly with reduced anxiety, gain support and commitment from others and minimize unproductive conflicts and other obstacles to co-operation and team work. By developing assertiveness skills, one will increase his/her overall ability to communicate effectively which will contribute to the person's professional success.

Being assertive is a core communicative skill. It means that one express as himself/herself effectively and stands up for his/her point of view while also respecting the rights and beliefs of others. It helps one to boost one's self esteem and earn others' respect. It also demonstrates that one is aware of the rights of others and is willing to work on resolving conflicts. It is not just what one says but how the person says it that is important. Being assertive gives an individual the best chance of successfully delivering his/her message. If the person communicates in a way that is too passive or too aggressive, his/her message may not be delivered to the people. Therefore political education, through voters, civic and assertive education equips citizens of any nation with adequate political socialization that will enable them to contribute towards enthronement and sustainability of political development of their nation.

Unfortunately, a vast majority of the citizens seem not to be empowered through political education. One of the consequences is political apathy which is dangerous to political development of the nation. Orisa (2012) assert that political apathy can be necessitated by lack of political culture and non adequate political socialization. With political apathy, citizens may not be interested in voter's registration exercises, may not be willing to vote and may not attend political meeting and rallies. Political apathy can manifest in different dimensions which include refusal to participate in protest and demonstrations, refusal to support any candidate and refusal to crosscheck names on the voters register. Therefore, any nation that wants to develop and make its laws functional must have a high rate of political consciousness or awareness in order to ensure sustainable development. It is on this premise that the researchers investigated political education for as an empowerment tool sustainable political development in Anambra State.

The following research questions guided the study

1. In what ways can civic educations empower the citizenry for political development of the state?
2. In what ways can voter educations empower the citizenry for political development of the state?
3. What are the consequences of not being politically educated by the citizens?

Method

The survey design was adopted in the study. The population of the study consists of the 3 senatorial zones namely Anambra North, Anambra South and Anambra central with a total of 4,805,600. Source: National Population Commission Awka. (NPC 2001). Sample size of 900 respondents was selected through simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for collecting data in the study was questionnaire, entitled “Political Education for Sustainable Political Development in Anambra State Questionnaire” (PEFSPDAQ). The questionnaire which was constructed by the researchers had four sections A, B C and D. Section A dealt with personal data of the respondents, section B dealt with issues on the awareness of civic education by the citizens, section C dealt with issues on awareness of voter education and section D dealt with the consequences of not being politically empowered. The response mode adopted in the questionnaire was the four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument contained 30 items. The instrument was validated by three experts, one in Sociology of Education and the other two in Measurement and Evaluation, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Their contributions were strictly adhered to in the final production of the research instrument. To establish the reliability of the questionnaire the test re test method was used. The two tests were administered within two weeks interval on 50 students outside the study area and the two sets of scores were correlated using Pearson product moment correlation – coefficient statistic and the coefficient value of 0.85 was obtained.

Copies of the instrument were administered face to face by the researchers with the help of three trained research assistants. Because of face to face and on spot administration and collection of the instrument, all the copies administered were retrieved. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

For decision making, means scores of 2.50 and above were regarded as positive responses and mean scores less than 2.50 were regarded as negative responses.

Results:

Table 1: Ways through which civic education can empower citizens for political development:

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	DEC
	The following are the ways through which civic education empowers the citizenry in the state			
1.	It gives information on the system of the government, the nature and powers of the offices to be filled in an election	3.86	0.93	Positive
2.	It gives information on the principal economic, social and political issues facing the nation	3.92	0.98	Positive
3.	It exposes the citizenry to the value of democracy, equal rights of male and female	3.04	0.62	Positive
4.	It informs the citizenry of the importance of peace and national reconciliation	4.14	0.98	Positive
5.	It helps to empower and motivate of the citizens to identify what areas of the political and government processes they can effectively participate in.	4.06	0.94	Positive
6.	It informs what the citizens do to influence political outcomes thereby improving the quality of governance	4.22	1.3	Positive
7.	It promotes citizen participation in the democratic and development process of any nation.	4.20	1.00	Positive
8.	It empowers citizens with requisite skills, motivation, and confidence to assert and exercise their rights and responsibilities in holding the government accountable.	4.08	0.96	Positive
9.	It is geared towards producing responsible and law abiding citizens.	4.02	0.94	Positive

cluster total	35.54	8.38
Cluster mean	3.94	0.93

Data in table 1 showed the ways through which civic education empowers the citizens. All the 9 listed ways attracted positive reapprove from the respondents as ways Civic education can empower the citizens as they all had mean scores well above 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.94 indicate that, the respondents agreed to all the identified as ways through which civic education can empower the citizens in the state.

Table 2: Ways voter education can empower the citizen for political development of the state.

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	DEC
	The following are the ways through which voter education can empower the citizens for political development of the state			
11.	It ensures that voters are ready, willing and able to participate in electoral process	3.82	0.82	Positive
12.	It encourages citizens to vote during election.	3.96	0.90	Positive
13.	It provides information on who is eligible to vote	3.74	0.80	Positive
14.	It provides information on where and how to register	3.78	0.83	Positive
15.	It provides information on how electorate can check voters list to ensure that they have been dully registered.	3.94	0.81	Positive
16.	It provides information on what type of elections that are being held, where, when and how to vote.	3.62	0.77	Positive
17.	It provides information on who the candidates are	3.42	0.71	Positive
18.	It informs on how election malpractices could be identified and handled	3.58	0.75	Positive
19.	It informs on how complaint could be filled as a voter	3.88	0.85	Positive
20.	It empowers voters to know the advantages and disadvantages of	3.94	0.91	Positive

participating in elections and making informed decision

cluster total	37.68	8.21
Cluster mean	3.76	0.82

Data in table II showed that all the listed, are the ways through which voter education can empower the citizens, as all of them attracted positive responses with mean scores well above 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.76 indicates that, the respondents agreed that all the identified, are ways through which voter education empower can the citizens in the state.

Table II: Consequences of not being politically educated by the citizens of the state.

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{X}	SD	DEC
	The following are the consequences of not being politically educated?			
1.	Failure to get involved in the choice of a good leader, leads to emergency of unpopular leaders.	4.08	0.98	Positive
2.	It brings about refusal to contest in elections	3.18	0.60	Positive
3.	It brings about refusal to vote during elections	3.48	0.72	Positive
4.	Refusal to register for voting exercise	3.90	0.88	Positive
5.	Refusal to crosscheck names on voters register	3.96	0.98	Positive
6.	Refusal to join political activities	3.88	0.82	Positive
7.	Refusal to support candidates for election	3.66	0.78	Positive
8.	Refusal to join campaign trips and rallies	3.60	0.74	Positive
9.	It brings about lopsided development	3.92	1.06	Positive
10.	Some groups are marginalized.	4.10	1.14	Positive
	Cluster total	37.76	8.70	
	Cluster mean	3.77	0.87	

Data in table III showed that all the listed consequences attracted positive responses with mean scores ranging from (3.18 – 4.10) which are all well above 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.77 indicate that the respondents agree to all the listed consequences as the consequences of the citizens not being politically educated.

Discussion:

The results as presented in table I showed that all the respondents agreed to all the items indicating that the identified are the ways through which civic education can empower the citizens of the state.

These ways include, giving information on the systems of government, the nature and powers of the offices to be filled, it giving information on the principal, economic, social and political issues facing the nation, exposing the citizenry to the value of democracy, equal rights of male and females, informing the citizenry of the importance of peace and national reconciliation and empowering and motivating the citizens to identify what areas of the political and government processes they can effectively participate in these ways in consonance with the findings and observation of Mehlinger (1997), Ganiyu (2011) and Wahab (2011). Other findings of the study are in line with Ismail (2011) and Oyesiku (2010) findings and observation which includes; informs what the citizens do to influence political outcomes thereby improving the quality of governance, promotes citizen participation in the democratic and development process of any nation, empowers citizen with the requisite skills, motivation, confidence to assert and exercise their rights and responsibilities in holding the government accountable and geared towards producing responsible and law abiding citizens. Falade (2008).

Results as presented in table 2: showed that the entire respondents agreed to all the listed ways of empowering citizens through voter education. The finding of the study on the ways civic education empowers the citizens includes: encouraging citizens to vote, providing information on who is eligible to vote; where and how to register; provides what type of elections are being held; where, when and how to vote. These are in consonance with findings by Awe (2000) and Okafor (2000). Another, findings of the study is that through voters education, people are provided informations on: who the candidates are; how election malpractices could be identified and handled; and the advantages and disadvantages of participating in election and making informed decisions. These findings agree with those of Ali (2012) and Abba (2014). Participating in an electoral process is of great importance while non participation gives birth to the emergence of bad governance by people who do not have the interests of their followers at heart and are insensitive to human problems with the resultant effect of creating artificial hardship for both those that participated and those who did not.

Results as presented in table 3; showed acceptance of all the listed consequences that follow when the people are not politically educated. This means that when people are not politically educated they not only refuse to

contest in election but equally refuse to vote during election, they refuse to register and belong to political groups. These again are in line with findings by Abba (2014). Other findings of the study include: refusal to support candidates for election; failure to get involved in the choice of a good leader; refusal to join campaign trips and rallies; lopsided development and marginalization of some groups. By implication any citizen who is not politically educated can never be an active participant, in politics, he/she lacks political consciousness and develops political apathy and leaves the choice of who leads at the mercy of the ignorant men and women who take up political positions to satisfy their own selfish interests.

Conclusion

It is important to note that political education is an empowerment tool for political development of both males and females who are up to 18 years and above. This is because the knowledge of political education will help to develop in the adults and the youth's adequate skills and sensitivities necessary to enable them take decision concerning political matters and offer the child the opportunity to learn his civic rights, duties and privileges. Despite the importance of this political education, a lot of people both old and young have not received political education in Anambra state. Perhaps this is the reason why election in the state is always associated with problems.

Based on the conclusions above, the following recommendations are made,

- (1) That government should make provisions for the teaching of civic education at all levels and also ensure that the citizens benefit from it either through formal or informal education.
- (2) That citizens should reciprocate government's efforts by availing themselves of the opportunities to receive political education.
- (3) That government should release fund that will enable the purchase or development of materials and equipment for the teaching of political education.
- (4) That government should enact a policy that will enhance the training and retraining of civic education teachers for successful implementation of civic education.

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