

Diagnostic Assessment of Senior Secondary School Students' Knowledge, Attitude, and Skills on Voter Education in Ogun State

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to assess the current knowledge, attitude and skill of senior secondary school students as a diagnosis on voter education in Ogun state. The sample was 192 senior secondary school II students randomly selected using multi-stage procedure. Three measuring instruments were used. They are knowledge test, attitudinal questionnaire, and mock voting assessment scale that were validated and passed for internal consistency. The results disclosed that performance was highest in attitude and lowest in knowledge. Also, performance varied across senatorial districts but it was similar between male and female. The study suggests for civic education teachers instructional strategy such as gamification that will raise the level of knowledge and skill in voter education, also suggests mock elections in the entire state to give practical training to the students for future skills on election.

Key words: diagnostic, assessment, voter education, gamification, competence

Introduction

Diagnostic assessment is variously defined. The common attributes of such definition are that it is a form of pre-assessment that allows a teacher to determine students' individual strength, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills prior to instruction. It is primarily used to diagnose student difficulties and to guide lesson and curriculum planning. The general purpose of diagnostics assessment is to identify students' prior knowledge and skills, their ability to pinpoint learning gaps, and their role in forming future instruction. Therefore, a diagnostics assessment should enable teachers to compare student performance not just within the class or school but also to the national picture (study.com, 2024). In this paper, diagnostic assessment is used to find out the strength and weaknesses of secondary school students' on voter education in order to give an informed suggestion to remediate these weaknesses through effective instructional techniques. The focus is on civic and voter education in the light of problems that Nigeria has been experiencing in our electoral processes since the coming of democracy again in 1999.

Many countries such as Ghana, India, and United States of America have initiated and adopted Civic Education programmes in order to teach their citizens about the dynamics of democracy, their rights and duties, the skills and virtues prerequisite to sustaining democratic government and remedying their civic deficits. These programmes are very important because they aim at developing citizens' capacity to participate in democratic processes, which including voting. Knowledge gained in the course of learning the various themes in civic education will help them to acquire knowledge, attitude, values, and basic skills needed to become responsible and disciplined members of their societies. Civic education competences comprise of civic knowledge, civic disposition and civic skills (Otache, et al., 2023). Civic knowledge is concerned with the contents or what citizens ought to know and include the ideal values and principles set forth in the nation's constitution. These ideals, values and principles serve as the benchmark for evaluating the performances of administration and political authorities (Mudau, 2022). Through civic knowledge, the citizens discover their roles in the governance of their country, such as voting responsibilities. Moreover, it can help to improve the quality of life of citizens in their neighborhoods, communities, and nation. It also exposes the citizens to the fact that their nation is interconnected with other nations in the world. It helps citizens understand what constitute international relations, how world affairs affect their own lives, and the security and well-being of their nation (Jega, 2022).

The focus on voter education within civic education is imperative in view of consistent reports of electoral violence across the country. For instance, widespread crises were reported in Lagos, Rivers and Kogi states during 2015, 2019 and 2023 elections. Voter education is meant to provide citizens of a democracy with basic tenets and process of participating in credible elections. Voter education is provided by the state itself, often through a National Electoral Commission which is politically non-partisan. The focus of voter education is on *how* to vote rather than *whom* to vote for (Polyas, 2019). Musa, et al (2021) explained that an appropriate voter education will provide citizens with knowledge regarding how to register to vote, how to complete ballot papers, and how their votes will contribute to the final result in an election. Voter education, as the name implies, is the combination of activities to help voters make rational choices about candidates and ballot measures, and then carry out those choices accurately, effectively and orderly when voting. It involves informing voters about the candidates, what a ballot will look like, how to use voting machines, where polling booths are located, how to register, and how to cast their votes properly to record free and fair election that leads to political stabilization (Ozioko, 2014). Voters' education is the bedrock of political stabilization in Nigerian democracy as the level of knowledge on the electorates in the polity matters a lot as it makes the electorates to understand the consequences of voting.

Voter Education could not be said to have received research attention of many Social Studies experts. Ogundare (1995, 2010) examined and described the then perspectives on elections held by a small number of students in Nigeria. The study showed that students had a very limited idea of the election process. Apart from this, Ocholi (2012) examined elections in Nigeria with a view to highlighting challenges, electoral reforms and democratic stability in Nigeria, using the 2007 general election and electoral reforms as a reference case study. The study showed that elections in Nigeria are characterized by massive rigging, thuggery and unbridled display of incumbency, hence the government that emerges from such controversial circumstances, becomes easily challengeable. In addition, there are various private institutions whose mission is to strengthen democratic values by increasing voter education. The focus is often on *how* to vote rather than *whom* to vote for. An appropriate voter education would provide citizens with knowledge regarding these three issues: *How to register to vote* - most democracies require citizens to first register as a prerequisite to voting in elections or referenda; *How to complete ballot papers* - filling out ballots incorrectly can mean an individual's vote is misrepresented in the final count or counted as invalid. Therefore, clearly

demonstrating how ballots are to be correctly filled out is essential; *The electoral system* - it is important that citizens know how their votes will contribute to the final result in an election (Polyas, 2019).

Research in voter education is trending fast in countries with democratic governance such as India, Austria and Nigeria. However, such studies have concentrated on problems of electoral processes and limitation to such success. For instance, Agyiri (2012) assessed voter education on electoral processes in New Juaben municipality India by determining factors contributing to delays in voter education, analyzed voters perception on effectiveness of voter education and the strategies of promoting voter education. These were carried out against the background that voter education normally delays and do not achieve its intended purpose. The descriptive research design was used by adopting the quantitative method of data collection and analysis. Data was collected from 370 voters using questionnaire. The main factors contributing to delays in voter education were found to be improper planning and late release of funds. A recommendation made was for the management of Electoral Commission to plan properly for the electoral processes and to ensure that each plan process is supported by a budgetary provision. The findings of this study are helpful to our present study by providing information on strategies for promoting voter education.

In Austria, Zeglovits & Aichholzer (2014) researched on turnout of young voters aged 16 to 17. Potential consequences of lowering voting age to 16 have been discussed in recent scientific and public debates. The study examined turnout of young voters aged 16 to 17 in Austria, the first European country that lowered the general voting age to 16. The researcher used unique data taken from electoral lists of two recent Austrian regional elections. The results support the idea that the so-called “first-time voting boost” is even stronger among the youngest voters as turnout was (a) higher compared to 18- to 20-year-old first-time voters and (b) not substantially lower than the average turnout rate. The researchers concluded that the findings are encouraging for the idea of lowering voting age as a means to establish higher turnout rates in the future. This research work on young voters’ age in Austria supports the desire to expose secondary school students to voter education in Nigeria to improve students’ knowledge, attitude and skills in voter education. Osalusi & Yemi-Fadipe (2018) examined the influence of ethnic background on the perception of youths to voter education and attitude towards voting in Southwest, Nigeria. The study adopted a description research

design of the survey type. The sample was made up of 2400 male and female undergraduates who were selected using multi-stage sampling procedure. A questionnaire was used for data collection and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Ethnic background was found to have moderate level of influence in voting behavior of youths but no influence on the perception of youths' attitude towards voting.

The study therefore recommended that government should organize voter educational programme in the media such as radio, television and newspaper to educate youths who have not got the opportunity to be involved in the voter education so that the negative attitude of the youths on ethnicity will be corrected. Some of the recommendations do not include the formal education in voter education for the secondary school youths to improve youths' knowledge and skills towards voting. Ozioko (2014) researched on need for Voter Education for political stability in Nigerian democracy. The researcher promised his work on the fact that democracy as the most widely accepted form of Government cannot thrive without political stability and effective electoral system. The work is targeted at orienting and re-orienting voters on the electoral process in Nigeria. The paper considered the possibilities of the voters to imbibe good democratic political culture and possible features of sustaining them to have a favorable political stability and national development. The study did not focus on teaching and learning of Voter Education in the classroom rather it is to orientate Nigerian voters on political stability.

Objectives of this study

For the purpose of diagnostics assessment, the query is: how competent are secondary school students on these objectives on voter education? It is therefore, a matter of research interest to undertake diagnostic assessment of students' performance on knowledge, attitude and skills of students on voter education covering the objectives of voter education as stated above. It is also important to examine, if any, differences between male and female students as well as among students across the three senatorial districts of Ogun state. Accordingly, One research question and two hypotheses were raised to guide the study:

Research Questions

1. Which of the three competences (knowledge, attitude and skills) will record highest and lowest mean scores in senior secondary school students' test in civic and voter education?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: there is no significant difference in the knowledge, attitude and skill of students' in voter education diagnostic test based on senatorial districts.

H₀₂: there is no significant difference between male and female students in their knowledge, attitude and skill in voter education diagnostic test.

Methodology

The study employed sample survey design. The population was all the senior secondary school year two students (SSII) in the three senatorial districts in Ogun state, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 192 students. Their selection involved a multi-stage procedure. One local government area was simple randomly selected from each of the senatorial districts. The second stage, one school was also simple randomly selected from each of the local government areas. From each school an intact class of SSII was selected by simple random sampling where the school had more than one arm. The distribution of the participants showed that: the school in senatorial A had 62 participants (24 male and 38 female), the school in senatorial B had 59 participants (28 male and 31 female), while the school in senatorial C had 71 participants made up of 31 male and 40 female students. Three measuring instrument were used: Civic and Voter Education Knowledge Test, Civic and Voter Education Attitude Questionnaire and Civic and Voter Education Skill Assessment Scale.

The Civic and Voter Education Knowledge Test (CVEKT) is a 30-item multiple choice voter education test with four options per item. It was constructed following the standard procedure for test construction which involved the use of a test blue print, subjecting the items to expert's scrutiny, and ensuring that the items satisfied appropriate discrimination and difficulty indices level. Split-half method was used to determine its reliability by administering it to a set of 60 respondents once at a local government outside the location of the main study. Guttman Split-Half formula indicated a reliability coefficient of 0.700.

The attitude of students was measured with Civic and Voter Education Attitude Questionnaire (CVEAQ) designed by the researcher using an adapted Electoral Management design of Sisk, (2017). It elicited students' dispositions on school and society voting. Issues covered include shunning political and social violence during voting, steps in voting, support during election, respecting voting result, tolerating others during election, and promoting peaceful voting. Participants responded by indicating their level of agreement or disagreement with each item on a seven-point scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree and strongly disagree. They were weighted from 7 to 1 respectively. Cronbach alpha reliability was used to determine its reliability which was found to be 0.887.

The Civic and Voter Education Skills Assessment Scale (CVESAS) was used to observe the students' skills in a mock voting session. The first section sought data on the respondents' school, class number, location, sex and age. The second section has three parts: Pre-voting with five items, voting activities with eight items and post-voting with four items. Each part has a rating scale for assessing each student's skills on voting. In order to determine its reliability, two raters were employed to observe the voting skills of pilot participants and assess them. The participants were from a location outside the main study. The researcher then correlated scores of the two raters by using Spearman-Brown Coefficient to obtain the reliability coefficient of 0.795. Data collection lasted for one week. The data collected from the three instruments were analyzed by a computer analyst, with minimum score, maximum score, mean score, standard deviation, frequency count, t-test and F-test.

Results

Findings are reported according to the research question and hypotheses.

Research question: Which of the three competences (knowledge, attitude and skills) will record highest and lowest mean scores in senior secondary school students' test in civic and voter education?

Descriptive statistics of students' performance on knowledge, attitude and skill in voter education is presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of students' performance

Competences	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	% of Mean	SD
Knowledge	192	25	3	28	18.98	63.3	4.767
Attitude	192	191	14	205	182.59	86.9	25.622
Skill	192	24	39	63	49.62	70.9	4.754
Valid N (listwise)	192						

Table 1 above shows the three types of learning competences considered in this study and the number of participants, 192. Since the measuring instruments for the three competences were not the same, it becomes necessary to render their mean scores in percentage for the purpose of comparison. Accordingly, Attitude has the highest mean score (86.9%) while knowledge has the lowest mean score of 63.3%. But performance in knowledge was more compact among the participants with SD equals 4.77

Hypothesis one: There is no significant difference in the knowledge, attitude and skill of students' in voter education diagnostic test based on senatorial districts.

Descriptive statistics of students' performance on knowledge, attitude and skill in voter education based on senatorial districts is presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics based on senatorial districts

Senatorial	statistics	Knowledge	Attitude	Skill
		e		
Sen A	Mean	14.87	187.52	45.74
	N	62	62	62
	Std. Dev.	4.091	29.474	1.810
Sen B	Mean	21.92	184.32	53.54
	N	59	59	59

	Std. Dev.	3.059	16.276	4.998
	Mean	20.13	176.85	49.76
Sen C	N	71	71	71
	Std. Dev.	4.014	27.517	3.437
	Mean	18.98	182.59	49.62
Total	N	192	192	192
	Std. Dev.	4.767	25.622	4.754

Table two shows that on knowledge senatorial B has the highest mean score, 21.92. The SD of senatorial B which is 3.059 also indicates that the group is also most homogeneous in performance in knowledge than the two other groups. Senatorial C closely followed senatorial B with a mean score of 20.13 and a SD of 4.014. Senatorial A comes third in rank in knowledge. In all, the three groups have a mean of 18.98 which amounts to 63.3% and is considered a little above average. With respect to Attitude senatorial A came first with a mean score of 187.52, followed by Senatorial B with 184.32 mean score. Senatorial C is a distant third position to Senatorial A and B. In all, the level of attitude of the students' amounts to 86.9%, which is considered very good. On skill, Senatorial B came first with a mean score of 53.54, followed by Senatorial C with a mean score of 49.76. Senatorial A came third with a mean score of 45.74. In all, performance on skill is about 70%.

Table 3: ANOVA BASED ON SENATORIAL DISTRICTS

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Knowled ge	Between Groups	1648.513	2	824.257	57.882	.000
	Within Groups	2691.403	189	14.240		
	Total	4339.917	191			
Attitude	Between Groups	4024.834	2	2012.417	3.134	.046
	Within Groups	121359.661	189	642.115		

	Total	125384.495	191			
	Between Groups	1841.555	2	920.778	70.301	.000
Skill	Within Groups	2475.445	189	13.098		
	Total	4317.000	191			

Table 3 shows that there is significant difference in the level of knowledge of the students in the three senatorial districts ($F_{(2, 191)} = 57.882$, $P < 0.05$). Similarly, there is significant difference in the level of attitude of the students in the three senatorial districts ($F_{(2, 191)} = 3.134$, $P < 0.05$). Also, there is significant difference in the skill of the students in the three senatorial districts ($F_{(2, 191)} = 70.301$, $P < 0.05$).

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between male and female students in their knowledge, attitude and skill in voter education diagnostic test.

Students' performance based on gender is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: t-test analyses of male and female performance

Competences	gender	N	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	Sig.
Knowledge	Male	83	19.34	5.066	.556	0.908	190	0.365(NS)
	Female	109	18.71	4.530	.434			
Attitude	Male	83	183.59	16.719	1.835	0.472	190	0.638(NS)
	Female	109	181.83	30.780	2.948			
Skill	Male	83	49.73	4.882	.536	0.279	190	0.781(NS)
	Female	109	49.54	4.676	.448			

Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference between male and female in the three competences tested that is, male and female were similar in their performances in knowledge, attitude and skill.

Discussion of findings

Findings on research question about the competence that has the highest mean score and the one that has the lowest mean score show that Attitude has the highest mean score whereas knowledge has the lowest mean score. This may be accounted for with the popularity of election in the present day Nigeria. Nigeria conducted a general election on February 25, 2023 and this study was conducted May, 2023. Besides, the students might have been exposed to classroom election which could have created positive attitude on election. Low level of knowledge on election could be explained with the fact that some of the concepts have not been experienced because of their age. This finding negates the findings of Akinlabi (2022) that Civic Education promotes political knowledge and internal political efficacy of students. But our finding corroborates Obiagu et al, (2023) that indicated positive attitudes towards all selected democratic values among university students including election.

Hypothesis one tested level of uniformity in the three senatorial districts on knowledge, attitude and skill in voter education. It was found that there was wide disparity among the districts in the three competences. This could be explained with such factors as school factor (facilities and books), student factor (regularity and punctuality) and environmental factor (availability of political posters). This lack of uniformity that was found is similar to the findings of Bajpai (2012) on knowledge, attitude behavioral and electoral practices of voters in the State of Uttar Pradesh in India. He found that in the eighteen districts there were variations on knowledge about voter list, on attitude and faith in electoral practices. The findings of this study are also partly similar and dissimilar to the findings of Kazimi et al (2014). The authors found that before training participants had low level of positive attitude (whereas, this study found high level of positive attitude): low level of knowledge, similar to this study.

Hypothesis two tested gender differences in the three learning domains and found no significant differences. This is in disagreement with the findings of Williams et al (2021) whose study indicated gender based disparity in the impact of electoral victory on satisfaction with democracy, with its magnitude being comparatively small among women. On the other hand, the findings of this study negates the conclusions of Obiagu et al (2023) study that female students scored significantly higher than their male counterparts in all measured democratic principles including elections.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of this study was to assess senior secondary school students' knowledge, attitude and skill on voter education in Ogun state. It is intended as a diagnostic analysis for the introduction of gaming instructional strategies for civic and voter education. The results disclosed that performance was highest in attitude and lowest in knowledge. Also, performance varied across senatorial districts but it was similar between male and female based on students' knowledge, attitude and skills. Therefore, Civic education teachers should be encouraged by school authorities to pay attention to gender groupings when they have to employ any teaching strategies because the strategies may have differential appeals to male and female students. The study suggests for civic education teachers to use instructional strategy that will raise the level of knowledge and skill in voter education. The study also suggests inclusion of topics related to need, importance and procedure of election in senior secondary school civic education curriculum. The study also recommends mock elections in the entire state to give practical training to the students for future skills on election.

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