

**Perception of Pre-Service Teachers Towards Introduction of Community Service  
Learning in Civic Education Programmes**

Soluade, Zabur Olayiwola  
College of Social and Management Sciences  
Department of Sociological Studies  
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.  
[soluadeola@gmail.com](mailto:soluadeola@gmail.com)  
[soluadezo@tasued.edu.ng](mailto:soluadezo@tasued.edu.ng)  
+2348035754275

Rosenje, M. Olapeju  
College of Social and Management Sciences  
Department of Political Sciences  
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.  
[rosenjemo@tasued.edu.ng](mailto:rosenjemo@tasued.edu.ng)  
08074294124

Idowu, Samuel Olayinka  
Department of Sociological Studies  
Lagos State University of Education,  
Ijanikin, Lagos State.  
[idnoblelaw@yahoo.com](mailto:idnoblelaw@yahoo.com)  
09055136488, 08029754089

Balogun Olukunle Olagunju  
Tai Solarin University of Education,  
College of Specialized and Professional Education  
Department of Adult and Development Education  
Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria.  
[balogunoo@tasued.edu.ng](mailto:balogunoo@tasued.edu.ng)  
[Kunlegunju1961@gmail.com](mailto:Kunlegunju1961@gmail.com)  
08033550362/08051712904

&

Agboola, Rukayat Opeyemi  
College of Social and Management Sciences  
Department of Sociological Studies  
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria.  
+23408166754216

## **Abstract**

This study assessed the perception of the Civic Education pre-service teachers on their engagement in Community service during the course of their studies. The study examined the perception of pre-services Civic Education teachers on the usefulness of community service and identified the contributions of community service projects to pre-service teachers' development of personal skills. The study employed descriptive survey research design. One hundred and twenty-five (125) students were selected to form the sample for the study using stratified sampling technique. Data collected through structure questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings showed that the urge to contribute to a better society and the usefulness of the service to the community encourages majority of the students to participate in the project and community service helps to develop a major degree of competency in the participants. Based on the findings, it is 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 learn the potential of community service, as it can help students to develop positive skills and gain more knowledge while in their field work.

**Keywords:** Perception, Community service, pre-service teachers, Civic Education programme

## **Introduction**

Citizenship or Civics Education is construed broadly to encompass the preparation of young people for their roles and responsibilities as citizens and, in particular, the role of education (through schooling, teaching and learning) in that preparatory process (Kerr, 2004). Civic Education, whenever and however undertaken, prepares people of a country, especially the young, to carry out their roles as citizens. Talabi (2012) sees Civic Education as life education, and he stressed that Civic Education is a specialized aspect of general life education. Civic Education is the education in citizenship or life of a citizen. Adie (2015) posited that Civic Education prepares people for citizenship roles, democratic behaviors and attitudinal change necessary for peaceful co-existence in society. Meneke and Nwebo (2013) defined Civic Education as a subject that teaches the rights and duties of a citizen and the way the government of our country works. Civic Education includes developing skills for democracy, such as how to contact representatives and how to register to vote. Mbang, et al., (2014) stressed that Civic Education is a discipline that inculcates sound moral values of democracy and good governance in the youths. Civic Education seeks to transmit skills necessary for participation in a civic society as it prepares young people to fill in their roles and responsibilities as members of a community (Enu, et al., 2017). Civic Education aims at helping young people to develop the ability to make decisions so that they can participate in determining the structures and compositions of the government of their own country and learn how to become actively informed and responsible citizens (Igba & Nwafor, 2016).

The major focus of Civic Education in Nigeria is to train students to become better, participatory and effective citizens; develop in children a positive attitude to citizenship; development of skills for 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 teachers, government officials, policymakers and curriculum experts in Nigeria today is that Civic Education has failed in achieving its salient objectives of developing positive attitudes in the objective of using the Civic Education programmes as a vehicle. Furthermore, Civic Education objectives and the development of skills by offering selfless services to the community the students reside 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's Civic Education classroom today. Therefore, to change students' attitudes, there will be a 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 an impact on the life of the community they

reside in. These will in-turn change the perception of students in their roles in community and national development (Soluade, et al., 2023a).

Governments across the nation are already overwhelmed by the enormous responsibilities that they have to render to the nation. Therefore, Civic Education should prepare students to play an active selfless role in their society and national development. Our Civic Education curriculum (classroom engagement) must not only center on teaching 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 inquiry and participatory instincts towards solving their communal and environmental challenges (Soluade et al., 2023b). Recently, in many schools the world over, community service participation is becoming an integral part of a student's education (Azmina & Nasreen, 2020). Some schools require 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 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 the negative attitude of the youths towards their community and national development. At the local level, everybody is always expecting the government to actually provide everything without the citizens' roles in nation building. For a nation to develop, citizens must be ready to perform their social responsibilities and be 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 behavior among the youths, which will also help to prepare them for adulthood.

Community service learning has been integrated into the educational programme of most of the developed world, but it's only gaining little recognition within the curriculum of Nigerian schools and 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 the Civic Education programme.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- i. Examine the attitude of pre-service Civic Education teachers towards engaging in community service
- ii. Identify the contributions of community service projects to pre-service teachers' development of personal skills

### **Research Questions**

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

## Literature Review

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 to a diverse range of non-profit community organizations, schools and other community-based initiatives, both local and international (Badmus, et al., 2024). Community service learning helps students to develop a better sense of self, test and deepen knowledge gained in classroom settings, develop as active citizens, and contributes to a more equitable society (Azmina & Nasreen, 2020; Walter, 2010). Community service can be termed as a method under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized community service experiences. It involves an effort made to meet the needs of the community. Community service learning is ways by which students help others by volunteering their time, effort, or talents, and is done 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). It's an educational method that prepares students to face the real world's complex realities and solidarity (Bon et al., 2019).

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 most of their volunteer labour to local communities, and in fact learn more than they teach. CBL is primarily designed to meet the 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 incentives to students or employees alike to volunteer their time to community service programmes. From volunteering to participating in such charity events like walks or runs, institutes continue the practice of 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 endeavors beyond the classroom through independent ventures and/or school sponsored activities (Camara, 2012). Community service gives students the opportunity to participate and reflect on services that benefit the local community as part of their curricular activities (Tijmsa, et al., 2020). The main focus of CBL is on the education of students rather than communities. Community service learning at university is not just about volunteering; it is about providing a service while also ensuring that learning happens (Parker et al., 2009). It helps students to contribute to the development of. It also aims at developing a positive attitude in the students that makes them think about how they can make a difference to 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. Community Service 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 find personally insightful for future use. Students engaged in community service often find it beneficial to pause and reflect on how they are changing society for the better. Community services give the students' the opportunity to actively participate in innovative projects, collaborating with communities in order to meet their needs within the complex reality of their multi-faceted environment (Bon, et al., 2019).

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 for those who need it most. Community Service 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 experience of active citizenship along with more direct community engagement (Webb & Burgin, 2009). CSL can provide access to new ideas and approaches, valuable university resources and enhanced organizational capacity (Lucas, et al., 2013).

Clinton and Thomas (2011) examined the relationship between business students and community service learning and found that 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. Chan, et al., (2017) assessed the implication of 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, et al., (2019) examined the students' community service in respect to self-selection and effects on participation. Findings show no participation effects on community service self-efficacy, generalized trust, empathic concern and poverty, and students that-do community service differ significantly from non-participants in regard to their self-efficacy, generalized trust and empathic concern. Azmina and Nasreen (2020) assess the impact of community service learning on the social skills of students. Findings revealed that a community service learning program has a positive impact on the social skills of the students, and it also promotes better citizenship among students. Therefore, for Nigeria to achieve her national objectives, efforts must be geared towards increasing civic participation, including students' selfless service as a means of developing our society 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 the Civic Education educational programme.

## **Theoretical Framework**

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 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. Experiential learning helps to facilitate connections between undergraduate education and professional experience (Earnest, et al., 2016). Zelechowski et al., (2017) also stressed that experiential learning triggers the students' ability to retain knowledge that leads to their intrinsic motivation and interest in the course materials. Through experiential learning, learners participate in mental, emotional and social interaction during the learning procedure (Voukelatou, 2019). Community service is a form of experiential learning model in which students put into practical application their theoretical learning. The relationship between learning and community service is that experiential learning promotes learning through experience and students in the process of engaging in community service gain experience that will enhance their civic consciousness and make them to be productive members of their society. Both experiential learning and community service helps to concretize teaching and learning and encourages learning through experience.

## **Methods**

The study employed a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design focus on obtaining information systematically to describe a phenomenon, situation, or population. The design is adopted in this study to assess the perception of pre-service teachers towards introduction of community service learning in civic education programmes in Ogun state, Nigeria. 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 a simple random sampling procedure. Students are allocated to different activities within the school and outside the 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, the 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 was coded and analysed using descriptive statistics.

## **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?			
1.	Yes	109	87.2
2.	No	14	11.2
Total		123	100
What motivated you to take part in the project?			
1.	To contribute to a better society	117	93.6
2.	To help/work with others	0	0
3.	To put course content into practice	6	4.8
Total		123	100

The table above presents the students’ opinions on their reactions to the community service activities they embarked on. In responding to the question of which stated that “would you have taken part in the project if it were optional?” 109 (87.2%) of the respondents stated 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 the majority of the respondents are motivated to participate in 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 on are useful for inclusion in Civic Education course content?	124	4.77	.639	Very Useful
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 table showed the respondents’ opinions on the usefulness of community service. The result showed that item 1, which addresses questions about 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 major effects. This implies that community service is very useful to the community, addresses community needs and relevant to the Civic Education programme.

**Research Question 2:** How has the pre-service Civic Education teachers 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
	Grand Mean		4.53	.829	

Table 3 showed the respondents' opinions on the contribution of community service to skills development. The respondents were of the opinion that the 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 item 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 a 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

The study examined the perception of pre-service Civic Education teachers towards the introduction of community service learning in the 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 the majority of students to participate in the project. This finding supported the views of Webb and Burgin (2009) that community service provides supports the students to become active citizens and make them to make positive



impact 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 a society.

The finding of research question two showed community service is very useful to the community, findings the community needs and relevant to the Civic Education programme. This is supported by the findings of Clinton and Thomas (2011), who found out that community service leads to positive experience for 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 a 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 the 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 of Kolb (1984) and Salandinan (2012) on the experiential learning theory that knowledge can be acquired through experience.

## **Conclusion**

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

## **Recommendations**

- i. 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 a positive attitude of contributing to a better society towards the students.
- ii. Civic Education teachers should always identify services that are beneficial to the community which will help to strengthen school community relationships and contribute to Civic Education teaching and learning
- iii. Civic Education teachers should earnest the potential of community service as it can help students to develop positive skills and gain more knowledge while in their field work.
- iv. Civic Education teachers should incorporate practical practice into their teaching as it can help to develop a positive attitude through learning through experience.

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