

# Repositioning Civic Education for Political Stability in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The attainment of political stability appears not to be dependent on the type of government (democratic or authoritarian) or ideology (capitalism or communism) a country adopts. While some nations are democratic, capitalist and politically stable (e.g. USA), some are authoritarian, communist, and politically stable as well (e.g. China). Some countries are democratic, with a mixed economy and politically unstable (e.g. Nigeria). The paper articulated the positive impacts civic education can make to enhance political stability in Nigeria. This is done by attempting to explore ways in which civic education can be repositioned for the attainment of political stability in Nigeria. In its attempt, the paper considered the politically stable climate of authoritarian China and the unstable political climate of democratic Bangladesh. This is necessary as civic education optimally strives in a democratic setting, like Nigeria, though politically unstable. The definition of democracy as an institutionalized form of government is that which enables the citizens to express their rights and perform their duties with the required skills and dispositions, necessitated the paper's advocacy for the repositioning of civic education to focus more on teaching on responsibility. This is considered from the perspectives of individual and shared or multi-level responsibility.

**Key Words:** Civic education, political stability, Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

Every nation strives for political stability. It is for this very reason that each nation adopts a system of government that would enable her to meet this noble objective. Political stability is easily achievable in a democratic society. Nevertheless, while some countries have achieved political stability from a capitalist stance (e.g. America) others have from a communist stance (e.g. China). For some African states, it appears that political stability is attained when a single regime remains in power for so long that the citizens (e.g. Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda) feel its positive impacts. In some other African states, it could be when there

is a smooth transference of political power, of course after a 'democratic election', from one political party to another and at some point, a heeding to a cry for restructuring (e.g. Nigeria). As it appears, it is debatable and arguably the type of government (democratic or authoritarian) or ideology (capitalism or communism) under which political stability flourishes best. While some nations are democratic, capitalist and politically stable (e.g. USA), some are authoritarian, communist, and politically stable (e.g. China) and some others are democratic, a mixed economy and politically unstable (e.g. Nigeria).

It is because of these conflicting paradigms that Shepherd (2010) gave up on

the strive and clamour for 'political stability' which may sometimes mean 'absence of politics' in some African countries and went for 'stable governance.' The question remains whether governance begets politics or politics beget governance. If the latter is the case, then the uproar for political stability remains valid, as it is under such conditions that a nation could have good, benefiting and stable governance. The importance of political stability, which includes, the creation of a stable and well-functioning social and economic system, and good governance cannot be overemphasized. It behoves on all citizens of a state to contribute their quota to make the system work. Leaving the affairs of the state in the hands of few individuals do not and cannot promote democratic values and ideals of the society. It is only when most citizens, if not all take part in the politics of the state that good governance is sustained. Democracy, as we have it today, is synonymous with popular participation. It is true that a few persons can make an impact but we cannot deny the power and strength of the majority. Democracy strives on majority rule and minority rights. The issue of utmost concern here becomes how to get a vast majority to become functional, responsible, and stable citizens, building and leading a stable government in Nigeria. This is the mission civic education seeks to accomplish.

Civic education is simply the kind of education that prepares citizens for citizenship, equipping them with whatever that is needed to be good and responsible citizens and contribute to good governance. A formative endeavour inculcates in citizens the skill, knowledge, and consciousness needed to exhibit positive and participatory behaviours in their country. (Nwanna & Odoh, 2013). The knowledge of one's rights, roles and responsibilities and consciousness of both the good and bad in one's environment as a citizen of a country guarantees good and honourable behaviour. Without such disposition, the society is prone to slip back into the state of nature, a

state without a government, a state of war of all against all, a state of anarchy and doom, a state of brutality and inhumanness. It is also the mission of education to enlighten and liberate citizens from such a state. As civic education contributes to political stability and lack of proper education is equal to deformation and contributes to disorder and anarchy.

Hobbes (cited in Anderson, 2004) canvassed and advocated for the transition to a civil state and for civil science without which political stability becomes impossible. When people are not properly educated about civics, that is, their real rights, roles, and responsibilities to their nation, unfortunately, they will become unconsciously ignorant. Anderson regarded such as a dangerous position where one sees a right way of doing something yet cannot do it, sees the wrong way as the right way, at times does not know what one should know, etc. The manifestation of such ignorance is abysmal and destructive. This is absolutely the root of the instability of different dimensions. The paper attempts to articulate the implications of civic education for political stability in Nigeria. It will begin by presenting definitions and categorizations of civic education and situating it within the Nigerian context. The paper will then proceed to discuss the political stability and the Nigerian situation, which regrettably is that of political instability. Drawing from the definitions and categorizations of civic education, the paper will explore the major issues, which is repositioning of civic education for the attainment of political stability in Nigeria.

## **CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CIVIC EDUCATION**

There are many and different concepts of civic education as there are many scholars in the field of civic education. Scholars have conceptualized civic education in different ways. Civic education has been, most often considered as a special school subject, in which case it includes several lessons taught by a teacher.

However, it can also be a group of activities that students experience or a government policy (Kennedy, 2012). Before we go further, we must understand that the entire educational process of any given nation in the world is centred on building citizens with the right knowledge, values, and skills for the state. This is to say that the process of education embodies certain aspects of civics which according to Cohen (2009) include the impartation of knowledge and values which often lead to the inculcation of certain attributes. Based on the type of behaviour that the products of an educational system imbibe, there are two types of citizens- individualistic and Communal.

However, having individualistic or communal citizens depends on the kind of knowledge and values inculcated into the citizens and the educational policies of the concerned state. The inculcation of knowledge and values that focus on the manner in which citizens should behave in the society, thus stressing the relevance of such individual conduct will create individualistic citizens. However, the creation of communal citizens with a communal way of acting would need the inculcation of knowledge and values that emphasize the wider national sphere and shared aims/responsibilities, solidarity, etc. which are communal values (Cohen, 2009). The issue here is to know the real focus of civic education. Should civic education focus on all the aspects discussed above or a particular aspect at a given time? Various definitions and categorization of civic education will give answers to the questions. These definitions and categorization help for a better conceptualization of civic education.

The Federal Ministry of Education (cited in Lukman & Audu, 2014) defines civic education as a classroom-taught subject that became part of the school curriculum in Nigeria as a component of the basic education programme targeted at moulding young Nigerians into responsible and participatory citizens. According to

Enu, Unimna, and Odidi (2017), it is a training or education targeted at imparting skills and knowledge in citizens that would help them become good citizens ready to accept the responsibility that citizenship requires. In America, civic education is considered as a means by which America's democratic ideals are realised (Jamieson, 2013). It is an education that makes citizens ready to carry out their responsibilities, change their attitudes and behaviours, and imbibe democratic behaviours and citizenship roles required for peaceful coexistence (Adie cited in Enu, Unimna & Odidi, 2017) thus bringing about political stability. Crittenden and Levine (cited in Enu, Unimna & Odidi, 2017) also define it as all processes that have a significant effect on the beliefs, dedication, abilities, and actions (behaviours) of the citizens of a given nation.

Coming to the categorizations of civic education Lukman and Audu (2014) explain that civic education has three major components which are: civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic disposition. The teaching of civic knowledge imbues in citizens comprehension of the mechanisms of their political system, civic and political rights, and responsibilities. Civic skills give citizens the abilities to actively and diligently take part in political and civic processes, to scrutinize, take stands and defend issues of public concern. The inculcation of civic disposition develops citizens to be civic or democratic in their conduct. Examples of civic knowledge include

- Knowledge of human rights,
- Knowledge of one's right to vote and seek for votes,
- Knowledge of one's responsibilities to the nation such as respect for the rule of law,
- Knowledge of others' rights and their interests, and to the electorate, etc.

Civic skills include expertise in monitoring the performance of public office holders, mobilizing support for a good course, a development plan, a good policy,

etc. Examples of civic behaviours include critical reasoning, tolerance, readiness for compromise where necessary, negotiation and display of civility.

Lukman and Audu's categorization is related to Aviv's (2009) typology of civic education, which includes political knowledge, normative values, individualistic and communal civic behaviours. Some according to Aviv have seen that passing of political knowledge to citizens as indoctrination. Nonetheless, the central aim of civic education should be the impartation of a common civic knowledge base accepted and respected collectively by the citizenry. Such knowledge has its roots in facts about a nation, its citizens and political institutions, and in some basic terms in the social sphere. In Britain, such basic terms include natural rights, law, and order, justice, power, force, authority, representation, pressure, freedom, welfare, and individuality (Crick cited in Aviv, 2009). In Nigeria, such basic terms may be captured from emerging issues which may include peace and conflict resolution, value orientation, human rights education, family life, HIV/AIDS education, drug and its abuses, drug trafficking, youth empowerment, employment, human trafficking, the rule of law, democracy and governance (Nwanna & Osondu, 2013).

The normative value aspect of civic education according to Aviv (2009) include the teaching of values such as justice, freedom, and equality among others that help citizens understand the convolution of the encounters between various individuals in the society. The values could be categorized according to their relations to oneself, one's encounter with fellow citizens, and the society in its entirety and to the natural environment. In Nigeria, values that civic education must inculcate into citizens such as honesty, tolerance, self-reliance, etc. The individualistic civic behaviour emphasizes personal values such as independence, responsibility, and other characters that emanate in the sphere of politics. According to Aviv (2009), these

individualistic behaviours can be achieved from both aspects of political knowledge and normative values. While the political knowledge needed for this behaviour furnishes citizens with information that will enable them to partake in political activities in acceptable ways, values allow them to appreciate and maintain an individualistic philosophy in their encounters with institutions of the state. Normative values that inform individualistic civic behaviours imbue in citizens unique attributes that make each person stand out. The building of communal civic behaviour requires the teaching of the shared history of a nation and other political knowledge to inputs in the citizen that 'sense of commonality.' In Nigeria, the phrase "one Nigeria" is often used to create this sense though it appears to be appreciated less in recent times. The inculcation of normative values such as the will to sacrifice, loyalty, patriotism, and the likes develop communal civic behaviours.

Enyiaka (2018) opined that the three broad concerns of civic education in Nigeria are: politics, values, and emerging issues. According to him, one should be parts and parcel of politics of his country. Civic education promotes popular participation, national unity, good governance, human rights, rule of law respect for national symbols (e.g. coat of arms, national flag, the national currency, national anthem, and pledge); regards for national institutions (e.g. NYSC), the constitution, democratic tools, and processes. The values incorporated in civic education are virtues of obedience, honesty, cooperation, self-reliance, moral probity and character formation with particular emphasis on issues of consistency, tolerance, fairness, integrity, trust, commitment, etc. The emerging issues element, which are issues or problems plaguing the society comprise all the issues previously listed. From the categorization of civic education in Nigeria, it is clear that a lot has to be done in areas civic dispositions and behaviours. Civic knowledge without the disposition and skill to put the knowledge into practice is a

wasted knowledge. Thus, it is important to state here that civic behaviours should be clearly categorized as a core aspect of civic education in Nigeria not embedded in other categories. This is because it is by observation of one's behaviour that one could be said to be responsible or not.

Looking at all definitions and categorization of civic education, we can state categorically that the overarching aim of civic education is the formation of responsible citizens without which any society rots in the vice of instability of ascending magnitude. The responsible citizenry is those that have civic knowledge and values, imbibed and display civic behaviours. Nigerians are suffering in the hands of fellow citizens who abysmally either lack the civic disposition to do what is right or do not know what civic behaviour is all about. For the lack of civic traits, we find many Nigerians acting callously all in a bid to fight for their rights and at the same time neglecting the duties of putting the rights of others into perspective and neglecting to follow due process in pursuance of their rights. Elections into political offices in Nigeria are without doubts, a matter of do or die affair, political assassinations have become rampant in our dailies, no free and fair elections anymore, which has resulted to mutual fear and citizens being politically apathetic, which civic education is out to fight.

### **UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL STABILITY AND THE NIGERIAN SITUATION**

Like many other concepts, many people from different spheres of life have defined political stability from different dimensions. There are mixtures of broad and narrow definitions of political stability. Political stability can be broadly defined as the nonexistence or absence of regular attacks on lives and property, widespread violence and civil conflict within the boundaries of a country (Sottilotta, 2013). From a narrow perspective, Sottilotta (2013) defines political stability as the absence of

structural change brought upon a country by internal or external agents. An example is the structural adjustment programme (SAP) introduced in Nigeria in 1986 by the Ibrahim Babangida regime. Shepherd (2010) defines political stability as a political environment that is predictable. Political stability can also be defined as the consistent rule of one particular regime. This is in consonance with the definition of political stability as longevity of government (Sottilotta, 2013) without the possibility of collapse (Alesina, Özler, Roubini & Swagel cited in Uddin & Masih, 2016).

In support of the above definition, Encyclopedia Britannica (cited in Nomor & Iorember, 2017) defined political stability as the integrity and durability of an existing government. To accord this quality of reliability and durability to an existing regime, a measurement of the extent of violence and terrorism in the country is necessary. If the citizens of a country under a particular regime are contented with the regime and subsequently the ruling political party in which case there will not be high-level destabilizing social strife, then we can talk about political stability. This entails the absence of rivalry between political parties in a country (Uddin & Masih, 2016). This implies that whatever problem the country experiences are resistible without the development of more disturbances that may continue to hunt the people. However, Nomor and Iorember insisted that the civic-minded countries should abhor autocratic government and revolutionary ideas.

To cap it up, Paldam (2016) conceptualizes political stability as including, a stable political system, stable governance, internal law, and external stability. Shepherd's (2010) argument on political stability as experienced in some African countries (e.g. Rwanda) equates it to stable governance. Shepherd also talked about political stability from an administrative angle where he sees it as respect for the rule of law, the creation of powerful institutions as against individuals,

a bureaucracy that is responsive and competent, and a favourable business environment for investment and low level of corruption.

Political stability or instability does not just happen on its own. There are both predictors of political stability and instability as are clearly highlighted in the definitions stated above. From all indications as seen from the definitions, Nigeria cannot claim to be politically stable. It is unfortunate that since the civil war that took place in Nigeria from 1967 to 1970, Nigeria has never experienced political stability. Prior to the civil war, instability was the product of these partition attempts by some quarters in the north before independence. There are also in recent times, the activities of the Niger Delta militants turned agitators, those of MOSSOB, IPOB, the extreme cases of Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen. These are indicators of the political instability of the highest order only second probably to the Civil War. The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced in Nigeria by the Babangida regime in 1986 is also seen as an indicator of political instability in Nigeria.

Reasons for political instability in Nigeria are not farfetched. Ignorance is a major factor here, not playing down on other factors like political apathy, false beliefs (Anderson, 2012), rivalry amongst the political parties in a nation (Chawdhury, 2016) and “money-bag” politics. A critical analysis of political instability in Nigeria highlights the issues of ignorance, political apathy, unfounded beliefs and rivalry between major political parties. Most leaders in Nigeria are careless, ignorant of their responsibilities, or just indifferent about them as are many Nigerian citizens. This is why the preoccupation of many of the Nigerian leaders is looting and acquisition of wealth for their families. In a situation as this, leaders who do the proper thing, working for the common good waving their selfish interest aside (which is very unlikely), are disdained by their families

and friends and labelled foolish and senseless. They believe that you cannot have the opportunity of climbing an *Iroko* tree twice in your lifetime; hence, once given the opportunity, you must use it to enrich your family and friends. There is an obnoxious belief that “opportunity comes but once,” thus engineering leaders to loot the government before the expiration of the tenures. This is the genesis of our problems in Nigeria. The electorate seems ignorant of what they should expect from their leaders or ‘about to be elected’ leaders or are simply frustrated with leadership in Nigeria, therefore focusing only on the individuals’ temporary gains and selfish interest. Some in the northern part of Nigeria just cannot understand the possibility of a candidate from another part of the country winning the presidential election outside the munificence of the northern elite. They are unwilling to let go of the belief that leadership of Nigeria is their God-given birth right. Therefore, they participate in voting not out of knowledge of rights and responsibilities but because of this false belief. They believe that the massacre of those that do not share their faith during political or religious conflict gives them better positions in heaven. The mixture of religion and politics is a headache to Nigerians. Born to rule is not only a slogan but also a creed; professed and practiced. There is always mayhem in the country if such belief is subjected to scrutiny either by words or by actions. Parties are formed and structured along ethnic divides, which promotes or provide reasons for national disunity and instability. The All Progressives Alliance (APC) is constantly on the neck of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and vice versa.

Many in the south can afford to show patriotism only when they are being favoured. Such patriotism or loyalty, therefore, is to a particular individual or political aspirant, not Nigeria. Most citizens come to the polling units only to sell their votes to wealthy politicians regardless of their credibility and ingenuity. With such display of corruption on the part of those

who sell their votes, apathy, and ignorance on the part of those who do not care to vote, and false beliefs, it becomes difficult for a nation with such citizens of negative mentality to experience development and stability in all spheres of life. Even in such situation, individuals suffer more because of the failure to vote good and credible leaders breeds impediments to both the individual and national advancements. The achievement of individual targets becomes difficult if not impossible. Voting irresponsible persons into power based on wealth or due to loyalty emanating from the bribe, familiarity, ethnic bias, rigging elections through stealing of ballot boxes and the likes put a nation and its citizens in jeopardy. It takes a particular type of education to correct the deficiencies in understanding the rights and responsibilities that Nigerians (both the young and elderly, leaders and the led) should display in different spheres and under differing circumstances. This type of education, which is most suitable for democratic dispensation and must not be limited to classroom activities, is civic education.

### **REPOSITIONING CIVIC EDUCATION FOR POLITICAL STABILITY IN NIGERIA**

In a democratic dispensation, where punishment is used minimally to maintain order, and where there is no room for capital punishment, civic education becomes a viable tool to aid the building and maintenance of a politically stable society. Hobbs (cited in Anderson, 2004) holds that without a well-educated citizenry, political stability is almost impossible for any nation. Education in general and civic education, in particular, is much more useful in democratic regimes thus must be well utilized in Nigeria. White (cited in Aviv, 2009) explains that in order for a democratic society to exist, its members must hold a democratic nature. Lukman and Audu (2014) posit that civic education is supposed to deepen the democratic culture in Nigeria. Yet, Nigeria is in actuality a democratic

nation without a democratic nature and culture hence, political stability associated with democracy is farfetched. It is sad to note that democracy in Nigeria is such that is preached and never practiced. For example, the use of the pronoun 'we' in democratic settings indicates that democracy is a practice which promotes the notion that all citizens are of equal worth (Ministry of Justice Stockholm, Sweden, 2000; Stahl, 2001) therefore, have the collective moral responsibility towards the state. In Nigeria, 'we' is used rather deceive instead of creating an understanding of togetherness in the achievement of common goals.

According to Hengsbach (cited in Stahl, 2001), ideas that form democracy should reflect on the fundamental attitudes of citizens. Such attitudes include responsibility for the whole, tolerance and moral valour. He fundamentally sees democracy as an institutionalized form of responsibility thus, democracy is considered as the ground under which responsibility can function effectively. In another sense, democracy evokes the sense of shared responsibility and through such practice, a democratic dispensation is enhanced to a point of breeding political stability, individual and national development. This is to say that civic education in a democratic Nigeria must focus on responsibility as it pertains to the citizenry as an indivisible unit and to citizens as distinct members of the society. The sense of a collective moral responsibility which civic education can form in a people is what enables citizens to reason and decide collectively despite differences. The inability to understand and act according to the above stance despite the frequent use of 'we' in the political sphere is the root of most of the conflicts that ensue in Nigeria. After the use of 'we' during political campaigns, some sections of the society are marginalized. While some sections of the Nigerian state believe they have more right to rule, the other section believes that they are of higher intelligence, therefore, would be better rulers. The

different regions allow no room for interdependence on each other, together with seeing it as a duty to resolve conflicts without violence.

Another point that highlights responsibility as an indispensable element for citizens is the practice of a representative democracy in Nigeria. It is mainly for this reason that representative democracy forms one of the topics covered in Nigeria's civic education curriculum. According to Pasternak (2011), the thing with representative governments, unlike some other forms, is that responsibilities are clear-cut (Pasternak, 2011). This responsibility is embedded in citizens' participation, which is at the root of democracy. Part of the main goals of civic education is the teaching of skills essential for participation in a democratic state (Enu, Unimna & Odidi, 2017). This participation is not restricted to voting or being voted for but stands in policy formation. This is why Pitkin (cited in Pasternak, 2011) reiterates that under democracy, citizens are seen as being ultimately responsible for government policies. The implication of this is that all citizens who are qualified to participate in the political process (which include processes of policy formation) of a democratic nation are as responsible as the government in the political stability of that country. Therefore, the citizens including the led and leaders have a collective moral responsibility in a democratic system this is despite arguments that the actions of a representative government are not always necessarily that of the citizens.

Lei's (2013) writing about political stability in China, a country led by an authoritarian leader (the Emperor), analysed the arrangement of the country's political space from the angle of responsibility instead of power. Power is usually shared among the three arms of government in any society. However, along with power, responsibility and blames are also shared. While presidential, senatorial, gubernatorial, chairmanship candidates and other political aspirants struggle to get the power, even as

their supporters struggle to help them clinch it, the taking up of responsibilities is not done with the same enthusiasm. The high level of enthusiasm with which politicians canvass for votes during elections, promising heaven and earth if voted in, is not the same when voted in, the reverse becomes the case. If politicians should keep their electoral promises, Nigeria will become much better and stable. The argument of Lei's thesis is that the multi-responsibility or active involvements of all Chinese citizens in civic life, social life and governance are the explanation for the political stability that China continues to enjoy despite the rise of contentious politics. For the authoritarian central government of China to achieve this configuration of multi-level responsibility, it allotted additional power to the local governments. This is because with more power and independence granted to the local governments came more responsibilities which were clearly defined. The local leaders had responsibility for the sustenance of political and social stability.

Many believe that political stability strives more in a democratic dispensation and less in non-democratic regimes. Nevertheless, studying the politics and governance of some Asian, African and some other developing countries there is a revelation that regardless of the level of democracy in a particular country, political stability can take place (Nomor & Iorember 2017; Lei, 2013; Shepherd, 2010). The growth of democracy in some South Asian countries has not introduced new waves of political stability. According to Chawdhury (2016), long after post-colonial eras and the restoration of democracy, political instabilities remain an unquenchable part of the political culture of South Asian countries like Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. It is sad to note that democracy though uninterrupted in Nigeria since 1999 until date, has not brought about political stability.

It is pertinent to note that until Nigerians (the led and the leaders) become sensitive to their civic responsibilities, there



can be no political stability. As Hileman (2007) has pointed out, talks about civil rights saturates the polity however that of civic responsibility seems inadequate. It is comforting to know that under democracy, citizens enjoy many unalienable rights. Nevertheless, civic education tutors, of the unavoidable responsibilities that democracy confers on citizens, in general, must constantly remind students, youths and the public. They must know that the civic responsibility that democracy preaches is not to be practiced only by leaders but by the led as well (Hileman, 2007). While people are ready to fight and die for their rights, it is appalling how people are careless about their responsibilities. Citizens are fast in making demands of their rights while ducking their responsibilities. Civic education should constantly remind citizens that any country that has reached remarkable heights in political, economic or other forms of stability, does so only through the co-operation of all the citizens. The citizens make stable their nation through actively supporting and fortifying it through their civic duties. It is the duty of each number of a country to help his or her country reach great and enviable heights in development. Take the president of Singapore who moved the country from third to the first world for example. Examples of such citizens whether they are from the home country or international community should be embedded in civic education texts.

The lesson, however, sinks in better where the citizens cited are from the learner's home country. Such citizens could be found in the different regions of Nigeria despite the controversies that may be surrounding the value of their contributions. According to Dewey (1916), every curriculum or programme should adjust studies to the "desiderata of the subsisting community life (p. 191)." There are too many textbooks on civic education in Nigeria with so many different kinds of definitions. Most of these books and definitions are from foreigners and fewer

case studies from the country. Case studies from Nigeria should feature in civic education, not for the sake of sarcasm or positioning a particular tribe as better than others but for intelligent critique. Learners should be encouraged to imbibe good values as reflected in the civic education curriculum. Consequently, in selecting topics or themes to be taught, the focus must be to improve the situations and better lives. In Dewey's words, education should ameliorate the life we live in common, for the sake of a better future. Civic education was used in the era that Aristotle lived to assimilate citizens into the political and ethical life of their community, not another community (Enyiaka, 2018).

With the gross irresponsibility plaguing every Nigerian sphere, whether we remain in a democratic regime or fall back to the rule of soldiers, divide along ethnic or religious lines or remain as one, we are prone to continue to languish in political instability. We can simply state here that while responsibility leads to stability, irresponsibility leads to instability. Where there is a sense of responsibility, rights will be upheld and so would the rule of law, political apathy will disappear, leaders and the led will play their roles, agitations will cease and settled amicably, the country will move forward and stability emerged. A focus on responsibility in this paper does not make little the importance of rights. It is the stance of this paper that there cannot be the stability of any form where rights of citizens are disregarded. Both rights and duties are important for a stable state to emerge because rights without duties are simply irresponsibility. So, the paper rather advocates for a teaching of responsibility, which incorporates responsibility to oneself through knowledge of one's rights and to the community through knowledge of one's roles, duties or responsibilities. It is equally important to note that while the knowledge of rights serves the individual citizens of any given nation more, that of responsibilities serves the nation itself. Nevertheless, we must also state here that a

truly responsible citizen is one who knows his rights and respects the rights of others. Respect for others is at the core of democracy and this according to Hileman (2007) involves one's responsibility to others. Thus, responsible citizens see it as their study and responsibility to the product not only their rights but also the rights of others so as to move their nation forward.

Microsoft's Encarta Encyclopedia (cited in Hileman, 2007) defines democracy as a political system where a country's citizens rule through a particular form of government chosen by them. The responsibility of citizens is thus not a small one. It is citizen's responsibility to rule alongside the government of the day not just through their representatives. The rights and responsibilities of citizens must not be compromised or the nation will suffer. Selfishness should be abhorred. The notion of popular participation in a democracy spells out the need for the involvement of the populace in governance. However, this will amount to nothing except citizens are educated on civics. To get the populace especially those not of school age educated on civics, civil society groups must be involved. Civil society groups, which serve to checkmate the government, must help train citizens on civics to enable them to differentiate between wrong personal political ideologies and democratic ideologies.

The earlier we have better-informed electorates, the closer we get to political stability. The assumption that people know yet want to do the wrong thing must be totally discarded so that weight will be thrown into civic education for all not just schoolchildren. Civic education must serve to remind Nigerians that self-government is *their* right and responsibility under democracy. Hence, none should allow any entity to lure them into activities that make their country or state ungovernable. By attempting to make the government of the day ungovernable, they end up losing their own ability to govern.

Shepherd (2010) talked about political stability from the angle of respect for the rule of law and building of strong institutions not powerful persons. This means that stability is assured only when the rule of law is respected. All citizens should play according to rules of the game. It is vital to note here that responsible, not powerful individuals can only build strong and stable institutions. The African continent with particular reference to Nigeria, unfortunately, creates powerful individuals instead of powerful institutions. From the north to the south, east to west in Nigeria, are supermen and demi-gods that have neither regards for the rule of law nor respect for human rights. They are devoid of civic virtues and disposition, which are necessary for good governance and national stability. At the heart of political administration in Nigeria, we have the cabals who, be it as it may, they do not have the interest of the masses at heart. This group of citizens is power-drunk and wealthy thus controls everything happening in the country. The citizens are powerless before them. They water down the efforts of citizens as they work hard to contribute to their own governance, by so doing democracy in Nigeria today is a mask. Democracy is only in name but in essence Nigeria monarchical in line with Islamic culture. Consequently, Nigeria constitutions embody some Islamic practices that favours one part of the country more than the rest. This has created a sense of irresponsibility among citizens. Uprisings and revolutions from the marginalized areas are quenched with the power of ammunition or money. The most influential people from these areas are silenced with a bribe or are killed. Nowadays the egos of the powerful are massaged consciously or unconsciously, the responsibility and loyalty of many youths of little understanding turn to the cabals and the few rich individuals rather than their nation. We have incidences of Biafran agitation for self-determination, Niger Delta militancy, Boko Haram, and Fulani herdsmen attacks. These are pointers and

indications of instability in Nigeria. Nigeria needs responsible leaders not cabals, responsible youths and not militants, agitators and terrorism.

Nigeria cannot boast of any powerful institution that can checkmate the excesses of the government. The legislature and the judiciary are puppets under the dominance of the executive arm of government. The judiciary is nevertheless neither autonomous nor independent as it should be in democratic nations. Nigeria, as it stands, is witnessing a government of compromise. The Senate is toyed with as much as the judiciary. Nigerian Police is just a tool in the hands of our unscrupulous leaders. Other African countries are victims of this same problem. In 2009, in Madagascar, having stirred popular unrest against incumbent president Marc Ravalomanana, 34-year-old Andry Rajoelina (six years behind the constitutionally fixed lowest age), a former Disc Jockey (DJ), became the president of the country (Al Jazeera, 2017; Shepherd, 2010; Corbett, 2009; BBC News, 2009; Howden, 2009). The international community was concerned about the manner in which DJ Rajoelina became president (through the unconstitutional use of violence). However, they should have been more concerned about the kind of civic values and disposition he was likely to bring into the country's political arena. Al Jazeera (2017) reported that Rajoelina's regime left Madagascar in heightened poverty, income inequality and malnutrition.

If Rajoelina had been a young man with a good understanding of his civic responsibilities then he would have performed better than his predecessors perform and perhaps brought his country closer to stability. This, unfortunately, is not the case. In Madagascar, the problem of political instability is yet to end, as is Nigeria's. Nigeria has youths like Fela Durotoye who emerged as Nigerian youths' consensus presidential candidate under the aegis of PACT (Presidential Aspirants Coming Together) and Kingsley

Moghalu who is not backing down for 2019 presidential election. Has any group seen the need to run an unbiased civic knowledge, value, and behaviour check on these youths? Alternatively, are their supporters just carried away by their charisma? Responsibility goes beyond charisma. The atmosphere of political stability, which brings about development begins with the ability of citizens to not only know their rights (to engage in politics) but play their roles and perform their responsibilities effectively. When the gap between the right, role, and responsibility is merged, the room for political stability opens.

Aside from the advocacy for an extended focus on responsibility in the different dimensions that have been discussed above, civic education must also be effectively repositioned for outside school environment teaching that would bring about citizens that are more responsible. It may seem that the uneducated who are quite many in Nigeria are the ones posing or most likely to pose as threats to the country's political stability. This is because they are seen to have the tendency of becoming victims, manipulated but hard to govern, careless and choiceless when it comes to who will lead them and unnecessarily violent. As a result, some may argue that it would be difficult to educate such people on civics. This, however, may not be the case as many who are tagged uneducated have had one form of informal training or the other. Moreover, many who are tagged educated have been retagged or branded educated illiterates for not acting in consonance to what is expected of them. With the demonstration of civic dispositions drawn from civic education, one can hardly be described as an 'educated illiterate'. This is because if such a person with civic behaviours takes up any leadership position, he/she would hardly deviate from or appear ignorant of his/her responsibilities.

The bottom line, however, is that civic education can build on whatever background, little or magnificent, that any

class of citizens may have in order to have or get citizens that are more responsible. This is only possible when civic education is not confined or restricted only to classroom activity and exercise. There are many ways to effectively expose the formally uneducated and educated to civic education. These avenues include the church, the mosques, public forum where people comfortably relate with one another, the social media where many youths (educated and non-educated) converge, the radio which even the nomadic people are glued to, political gatherings and conventions. For the sake of these formally uneducated ones and some locals, civic education must also be translated into local languages like many media programmes are to making learning easier. Abdi, Ellis, and Shizha (2005) promote the adoption of a culturally sensitive civic education that can utilize formal and informal means to enlighten citizens on political processes, rights and democratic virtues.

One vital way of transmitting civic values in Nigeria outside school activities is political parties' rallies and political sensitizations. Chawdhury (2016) considers frail political culture and inefficient political parties as the reasons for political instability. Chawdhury reports that in Bangladesh, the opposition party uses what is called *hartal* to oppose the ruling party. The *hartals* have continued to increase since after their independence in 1976, disrupting the life and socio-economic activities of the citizens and causing political instability. In Nigeria political parties, especially the ruling (APC) and major opposition (PDP) are known for accusing each other of heinous crimes. The role of civic education is partly to help the citizens of a country from a young age learn and practice the political culture of high standards. This keeps the thoughts of young men who will become political leaders in future away from dirty politics based on dangerous taste for power without responsibility.

A strong political culture will birth strong and efficient political parties and

institutions. However, political parties can also help in the creation of a strong political culture. This is possible if adequate consideration is given to civic education as one of their civic duties. Political parties, their conventions, and rallies should be platforms for the display of high civic virtues and understanding the responsibilities of leaders to their people. In fact, the parties' ideologies must be tied to the rights of the citizenry that must be protected at all times, civic virtues and responsibilities that will guide leaders and members of the party. The political parties/institutions in conjunction with civil society groups and specialist in civic practices can create civic education programmes that can build in the Nigerian populace, the ideology of multi-level responsibility. These civic education programmes should contain civic responsibilities that are to be demanded by leaders and the electorate at the local/traditional, state, regional and national levels. This should prevent unnecessary attacks and the rain of abuses that political parties and their members mete out on each other.

Having noted that the 'uneducated' may not necessarily be the escalators of political instability, we must not feel relaxed with the 'educated'. In Nigeria, civic education ends in the secondary level of education. While those in tertiary institutions continue to go deeper into the study of English, Mathematics and other general studies, civic education is given no place in the scheme of things. Consequently, many Nigerian youths continue to get more and more education without being formed in civic values. This stock of youths may become lost in theories of their field, unconsciously neglecting their real civic responsibilities. Shepherd (2010) has predicted that with the way many African youths are becoming increasingly educated and their demography is growing all over Africa, we can expect the next wave of change in Africa to emerge from these factors. The generation of older politicians

appears now to be in control of Nigerian politics just as we have in many other African countries. Nevertheless, new poles of mobilisation are likely to be born as Shepherd has predicted when they do, we do not want to be left in the hands of mere theoreticians who are unmindful of reality. Neither do we want to be left in the hands of negatively radical formally educated youths with neither dignity nor regard for others' rights and their responsibilities to their subjects and nation- it may be a journey of no return.

To avoid the above scenario, civic education should be a lifetime exercise that must be taught in all levels of education. This means that civic education has to become a specialised field of study in Nigerian institutions of higher learning. This will enable Nigeria to produce specialists with not just first degrees but postgraduate diploma (PGD) M.Ed (Master in Education), MA (Master of Arts), M.Sc. (Master of Science) and doctoral (Ph.D.) degrees in civic education or civic studies. The implication is that civic education has to become well positioned as both an art and social science to engineering rich research in the field that will bring about the development of the polity. In addition, civic education should also become a General Studies Course for undergraduate and postgraduate students just like Research and Entrepreneurship Courses. Again, teachers of civic education for every level of education must be selected from a stock of specialists in civics who have been tested on their civic behaviours. How well can a politically disinterested teacher teach popular participation in politics?

The teaching of civic education must not be a mere formality but a targeted exercise to ameliorate the myriad issues that threaten hopes for political stability in Nigeria. Nigerians must from this point onwards, begin to overlook mere rhetoric and start judging presidential and all political aspirants and their manifestos based on the civic dispositions they have demonstrated in the past and present and the

civic knowledge and values embedded in their manifestos.

## **CONCLUSION**

The attainment of political stability appears not to be dependent on the type of dispensation (democratic or authoritarian) or ideology (capitalism or communism) under which it falls. It is clear that while some nations are democratic, capitalist and politically stable (e.g. USA), some are authoritarian, communist and politically stable as well (e.g. China) and some others are democratic, a mixed economy and politically unstable (e.g. Nigeria). The paper articulated the positive implications that civic education can have for political stability in Nigeria. It began by presenting definitions and categorizations of civic education and situating it within the Nigerian context. Civic education in Nigeria is categorised into three basic elements which are: politics, values, and emerging issues. The last element was found to be different from the categorisations of authors from other countries, which include civic knowledge, values, and dispositions (behaviours).

The absence of the important element of civic behaviours in Nigeria's categorization raised a concern. It was though figured that the element must have been embedded in the other two. Nevertheless, it was proposed that the element of civic behaviours be stated clearly as a core area in civic education in Nigeria. This is because the overarching aim of civic education as gleaned from the definitions and categorisations of civic education is the formation of responsible citizenry without which any society will rot in instabilities of ascending magnitude. Moreover, responsibility is better judged by citizens' behaviour.

In this article, political stability was discussed and an attempt made at sighting the indicators of political instability in Nigeria despite running a democratic government. Then the thrust of the paper,

which is the repositioning of civic education in order to draw out the positive implications of civic education for political stability in Nigeria, was tackled. The definition of democracy as an institutionalised form of responsibility and the condition, under which responsibility functions effectively, necessitated the need for the repositioning of civic education to focus more on responsibility. It is this paper's stand that a sense and practice of shared or multi-level responsibility maintains a democratic dispensation to a point that political stability is attained and continuously maintained. In addition, civic education can be used to enshrine this spirit of communalism. To effectively realize political stability in Nigeria, civic education must not only be a primary and secondary school classroom subject, rather it must become a specialised course to be learned in higher institutions and be taught by all means available like social media, radio, political gatherings, and other public forums. Political parties in conjunction with civil society groups and specialists on civics must also be involved in teaching civic education.

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