

**Exploring Pedagogical Innovations for Enhancing Teaching and Learning of****Civic Education in Nigeria**Muhammad, Sule<sup>1</sup> and Nasa'I, Muhammad<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Federal University Gusau<sup>2</sup>Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello  
University Zaria**Abstract**

This research explores pedagogical innovations aimed at enhancing the teaching and learning of Civic Education in Nigerian secondary schools. Given the need for an active, informed citizenry capable of contributing to democratic processes, the study highlights the importance of adopting innovative teaching methods that go beyond traditional, teacher-centered approaches. The research examines the role of Constructivist Learning Theory in promoting student engagement through pedagogical innovations such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Collaborative Learning, ICT integration, Service Learning, and the Flipped Classroom Model. These methods encourage critical thinking, active participation, and the application of civic knowledge to real-world issues. Despite their proven effectiveness, challenges such as insufficient teacher training, resistance to change, and inadequate resources hinder the widespread adoption of these approaches. The study emphasizes the need for continuous professional development, curriculum revision, and policy support to overcome these barriers and enhance the delivery of Civic Education. By integrating these innovative strategies, the research suggests that Nigerian secondary schools can better prepare students for active citizenship and democratic participation, fostering a more engaged and responsible society.

*Keywords:* Civic Education, Constructivist Learning, Nigeria, Pedagogical Innovations, Secondary Schools

**Introduction** Civic education is fundamental in shaping responsible, informed, and engaged citizens who can actively participate in democratic processes and contribute to societal progress.

However, in Nigerian secondary schools, the conventional teacher-centered approach to civic education has often been criticized for its limited capacity to stimulate student engagement, foster critical thinking, and cultivate the participatory skills essential for civic competence (Levine, 2007). This concern has sparked growing interest in pedagogical innovations designed to enhance both the teaching and learning experience in civic education (Ajibola, 2012). Pedagogical innovations encompass a range of novel instructional strategies aimed at improving student engagement, comprehension, and academic performance. In the context of civic education, these innovations play a crucial role in making the subject more relatable, interactive, and impactful, ultimately encouraging students to take an active role in civic activities and discussions. Several studies have explored the effectiveness of innovative teaching methods in the Nigerian educational landscape, shedding light on their potential to transform civic education. For instance, Junaid and Olaniran (2017) examined the relationship between innovative teaching strategies, school quality, and students' achievement in junior secondary school civic education in Abeokuta metropolis. Their findings revealed a strong positive correlation between modern pedagogical approaches and student achievement, emphasizing the benefits of dynamic and student-centered teaching strategies. Likewise, Ogheneakoke et al. (2022) investigated the impact of supplementary tutoring on students' learning outcomes in civic education. Their study demonstrated that additional instructional support significantly improved students' academic performance, highlighting the value of reinforcement strategies in deepening students' understanding of civic concepts. Furthermore, Nwangburuka et al. (2021) analyzed the role of instructional materials and teaching methods in shaping students' academic performance in civic education. Their research concluded that well-designed instructional materials and effective teaching strategies substantially influence students' comprehension and retention, reinforcing the importance of adopting diverse and engaging teaching tools. Despite these significant contributions, there remains a critical need for comprehensive research that examines the collective impact of various pedagogical innovations on the teaching and learning of civic education in Nigerian secondary schools. A deeper understanding of how these strategies affect student engagement, interest, and academic performance is essential for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers (Osokoya, 2010). Insights from such research can inform the adoption of effective teaching methodologies that

promote active citizenship, ultimately strengthening democratic values and civic participation in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Constructivist Learning Theory developed by Jean Piaget (1950). The theory asserts that learners actively build their understanding and knowledge through personal experiences and reflection. This approach prioritizes engaging students in meaningful and contextually relevant activities, allowing them to explore concepts, question ideas, and collaboratively derive knowledge (Piaget, 1950; Vygotsky, 1978). Unlike traditional didactic methods that rely on rote memorization and teacher-centered instruction, constructivist learning promotes interactive and inquiry-based education, fostering deeper comprehension and critical thinking. In the context of Nigerian secondary education, particularly within Civic Education, the application of constructivist-based pedagogical innovations has shown significant potential in improving student engagement and learning outcomes. According to Balogun and Yusuf (2019), the introduction of Civic Education into the senior secondary school curriculum aims to equip students with the skills and attitudes necessary for active and responsible citizenship. However, they argue that conventional teaching approaches have not been fully effective in achieving these objectives, highlighting the need for a transition towards constructivist methodologies that make learning more dynamic and impactful. However, Adediran and Ajiboye (2017) found that employing contextual and service-learning strategies both grounded in constructivist principles substantially enhances students' civic knowledge and engagement. Their research suggests that when students participate in real-world civic activities and critically reflect on these experiences, they develop a more profound understanding of civic responsibilities and societal roles. Similarly, Candra and Retnawati (2020) examined the implementation of constructivist learning in Civic Education and observed a positive correlation between student-centered instructional strategies and improved learning outcomes. Their study highlights that constructivist methods, which emphasize active participation and critical inquiry, lead to better comprehension and retention of civic concepts. Despite the proven benefits of constructivist pedagogy, several challenges hinder its widespread adoption in Nigerian classrooms. Obiagu (2019) identifies a major barrier: the lack of adequate training for Civic Education teachers in constructivist teaching methodologies. Without sufficient knowledge and support, educators struggle to implement these innovative approaches effectively. To address this,

Obiagu recommends continuous professional development programs and the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to create more interactive and student-centered learning environments.

### **Concept of Civic Education**

Civic education is the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and values essential for participating effectively in civic and political life within their communities and nations (Galston, 2001). It plays a fundamental role in preparing individuals to engage in democratic processes, understand governance, and advocate for their rights and responsibilities in society. This process ensures that citizens are not only informed but also active in promoting democratic ideals. According to Hess (2009), civic education encompasses both formal and informal learning experiences, where individuals gain the knowledge and dispositions needed to navigate and participate competently in public life. It emphasizes the importance of democratic values, responsible citizenship, and active participation in political, social, and economic issues. Torney-Purta et al. (2001) highlight civic education as a deliberate effort to cultivate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for becoming engaged members of a democratic society. This approach encourages individuals, particularly the youth, to engage in political processes, comprehend their rights and responsibilities, and address societal issues critically. Dewey (1916) underscores that civic education also develops reflective and participatory engagement in democratic practices. Dewey's view highlights the importance of experiential learning, where individuals are encouraged to reflect on their actions and interactions within society, thus contributing to informed and responsible civic participation.

Furthermore, civic education fosters critical thinking and social awareness, helping individuals engage meaningfully with contemporary issues. It promotes active citizenship, urging individuals not only to vote but also to contribute to social change through public debate, community service, and policymaking (Niemi & Junn, 1998). Civic education empowers citizens to understand the workings of government and society, allowing them to make informed decisions that benefit both the individual and the collective. As such, it is considered an integral part of a comprehensive education that nurtures responsible and active citizens who can contribute positively to their communities and society as a whole (Hess, 2009).

### **Objectives of Civic Education**

The objectives of civic education are varied and encompass a broad range of goals aimed at producing citizens who are well-informed, socially responsible, and actively engaged in their communities and nation-building. These objectives include:

1. **Developing Informed and Knowledgeable Citizens:** One of the primary aims of civic education is to equip individuals with the knowledge necessary to understand the political, social, and economic systems in which they live. This involves familiarizing students with political institutions, such as government structures, the electoral system, and the roles of the judiciary and legislature. Civic education also enhances individuals' understanding of laws, policies, and human rights, empowering them to make informed decisions and engage meaningfully in public life (Hess, 2009).

2. **Promoting Active Participation in Civic Life:** Civic education encourages individuals to participate actively in their communities and the democratic process. This could include voting, engaging in public debates, volunteering in community services, or participating in policymaking processes. By fostering active participation, civic education enables individuals to understand that democracy is not only about voting but also about contributing to societal development and public welfare (Galston, 2001). It nurtures advocacy skills, public discourse, and the ability to drive positive societal change (Torney-Purta, 2002).

3. **Instilling Democratic Values and Social Responsibility:** Civic education plays a crucial role in promoting democratic values such as justice, equality, freedom, and tolerance. It highlights the significance of individual rights while emphasizing the need to respect others' rights. Additionally, it nurtures social responsibility, encouraging individuals to be aware of societal challenges and contribute to solving social issues through integrity, accountability, and respect for diversity (Hess, 2009).

4. **Enhancing Critical Thinking and Social Awareness:** Civic education develops critical thinking skills, enabling individuals to analyze and evaluate complex societal issues. It encourages students to think critically about policies, societal problems, and current events, equipping them with the ability to assess information from multiple perspectives. Civic education also fosters social awareness by helping individuals recognize and engage with social challenges like inequality, poverty, and human rights violations, empowering them to contribute to creating positive social change (Torney-Purta, 2002).

5. Fostering National Unity and Social Cohesion: Civic education serves as an essential tool for fostering national unity and social cohesion, especially in societies with diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. By promoting tolerance and understanding, civic education helps individuals appreciate diversity and work toward common goals, resolving conflicts peacefully. In countries like Nigeria, where ethnic and religious tensions are prevalent, civic education encourages citizens to transcend differences and contribute to building a harmonious, inclusive society (Galston, 2001).

### **Concept of Pedagogical Innovation**

Pedagogical innovation refers to the introduction and application of new ideas, methods, or approaches in teaching to enhance student learning and engagement. It is aimed at improving the effectiveness of the educational process by adapting to the evolving needs of students, advancements in technology, and changes in societal demands. Innovations in pedagogy may include new teaching strategies, the use of educational technologies, the redesigning of curriculum content, and the introduction of novel assessment techniques. The primary objective of pedagogical innovation is to create more engaging, inclusive, and effective learning environments that enable students to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for success in the 21st century. According to Finkelstein et al. (2007), pedagogical innovation involves changes in both the content and methods of instruction, which are designed to improve the quality of learning outcomes. These innovations might involve shifts from teacher-centered to student-centered learning, the incorporation of collaborative learning, or the use of project-based learning techniques. By focusing on active student engagement and fostering critical thinking, pedagogical innovations aim to provide learners with opportunities to explore, experiment, and engage with knowledge in meaningful ways. Such innovations often encourage interdisciplinary approaches and connect classroom learning with real-world contexts, making the content more relevant and applicable.

Fisher (2016) defines pedagogical innovation as the process of transforming teaching methods to align with modern educational theories and technological advancements. It entails a move toward more flexible and adaptive learning environments where students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning through inquiry-based or problem-solving approaches. Pedagogical innovations may also involve utilizing digital tools and platforms that support interactive learning, collaboration, and individualized instruction. Fisher highlights that the integration of technology

into pedagogy is particularly important as it provides learners with new modes of accessing and engaging with information, thereby enhancing their overall learning experience. In the context of education in developing countries, including Nigeria, Akpan and Umoren (2020) argue that pedagogical innovations are essential for addressing the challenges faced by educators and students.

They emphasize the importance of implementing innovative teaching practices that can enhance the quality of education amidst limited resources and large class sizes. Pedagogical innovations such as blended learning, flipped classrooms, and the integration of digital tools have been shown to improve student engagement, reduce dropout rates, and provide more personalized learning experiences. These innovations are particularly crucial in the context of civic education, where the goal is to foster informed, responsible citizens capable of participating actively in societal and political processes. Moreover, pedagogical innovation involves a shift toward more learner-centered approaches, which are based on the belief that students learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process.

According to Kember (2009), these approaches promote deeper learning by encouraging students to engage in critical reflection, problem-solving, and collaborative activities. Such innovative methods are designed to enhance not only students' academic achievements but also their personal and social development. These innovations aim to develop students' capacities to think critically about their roles in society, their rights, and responsibilities as citizens, which is particularly relevant in the context of civic education. Additionally, pedagogical innovation is often seen as a response to the increasing diversity of student populations and the need to cater to various learning styles, abilities, and interests. By incorporating a range of teaching methods such as experiential learning, inquiry-based learning, and project-based learning educators can create more inclusive learning environments that accommodate diverse learners (Hattie, 2009). This adaptability is crucial in ensuring that all students, regardless of their backgrounds, are able to engage meaningfully with the curriculum and achieve their full potential.

**Pedagogical Innovations in Teaching Civic Education in Nigeria** Various pedagogical innovations have been implemented to enrich the teaching of Civic Education, ensuring that students are well-equipped to contribute to societal progress.

- 1. Problem-Based Learning (PBL):** Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is an educational strategy that focuses on solving real-world issues as the central element of the learning experience. In the context of Civic Education, PBL encourages students to engage with complex topics such as governance, human rights, and democracy. By addressing these issues, students not only enhance their problem-solving skills but also collaborate with peers, gaining a deeper understanding of their civic duties and responsibilities. PBL empowers students to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations, fostering critical thinking and effective problem-solving. Akinwumi and Olaniran (2020) emphasize the role of PBL in Nigerian Civic Education classrooms, noting that it promotes student engagement by addressing local and national issues. This method encourages learners to think critically about political and social problems, enriching their comprehension of their rights and responsibilities as citizens.
- 2. Collaborative Learning:** Collaborative learning is a strategy that fosters teamwork and group-based problem-solving to achieve educational goals. In Civic Education, this approach helps students understand the importance of collaboration in a democratic society. It emphasizes skills such as negotiation, cooperation, and collective decision-making, all of which are vital in a democratic context. Oduwaiye and Abimbade (2019) highlight how Nigerian Civic Education curricula have adopted collaborative learning to promote peer interaction and collective learning. This method significantly improves students' grasp of democratic principles, rights, and responsibilities, preparing them for active participation in civic life.
- 3. ICT Integration in Teaching:** The incorporation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into Civic Education teaching practices has transformed how students learn about their civic responsibilities. The use of online platforms, social media, educational videos, and interactive games makes learning more engaging and accessible. This approach also enhances students' ability to stay informed about contemporary issues concerning governance and civic rights, fostering a more flexible and dynamic learning environment. Okojie (2021) argues that ICT has been a game-changer for Civic Education in Nigeria, providing easier access to learning materials and enabling students, especially in insecure regions, to engage with the curriculum remotely. The use of ICT tools helps keep students updated on current events and issues related to governance, democracy, and civil rights.



4. **Service Learning:** Service Learning is an experiential pedagogy that integrates community service with academic learning. In Civic Education, this approach allows students to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, participating in community service projects such as voter registration drives, public awareness campaigns, or working with non-governmental organizations. This form of learning helps students develop a deeper sense of social responsibility and active citizenship. Adeyemi (2020) underscores the effectiveness of service learning in bridging the gap between classroom knowledge and real-world practice. By engaging in community-based projects, students develop teamwork, responsibility, and a stronger commitment to democratic values.

5. **Flipped Classroom Model:** The flipped classroom model is a pedagogical approach where students first learn content outside of the classroom (e.g., via video lectures or reading assignments) and then engage in interactive, hands-on activities during class. In Civic Education, this model encourages deeper discussions, debates, and problem-solving about citizenship, governance, and societal issues after students have reviewed the basic concepts. Akinlade and Okoye (2022) suggest that the flipped classroom model has significantly improved student learning in Nigerian Civic Education by allowing students to learn at their own pace and come prepared for meaningful class discussions. This model promotes critical thinking and reflection on democratic principles and civic duties.

6. **Experiential Learning:** Experiential learning emphasizes learning through direct, hands-on experiences. In the context of Civic Education, this approach might include activities such as visiting government institutions, engaging with local leaders, or participating in mock elections and town hall meetings. These activities allow students to gain a more tangible understanding of how governance and democratic processes work in practice. Akinwumi (2020) notes that experiential learning has proven to be an effective strategy in Nigerian Civic Education by offering students the opportunity to engage with the political and social realities of their communities. These activities not only reinforce the theoretical knowledge but also foster a deeper appreciation of democratic processes.

### **Advantages of Pedagogical Innovation in Teaching Civic Education in Nigeria**

1. **Enhanced Student Engagement:** Pedagogical innovations like Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Collaborative Learning make the learning process more dynamic and relevant to

students. By addressing real-world issues such as governance and human rights, students become more interested in their civic education and actively participate in the learning process.

2. **Development of Critical Thinking Skills:** Many of these innovative pedagogies, such as PBL and the Flipped Classroom Model, encourage students to think critically about political and social issues. They move beyond rote learning and foster analytical skills that are essential for informed citizenship and active participation in democracy.

3. **Promotes Democratic Values:** Methods like Service Learning and Collaborative Learning emphasize key democratic principles, such as teamwork, cooperation, negotiation, and collective decision-making. These skills are crucial for fostering a strong democratic culture and promoting active civic engagement among students.

4. **Increased Access to Learning Materials:** The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching allows students to access learning resources and stay updated on current events, particularly in remote or insecure regions of Nigeria. ICT makes learning more flexible and accessible, overcoming challenges posed by traditional classroom settings.

5. **Real-World Application:** Experiential learning and Service Learning, in particular, offer students opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world situations. Activities such as mock elections, visiting government institutions, or engaging in community service make civic education more practical and tangible for students.

6. **Improved Collaborative Skills:** Collaborative learning encourages teamwork and cooperation among students. By working in groups, students develop important social skills such as communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution, which are vital in a democratic society.

### **Disadvantages of Pedagogical Innovation in Teaching Civic Education in Nigeria**

1. **Resource Constraints:** Many of these pedagogical innovations, especially ICT integration and experiential learning, require significant resources such as technology, funding, and access to learning materials. In schools, especially those in rural or underfunded areas, this can be a major barrier.

2. **Increased Teacher Workload:** Implementing pedagogical innovations requires teachers to invest more time and effort in lesson preparation, classroom management, and assessing student

progress. This can be overwhelming, especially for educators already facing large class sizes and limited resources.

3. **Technological Barriers:** While ICT integration has the potential to revolutionize civic education, limited access to computers, the internet, and digital devices in many Nigerian schools, particularly in rural or conflict-affected areas, can hinder the effective use of technology in teaching.

4. **Cultural and Contextual Relevance:** Some pedagogical innovations may not be easily adaptable to Nigeria's diverse cultural and educational contexts. For instance, methods like PBL or Service Learning require a level of societal infrastructure and community support that may not be readily available in all regions of the country.

5. **Resistance to Change:** Teachers and students may resist new pedagogical approaches, especially if they are accustomed to traditional, lecture-based methods. The shift towards more interactive and student-centered learning can be challenging, requiring both teachers and students to adjust their mindsets and habits.

6. **Assessment Challenges:** Many of these innovative methods, such as collaborative learning and experiential learning, can make it difficult to assess students' individual performance accurately. The informal nature of some activities and the group-based focus can complicate traditional assessment methods, such as exams and written assignments.

## **Conclusion**

Pedagogical innovations are essential in overcoming the limitations of traditional, teacher-centered teaching methods that have often been ineffective in promoting student engagement and active learning. By shifting toward more interactive and participatory teaching approaches, educators can equip students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes for effective citizenship. The application of digital tools, experiential learning, and inquiry-based methods has proven to make civic education more relevant, engaging, and impactful. However, challenges persist in the widespread implementation of pedagogical innovations. Key obstacles include the lack of adequate teacher training in innovative pedagogical strategies, insufficient resources, and the need for stronger institutional support in terms of policies and infrastructure. To maximize the benefits of pedagogical innovations, it is crucial to invest in ongoing professional development for

educators and to foster learning environments conducive to the use of innovative teaching practices.

### **Suggestions**

Based on the suggestions the study on pedagogical innovations for enhancing civic education in Nigeria, the following suggestions are made to improve its quality:

1. Teachers should be trained to implement innovative teaching strategies such as problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and ICT integration. Ongoing professional development programs should focus on active learning techniques and technology usage to help educators deliver more engaging and effective lessons.
2. The civic education curriculum should be revised to incorporate student-centered learning, critical thinking, and hands-on activities like service learning and mock elections. This would bridge the gap between theory and practice, promoting experiential learning and enhancing students' understanding of democratic processes.
3. Teachers should be encouraged to use ICT tools to enhance student engagement and provide access to diverse resources. This is especially important in areas with limited resources or security concerns, allowing students to learn remotely and stay informed on current events.
4. Schools should adopt interactive teaching methods, such as problem-based learning and flipped classrooms, to promote active participation and critical thinking. Inquiry-based learning and collaborative group work can strengthen students' civic education and prepare them for active citizenship.
5. The government and educational authorities should support pedagogical innovations by providing resources, instructional materials, and technology. Policies should foster flexible learning environments and support teachers' professional development, ensuring schools are well-equipped to implement innovative teaching practices.
6. Successful implementation of pedagogical innovations requires collaboration among schools, local governments, educational bodies, and NGOs. Engaging students, teachers, parents, and communities will foster a culture of civic engagement and enhance the relevance of the civic education program.
7. Ongoing research and evaluation should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of different teaching methods. Regular evaluations will help determine the most effective strategies

for improving student engagement, critical thinking, and civic participation, ensuring continuous improvement in civic education.

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