

Civic And Ethical Education In Institutions Of Higher Learning In Ethiopia; Challenges, Opportunities And Policy Implications

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Abstract: There is a growing concern among national governments to include Civic education in their curriculums. This is because Civic education plays an indispensable role in creating awareness among the citizens about their rights and responsibilities. Ethiopia too, commencing its transition to democracy has taken significant steps to do so. In this regard, one of the significant departures of the EPRDF government from its predecessors in terms of curriculum reform is the inclusion of Civic education in tertiary education. The study shed light to assess the role of Civic education in shaping students attitude in terms of appropriate service provision, good governance, tolerance of diversity and others. Using sample respondents of 201 students randomly selected from the three universities, namely Arba Minch, Wolayta Sodo and Hawassa universities, generalizations were deduced. The facts drawn from both the qualitative and quantitative surveys indicated that Civic education is playing a crucial role for cultivating informed, reasonable and active citizens and the subsequent building of constitutional democracy in Ethiopia. The study indicated that, the problems related to good governance in the various government offices are not the result of lack of the required skills but due to the lack of Civic knowledge. The Civic dispositions that build the citizens traits are not inherited, and as such every new generation is required to acquire the knowledge, learn the skills, and develop the dispositions or traits of private and public character that undergird a constitutional democracy. Civic education, therefore, is-or should be-a prime concern. There is no more important task than the development of an informed, effective, and responsible citizenry. Democracies are sustained by citizens who have the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions. In the absence a reasoned commitment on the part of its citizens to the fundamental values and principles of democracy, a free and open society cannot succeed. It is imperative; therefore, that educators, policymakers, and members of civil society make the case and ask for the support of civic education from all segments of society and from the widest range of institutions and government.

Index Terms: Civic Education, Higher Education Institutions, Good Governance, Attitudinal change

Introduction

Civic education involves knowledge and the development of intellect about the contents of Citizenship education. Different scholars define the term Civics in different ways. Some tried to define it as a subject which involve the grasping of information and internalizing of these information regarding the socio-economic, political-legal, cultural, environmental problems (challenges), success and opportunities of the country; While others, insist that it involves knowledge of the country's past, present and future directions, and the possible challenges and opportunities, now and ahead of us in the social, economic, political, environmental, technological and cultural life of the country (Dewey, 2004). However, they have a common point that Civic education involves basic knowledge of the political system and its operation; the legal system and its operation; the physical geography of the country and its peopling; the history of the country and its peoples; the economic system and its workings; and current issues (Abowitz et.al 2006). The most extensive claims for civic education are its extreme relevance to make citizens aware about actual civic participation; products of civics education should be better and more active citizens (Semella *et.al*, 2012) than they would be without this kind of training (Dewey, 2004).

They should have a deeper appreciation of values like tolerance and inclusiveness – values that must not just be known, but internalized and use as guides in actual political engagement. Although most of the countries across the world provide room for Civic education mostly at elementary and secondary school levels, the Ethiopian experience provides extra ordinary programs of instruction within colleges and universities. The need to expand such a program is compounded with the rapid expansion of higher education (MoE 2010). As the country was embroiled with internal armed conflict (Semella, 2011; Tekeste 2006), Ethiopia has introduced new civic education curriculum in schools and universities, with a mission to protect the new found peace and stability since 2003. Following the country's transition to democracy in the 1990s, attempts have been made to institutionalize the protection of human and democratic rights of citizens, and also a popular constitution was set in place. To further enhance the ideals of democracy and constitutionalism, Civic education was introduced into the education system (MoE, 2004). In the quest to consolidate the democratic process in the country and enlighten citizens in their rights and obligations, since 2002/03 the curriculum of civic education was revised and a new Civics and Ethical Education curriculum, which is based on major social values, is adopted across the grade levels. This clearly shows the intention of the government to create peace loving, tolerant, and vibrant generation even in the earliest days of its rule. This was largely attributed to the intention of the government to create citizens who understand the real needs of their country and their obligation as a citizenry to look in to the problem equipped with good ethical & democratic culture (Jibril, 2012). In favor of this idea, he further argued that, there is no government in the world without the intention of shaping citizens according to its constitutions. This is because of the fact that the effectiveness of governments and states in driving sustainable development depends on the creation and

- *Evidences from Arba Minch, Wolayita Sodo and Hawassa University*
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development of skilled, competent and responsible human capital.

1. 2. Statement of the Problem

As a nation state with quite long history, Ethiopia has little experience of prevalence of *rule of law*. Although the central principles of Civic education are universal, special emphasis is given to *ethical values* and democracy. This is because Civic education plays a key role in promoting the values and principles of democracy to the extent that the boundary between the two is blurred. Thus, some argued that, Civic education is apparently becoming an instrument for the realization of democratic thinking, individual freedom and personal responsibility (Dewey, 2004). However, at national level, even though civic and ethical education was started nearly a decade ago, it has received little research attention (Semella, et.al 2012). What has immensely necessitated the need for Civic education is the highly diversified cultural environment prevailed in Ethiopia. Semella et.al 2012, for instance, claims that civic education in Ethiopian context will have important implications for multicultural societies within the African continent and beyond. The same study, having gone through the various literatures (Schoeman, 2005; Enslin and Horsthemke, 2004; Sifuna, 2000; Saille, 1997) further investigated that understanding the potency of civic education in nurturing democratic citizenry in Africa is equally important to the rest of the developing world where lack of peace, democracy, and ethnic conflict remains a daunting challenge to ensure national survival and socioeconomic progress. In this paper, attempts were made to address societal and institutional and policy changes underway that pose challenges and provide opportunities for civic education particularly in institutions of higher learning in Ethiopia. Civic and Ethical Education has an already stated three main objectives. These include:

1. Enable the young generation to play an active role in their country's socio-economic and political activities via instilling the values of democracy and good governance.
2. Produce citizens who have internalized the values of civic citizenship and capable of shouldering social, economic, and political responsibilities.
3. Producing citizens who are built up and guided by, scientific knowledge and attitudes, reject backward attitudes, and can make decisions only based on knowledge and truth (MoE, 2006: 31).

It also plays a vital role for empowering local communities in terms of training, in the areas of fighting corruption, enhancing service delivery in public institutions, gender mainstreaming, avoiding regionalism and providing room for cultural pluralism, and others.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1. To assess the role of Civic & Ethical Education in changing students attitude
2. To identify the emerging challenges for Civic & Ethical Education
3. To explore the opportunities for the successful scaling up of Civic & Ethical Education
4. To use the outcome of the study for developing sustainable strategies for policy and practice.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study will contribute many things for policy and practice. Among other things, it will provide background information concerning the challenges, opportunities and related issues to Civic education in Ethiopia. Recorded and published evidences on Civic education particularly in higher education institutions of Ethiopia are badly available. Thus, the successful accomplishment and the subsequent publication of the study will be of immense relevance to policy makers and researchers who aspire to work on Civic education.

1.5 Scope of the study

The sample respondents for the study are second year technology faculty students and course instructors from the department of Civics and Ethical Studies (Arba Minch & Wolaita Sodo Universities) and Governance (Hawassa University). The issue of having gone directly to second year students is due to the reason that Civics as a common course is usually offered for students in their first year entry. Since the study is aimed at assessing the role of Civic education in changing the students' attitude, it took second year students immediately after the students took the course in their first year stay.

1.6. Methodology

1.6.1 Research Design

The study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The quantitative one is meant for the questionnaire, discussion and analysis; while the qualitative one is for analyzing the interview discussion, conducted among the course instructors of each institution.

1.6.2 Sources of Data and Data Collection Instruments

Primary data is collected through the following instruments; while the secondary data is collected from the documentary sources.

1. Questionnaire

A significant number of questionnaires, both open and close ended questions were distributed for a total of 201 second year technology faculty students.

2. FGD with subject instructors

These discussions involved six course instructors from each of the three institutions. The criterion for selecting these interviewees was their work experience. Generally, eighteen instructors with teaching experience for seven years and above were selected for a discussion.

3. Document Analysis

This included official documents from the ministry of education, published scholarly articles, working papers and unpublished materials. Documents with specific relevance to the study were reviewed. This is because; document review is an essential tool to identify events and adds knowledge to the fields of inquiry.

1.6.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The required sample size has best determined by using scientific sample size determination formula: Yemane Taro, 1967. This formula used the following variables to compute the required minimum sample size.

$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$, where
 N= General Population=11280
 n=the required minimum sample size
 e= Precision Level; taken to be 0.07.

$$\text{THUS, } 11280 / (1 + 11280(0.07)^2) = 201.$$

The following table justifies the respective sample sizes for each of the study institutions.

No.	Name of the institution	Total Students	No. of	Required Sample Size
1.	Arba Minch	4,100		73
2	Hawassa	4,021		72
3.	Wolayta Sodo	3,159		56
	Total	11,280		201

Source: Researcher's Preliminary Survey Assessment result, April 2015

The institutions of higher learning were selected purposefully, for their relative proximity. Initially, purposive sampling technique was employed for identifying the study population among students of all faculties. Thus, second year technology faculty students were selected based on the argument that, most of the time, students from technology and related areas are more likely to be unaware of their duties, rights and the reciprocity between the two (Markakis, 2004). Generally, 11280 students were found to be study populations, of which 201 students were decided to be sample respondents based on a formula given below.

1.6.4 Method of Data Analysis

The data gathered through scheduled questionnaire was

analyzed using simple statics such as frequency and percentage; while the data gathered using interview and FGD was analyzed through direct interpretation of the discussion results. The discussion results of the aforementioned three sources were substantiated by document analysis and triangulated for final outcome.

2. Results and Discussions

1. Since the time you joined higher education, and prior to taking the course Civics, it is more likely that you might have faced a dispute of some kind with your friends in your dorm.

1. Yes

2. No

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	61	30%
No	140	70%
Total	201	100%

Source: Researcher's own survey, May 2015.

Disputes and disagreements are usually observed in fresh entry students in various universities. Conflicts are inevitable in nature. What creates a fertile ground for emergence and de-

escalation of conflicts is diversity. Mostly diversified cultural environment is one of the causes for conflicts in many ways. In our case, most of the sample respondents 140(70%)

- 3) Negative attitude towards subjects whose substantial content is based on theory
- 4) Discontinuity of the course, which is usually given only for a semester

Table 5: Tabular explanation of the students' perception on the challenge to the course

S.No	Respondents	Freq.	Percentage
1	Lack of Interest	89	44%
2	Instructors' shortage of knowledge	77	38%
3	Hatred for theoretical courses	23	12%
4	Discontinuity of the course	12	6%
Total		201	100%

Source: Constructed from Researcher's own survey, May 2015.

The discontinuity of the course which is being offered only for a semester is identified as the major significant challenges for Civic education; while prejudice towards theoretical courses among the students is the second major emerging challenge 89(44%) and 77(38%) respectively. The remaining minority of the respondents emphasized on the point that lack of interest for the course among the students and lack of knowledge on the part of the instructor 23(12%) and 12(6%) respectively. Concerning the point of prejudice among students towards theoretical courses including Civics, the FGD results provided similar deductions. Students are expected to

reading and reach on conclusions of theoretical and analytical phenomena. The course instructors cited that, various scholarly literatures indicated that an emerging prejudice for such kinds of courses will have negative consequences on the development of open minded, informed and responsible human resource.

7. How did you see the support given for the course Civics from the policy side?

- 1. Highly valued
- 2. Less Valued
- 3. Valued
- 4. Neglected
- 5. I do not know

As one could see from the chart above, most of the students 111(57%) have replied as the course has been given a support from the policy side. Still the second majority 49(25%) of the respondents agreed that the course is highly valued. While the rest 28(14%) responded that they have no the evidence with regard to the policy support. However, the FGD result contradicts to some extent with the above discussion. The course instructors are not enthusiastic on the policy. Despite the lack of policy sustainability in the country, the policy direction which favored the technocracy area is not creating a fertile ground for the course.

8. As you have seen in your course, Civics is concerned with the study of rights and responsibilities of citizens of a state. Have you noticed what are your duties and rights as a citizen or a legal member of organized political community?

- 1. Yes
- 2. Somewhat
- 3. No

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	178	88%
Somewhat	12	6%
No	11	6%
Total	201	100%

Source: Researcher's own survey, May 2015

As depicted from the table above, the overwhelming majority of students 178 (88%) replied that they are able to identify their rights and responsibilities as a result of the offering of the course in tertiary education. They did not want to conceal the tangible fact that they were used to insist their duties as their rights prior to joining the university, particularly prior to taking the course. The FGD has also a promising result. Each of the three separated FGD results confirmed that the course instructors have seen significant changes even on the behavior of their students at the end of the course. Despite the fact that students tend to show love and interest for courses and instructors in which they scored unreasonable points, they

have enjoyed the class throughout the entire semester.

9. If your answer to the above course is yes, do you think that, the 70/30 policy direction of STEM prioritized agenda has put a pressure on the course of Civics and ethics?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	102	51%
No	41	20%
To some extent	58	29%

Source: Researcher's own survey, May 2015.

As it is evident from the responses of sample respondents above, most of the students 102 (51%) responded that the 70/30 policy has a significant impact on Civic education. Just as other Social Sciences disciplines, the policy will negatively influence such a multidisciplinary course. The result of instructors FGD has clearly indicated that; the policy not only pressuring the course, Civics, but tend to kill the sense of patriotism and the development of informed and active citizenship conceptions among the emerging generation. In some universities, like Arba Minch and Haromaya Universities, the 70/30 admission policy has ascended to 80/20 ratio. In Arba Minch University, the situation is increasingly becoming worse.

10. What other advantages do you get from the course of Civic education?

The responses of most of the respondents revolve around the following points. Civic course is a very essential part of the course in terms of cultivating citizens to be

- Democratic citizens who safeguard their rights and respect the rights of others.
- Citizens who work within the provisions of the constitution and abide by the rule of law.
- Patriotic citizens who uphold the democratic ideals and the principles of the constitution as well as defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their country.
- Responsible citizens who nurture tolerant culture and resolve differences peacefully.
- Industrious citizens who are self-reliant.
- Citizens who are active participants in the political process of their country and dedicated to work for the common good.
- Citizens who have a decision making capacity on the basis of knowledge and objectivity.

11. What do you think are the opportunities around the course Civics? The responses of the students are screened as follows.

1. Policy support; the course has been welcomed from the side of the government as a significant tool to create competent and responsible citizens.
2. The multidisciplinary nature of the course and its patriotic spirit; Civics is a multidisciplinary course which has a horizontal relationship among other disciplines, such as law, political science, sociology, history, public administration and others. Anybody who takes the course will have a multidisciplinary knowledge on the various issues.
3. The importance of contents of the course for the promotion of democracy and good governance. To further enhance the ideals of democracy and constitutionalism, Civic education was introduced into the education system. It will necessarily fasten and Consolidate the democratization process and rule of law in the country through creating awareness concerning their rights and obligations.
4. The development of professional Civics teachers in itself. Prior to 2008, the course was offered by graduates of related disciplines such as history and geography. The instructors of Civics and Ethical Studies have a national responsibility to work diligently for the materialization of the mission of the course.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Civic education should be an integral part of a liberal education and that community service can help prepare students for citizenship. Today, every nation states of the world educates their citizens about the type of roles and responsibilities they assume and the types of civic dispositions they are expected to show; and the types of rights (benefits) they are entitled with or claim for by virtue of membership to the state. The ultimate goal of Civic Education is therefore, associated with the process of imparting knowledge about the nature of political system and their subsequent roles, skills, and attitudes which are essential for active participation of citizens in the social, economic and political affairs of their country. Civic Education is an important component of education that cultivates citizens to participate in the public life of a democracy, to use their rights and to discharge their responsibilities with the necessary knowledge and skills. Hence, it should be noted and recognized that a free society must ultimately depend on its citizens, and that the way to infuse the people with the necessary qualities is through education. As one step of this education process, higher education has been assuming the mission to foster citizens with the spirit to lead. Therefore, for the successful scale up of the course, efforts should come from a composition of diverse voices from all kinds of participating social units (from individual to government).

4.2 Recommendations

Today, the working environment for Civic education in Ethiopia is somewhat encouraging. It is being offered from the primary to the tertiary education institutions. However, the emerging trends are not good for social sciences in the country as priority is already given to science stream and technology streams. Thus, the situation is an emerging threat for the future of Civic education in the country. However, producing mere technocrats without a spirit of common good, appropriate service delivery, community service and other values has nothing to do for the sustainable development effort. On the other hand, bad governance questions and a subsequent violent political rule will prevail. Therefore, as it is the obligation of any government to acquaint its citizens with good civic & ethical values, the government of Ethiopia should further work for scaling up the course in the higher education institutions. Another emerging challenge to Civic education is the increasing global convergence driven by highly sophisticated information communication technology. As it is well known, globalization has challenges and opportunities, especially for third world countries. The challenge is overriding the opportunity. What is reflected from the FGD among the course instructors is that it's bringing about the diffusion and dissemination of the western culture often displacing the indigenous cherished values. The values and dispositions of the course will be swallowed by the evils of globalization. Thus, the game is between the winners and losers. Therefore, it is highly recommended that globalization as a chapter must be included in syllabus of the course in higher education institutions.

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