

**Maxmising Cascade Model of Training to Facilitate Voter
Education Club (VEC) for Secondary School Students in
Nigeria**

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Abstract

The cascade model of training involves the delivery of training through layers of trainers until it reaches the final target group like waterfalls from the top to the bottom of a hill. This was a model adopted by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to establish Voter Education Club (VEC) in secondary schools in Nigeria. The idea began with the INEC Chairman, Professor Athairu Jega, training INEC State Commissioners who in turn trained selected principals of secondary schools covering the thirty-six states plus the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). They in turn went to train other principals and designated (VEC) coordinators and thus (VEC) emerged as a process of political enlightenment to young political leaders of tomorrow. Other models were recommended for the perpetuity of the project. It was therefore recommended that INEC, NOA and other stakeholders in the national electoral processes give close monitoring to these clubs that are ubiquitous. The activities of the club coordinators should also be monetized that it may not amount to a still-born project.

Key words: Cascade model, training, INEC, Principals of Secondary School and Perpetuity.

Word Count: 183

Introduction

A cascade is a waterfall and a series of waterfalls. So, when we think of a cascade, we have a vision of big quantities of water rushing down a river. In educational models of teaching, we use this imagery as a metaphor for a particular training model. When one teacher from a school (or a district) is trained; the newly trained one trains a few more. Each one of them trains a few more until all have received the training. According to Adedeji (2008), the cascade training model is an attempt to fast-track training of great numbers of teachers. Cost saving is one of the perceived benefits of this approach. Only one teacher needs to attend an expensive training course. The knowledge gained on the course can then be passed on progressively to all in the organization.

Hence Oyedeji (1999) opined that in the light of this, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) recently adapted this method to teach students of secondary schools on voter education in Nigeria. Among other things, the training process was officially tagged “Catch Them Young”. According to Mapaderun (2012), voter education can be defined as “informing the public on their democratic rights, election procedures, candidates and issues”. The role of voter education in any electoral process must not be underestimated. It is very important that voter education commences early in order for election to be successful. This involves election literacy, educational campaign and confidence that the electoral process is appropriate and effective in selecting their representatives through the electoral process. When people are properly educated about the procedures, they are likely to have confidence in the electoral process. Voter education typically addresses voter motivation and preparedness to participate fully in elections.

In essence, Oyedeji (1999) opined that voter education is the basic guide to voters for informed electoral choices during elections. Our electoral landscape has been pervaded by parochial political culture and this demands a new orientation. Hence, with adequate voter education, electoral offences would be curbed, voter apathy would be curtailed

and eligible voters will be enabled to participate more actively in the electoral process, having been better equipped.

Furthermore, Adedeji (1998) suggested that with adequate education, voters will be aware of lawful and constitutional means of mobilizing the electorate, while also, they will be empowered for understanding of their rights and responsibilities within the context of the electoral process. Above all, with the inculcation of a new set of values and attitudes required for a credible electoral process, credibility of elections and representatives would be guaranteed, and elected leaders and institutions will be attainable.

Why Focus on Schools?

This novel focus which the management of INEC is introducing has provided a veritable paradigm shift which is bound to impact very positively on our electoral process. According to Douglas (2008) all the previous voter education embarked upon by stakeholders have been targeted only at the much older segments of the society, probably with the assumption that they are the eligible electorate and political office seekers. But now, we have realized that even though a number of the youths that fall within this category may not be eligible voters, they have influential roles to play on the much older segment, and also their roles in the electoral process can make or mar it.

Reasons abound for the essence of focusing on schools and indeed the youth of this segment. While corroborating the need for civic education (a part of which is voter education) in schools, Dr. Sam Egwu, a former Minister of Education submits that “Civic Education provides a unique opportunity for us as a nation to deal with ethical issues as well as those of values from the foundation of our school system to tertiary level... that through this elaborate and sustained exposure of our children to citizenship education, they will imbibe the requisite knowledge, skill and character that will prepare them for the challenges of nation building...”(Ebigbo and Uzuora, 1985).

Coupled with the aforementioned population advantage of the youth, it is also proven that early life intervention enables the child to bond with parents, community and so prepares the ground for social mobilization, civic management, patriotism and other civic engagements. As itemized by Lowie (2004), focus on schools, especially secondary schools is enormous and this makes them relevant because their number would permeate the different strata of the society. Among this number, a good proportion of them is expected to graduate to voting age of 18 years, every year. Moreover, such orientation imbibed in school age children is expected to remain fresh in their memory as they grow older.

Therefore, Oyedele (1990) was of the view that the school environment also provides vehicles for fostering integration and harmony among ethnically and religiously diverse groups. Events following the 2011 General Election in Nigeria must have made it quite glaring to us that most prominent among those involved in electoral and other sectarian violence are those in their adolescence. When such are properly educated, such incidence could be minimized. Schools also provide opportunity to inculcate patriotism and leadership which can always be imparted in them through civic and moral instructions.

Without gainsaying, with effective voter education in schools, voter turnout which was about 50% in 2011 will increase as this will serve as the required boost. Also remotely, schools can serve as effective bridges to reach communities and neighbourhoods, encourage democratic practices in schools, and carry out other activities that will enhance sustainability of democratic practices in the country.

As parents, we owe it a duty to lead the children aright. We can identify their individual characteristics, and this will be useful in determining what method to use to drive home our patriotic messages in them. As principals and teachers, they have the regard of parents for us and look up to us for instructions on life issues. According to Adedele (2008) as their mentors and role models, they 'mimic' or replicate what we do. We have to 'show' to them that we are also patriotic and exhibit worthy

virtues to them for more positive character formation. We need be genuinely involved in this democratic process so that our unspoken words are well read and understood. We cannot afford to remain aloof, or else this project will not succeed. We are moulders, and this advantage we have to maximize. Our instructions to them supersede the one from their parents. Let us mould them into responsible adults worthy of handing over this nation to in the nearer future.

Hence Kopoka (2000) succinctly puts it that the National Orientation Agency (NOA) has been in the vanguard of, among others, (i) enlightening the general public on government policies, programmes and activities; (ii) arousing the consciousness of all categories of Nigerians to their rights and privileges, responsibilities and obligations as citizens of Nigeria; (iii) orientating the populace about power, its use and proper role of government in serving the collective interest of Nigerians and (iv) mobilizing Nigerians for positive patriotic participation in, and identification with national affairs and issues. This occasion which is in partnership with the INEC is one of our collaborative efforts with various organizations in our collective effort to have an excellent electoral process with a view to having totally credible, representations at all the tiers of governance in Nigeria (Mapaderun, 2012).

Workshop Objectives

Objectives of the training/workshop was among other things, to;

- Sensitize secondary school communities on the importance of voter education in secondary schools and provide enlightenment on how to organize Voter Education activities.
- Encourage each school to initiate Voter Education activities in the school by designating a teacher as “Voter Education Coordinator” and setting up a Voter Education Club (VEC) comprising students only.
- Establish a good relationship with INEC and with secondary school authorities in Nigeria’s democratization process.

- Build a generation of future ad-hoc staff, booth level officers (similar to the one in India) and volunteer corps in managing Nigeria's electoral process.
- Use schools as bridges to reach the parents, communities and neighbourhoods.
- Encourage democratic practices in school activities.
- Carry out other activities that will enhance sustainability of democratic practices in Nigeria and many more (Oguntuashe, 2012).

Why Catch Them Young?

According to Oguntuashe (2012)

- Development in the child is lawful, orderly, sequential and age-related.
- Research findings suggest existence of critical stages in child development (Lorenz, Bernstein, Hallow etc).
- Nigeria's greatest population is young.
- Close to 70% of POP is below 30 years.
- Expected enrolment of children 3-5 years in ECD 22 million (FME Roadmap, 2009).
- Adolescents (10-19 years) about 25% POP.
- Early life intervention enables children to bond with parents, community and so prepares the ground for social mobilization, civic engagement, patriotism and other engagements.

Why the School?

Oguntuashe (2012) was very optimistic when he said that the school

- Would have been more effective to engage ECD facilities and primary
- However this project starts with SEC
- There are 14,749 secondary schools nationwide
- Secondary school enrolment this year was 4,046,437
- Good proportion will transit to voting age of 18 years every year.
- School is a vehicle for fostering integration and harmony among ethnically and religiously diverse groups.

- Schools promote excellence through competition in science, arts, sports etc. in the past.
- Schools provide opportunity to inculcate patriotism and leadership.
- Hence establishing VEC is to boost voter turnout which was a mere 50% in 2011.

According to Adediji (2008)

Every school-child must be served

However selection compelled by cost

Public secondary first, why?

Not every public secondary school can be reached at moment

How do we ensure equity?

INEC's formula in selection of schools

RECs to engage principals in domain

Principals are to appoint, choose or elect? VEC co-ordinator

School authority to support VEC

INEC is to support VEC through school

VEC is to draw up activities term-basis

School is to launch VEC logo

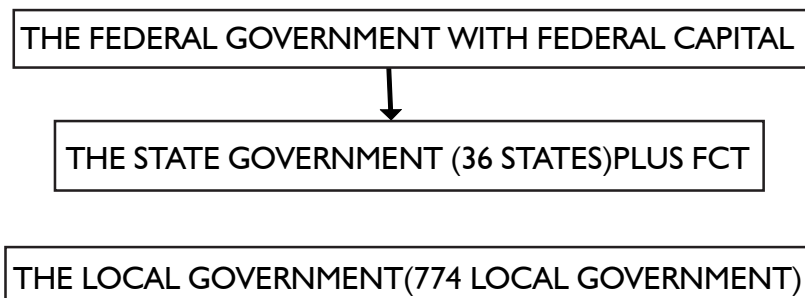
School is to monitor VEC activities

INEC and NOA are to monitor VEC activities.

The Cascade Training Methodology for Voter Education Club among Secondary School Students

In developing both the overall strategy and the detailed session plans for training according to Adedijet al (2011), it is essential to select a structure and methodology that will be most effective for the training environment, considering factors such as cultural environments, available time frames, affordability, cost-effectiveness and many more. Hence the initial workshop on Voter Education Club (VEC) begun with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Professor Athairu Jega summoning his states (INEC) Commissioners to a national conference where the idea of voter education (VEC) was first introduced

with the three-tier system of government in vogue in Nigeria: the Federal, the State and the Local Government.



Okediran (1995) observed that there are thirty six (36) State in Nigeria, each with its State Governors and a Commissioner for INEC working with the State Government to carry-out the citizen's franchise during the electoral process. There are also seven hundred and seventy four (774) local governments. According to Adedeji (2008) each local government area is administered by a Local Government Council, consisting of a chairman who is the chief executive of the LGA and other elected members who are referred to as Councillors. In this local governments were appointed seven hundred and seventy four Local (INEC) officers. This method facilitates both convenient upward-downward ward communicational processes.

Therefore, on arrival back home by the state INEC Commissioners, another Voter Education Conference (VEC) was organized at the States' level. To which principals of selected ten secondary schools in the thirty-three local government of Oyo State, Nigeria were convened to a training workshop at the state capital. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) on whose civic education was saddled were joint planners and executors of the giant-stride. The training took place at the House of Chiefs, State Government Secretariat, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. At the conference were keynote speakers as well as paper presenters.

According to Mapaderun (2012), objectives of cascade model of training was to:

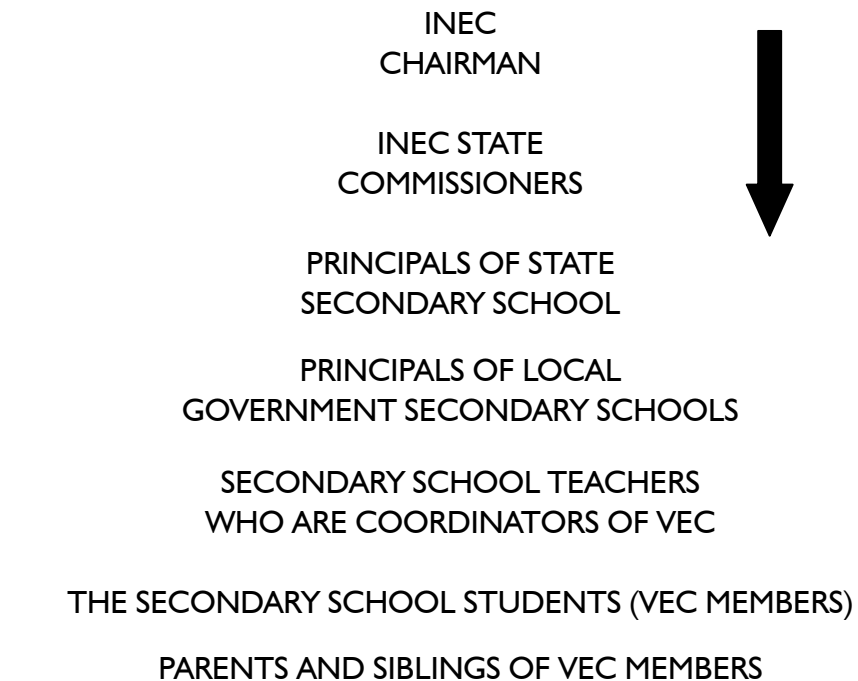
- Establish Voter Education Club in their schools
- Organise general lectures on electoral and democratic issues
- Organise visits for the students to democratic institution electoral processes
- Provide electoral publications to the students
- Organise debates and quizzes on democratic and electoral matters
- Designate a teacher in each school as VEC coordinator.

According to Adedeji (2008), it is recognized that task-based learning is better accomplished in face-to-face training sessions rather than from book study. Thus training programme for Voter Education Club was based on aiming to provide the grassroots secondary students with some face-to-face training on voters' rights.

At the local government level, another session of training was organized involving principals and a leader, each formally existing public and private secondary schools in the locality, where such club was to be established. Thus the secondary school students were caught young in the Voter Educational Web.

The Cascade Training Model Structure

Determining the training structure was interdependent with assessing resource needs against resource availability. There were three basic training structure model used for the training of Voter Education Club Member (VEC), the cascade ripple, or pyramid model as indicated in this paper and the mobile team. Each of this structure has positive aspects that may be sufficient to make it preferable in Nigerian setting. All these elements were confirmed in a Close Circuit Television (CCT) production that was sufficient to make it preferable in Nigerian context.



Thus we examine the negative and the positive implications below:

II.iii. Advantages and Disadvantages of Cascade Model of Training for VEC

Advantages

- It was flexible
- It was empowering and capacity building in delivery transported training skills to senior secondary students
- It required few logistical resources as the bulk of the training were locally based
- It was cost effective as it used the staff of Federal State and Local Government as indigenous facilitators
- It enabled fully participative competency of the grassroots students.
- Presently, Voter Education Clubs (VEC) are already existing in almost all the secondary schools throughout Nigeria.

Disadvantages

- It required development of trainer's manuals, lesson plan and presentation resources
- It required close monitoring of the club by the INEC and NOA for its effectiveness
- It was a bit taxonomic to be preparing training syllabus on quarterly basis
- If the club coordinators are neither reimbursed nor given incentive, they may soon lose their interest too.
- It may be too cumbersome for class teacher combining this club with their daily routines as class teachers.

Naturally, a cascade training of this nature for establishing Voter Education Club (VEC) is like the force of gravity that ensures all the water reaches the bottom. The force of gravity may not be operative when one tries to empower many teachers (especially those in Mathematics and Sciences) with political bias. One probable selects the most qualified Political Science teacher who had passion and affinity for political club project. If the secondary school principals who are the main mentors of the (VEC) are jaundiced by appointing less qualified coordinators for the clubs, definitely it is going to be short-lived. Thus the coordinators can only pass what they themselves value, cherish, remember and understand to the club members.

In many cases, the envisaged cascade model is reduced to a mere trickle of knowledge when it reaches the club members, minimal knowledge may reach the members.



According to Oyediji (1999), cascade model of training may be useful for creating initial political franchization awareness among the member students, but when more intensive training is required, other models like: Mobile Training Team Model in which two or more trainers or club coordinators are available to substitute the other when s/he may be absent. The Simultaneous Model whereby the maiden club coordinator trains other coordinator who will be handling different topics to avoid monotony would also be useful.

If sincerely the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria wishes to perpetuate this laudable Voter Education Club and desires that the students be competent enough to affect their parents at home with this cascade model (which is going to be another level of

Political right training), they should seriously promote this through media houses (Adedeji, 2008).

Finally, where Voter Education Clubs are being promoted as a national strategy to stimulate interest in electoral education in general or, in an upcoming election, a simultaneous or eclectic training model such as national election training day may assist in image building and in voter education. For this to be successful, appropriate publicity campaign materials will need to be developed. It may also be an appropriate model where unexpected elections are called at short notice. However, its significant disadvantages will generally mean that unless there are some special environmental factors present, other models offer more cost-effective solutions.

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