

Original Paper

The Gambia: Citizenship and Civic Consciousness

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Abstract

Citizens are an important component of national development enterprise. This is because citizenship is crucial to the promotion of nationhood. But being a citizen alone means very little if it does not come with certain responsibilities and civic consciousness. Through the historical lens of The Gambia, this paper argues, an understanding of citizenship and civic consciousness is necessary for sustained national development. It draws an interrelation among these concepts. Therefore, supports for responsible citizenship through education and emphasizes education's role in attaining national development. Also, this paper refers to primary and secondary sources. It uses oral interviews, content analysis of government publications, academic journals, books, and media reports to provide context to the paper. The article suggests some viable strategies for sustainable national development in The Gambia such as free and fair election, informed citizenry, visionary leadership and vibrant civil society organizations.

Keywords

citizenship, education, civic consciousness, politics, and national development

1. Introduction

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.¹

This quotation from Karl Marx's essay, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in this context explains the relevance of collective memory to determine rules and norms of a nation. Analyzing Africa's past, many lessons could be drawn and established from foreign rule over indigenous people through domination, which caused a structural inequality and split the populace into two categories: citizens and subjects. This dual relationship influenced the course of history in Africa. Based on this history, under the British indirect rule system and the French policy of assimilation, there was a different interpretation of citizenship. However, the overwhelming majority of the indigenous people

were subjects. We found a prime example of this type of citizenship in The Gambia. This article, therefore, explores the interplay between citizenship and civic consciousness and how such interrelatedness enhances national development. Further, the paper argues that socioeconomic and political development of The Gambia was constrained because of a lack of proper civic education for the citizenry, that resulted in poor civic consciousness and absence of ideal citizenship because of the importation of the British colonial model.

Colonialism has an influence on African countries in different aspects. For instance, in The Gambia, its colonial past has influenced its socio-economic, political, and legal contexts. The presence of Europeans and their interactions with the Gambian people brought along British social compositions of education, language, religion, and its legal system. These Western cultural constructions coexisted with African culture among the indigenous people and settlers. This historical development has reflected on the country's Constitution (specifically 1965, 1970 and 1997) as the source of fundamental laws of The Gambia. The Constitution contains aspirations of Gambian people, including citizenship laws, such as acquisition, rights, liabilities, and loss of citizenship. The 1965 Constitution provided for automatic citizenship, likewise, the 1970 Constitution. There was no significant difference between 1965 and 1970 Constitutions. In both iterations, the citizenship process allowed for citizenship by birth if the father was a Gambian, even if the child was born outside the country. Women, however, could only attain citizenship through marriage to a Gambian man.² In the 1997 Constitution, it remedied this problematic patrilineal requirement, as citizenship could be attained through matrilineal descent as well. The 1997 Constitution resolved the gender biases of citizenship acquisition that existed in the 1965 and 1970 Constitutions.³

Citizenship and civic consciousness are driving forces for national development. There can be no development without citizens assuming their civic responsibilities, and the state creating the environment to ensure national consciousness. Aristotle, in his "Politics" notes, 'a citizen is not a citizen because he lives in a certain place, for resident aliens and slaves share in the place. Rather, he shares in the administration of justice, and in [public] offices.'⁴ This explains a citizen should be able to show allegiance and take ownership of his or her community through participation to go beyond being a mere resident. That is possible if they create an ideal environment. Civic consciousness is essential to sustain a country's democracy and enhance development. Therefore, it must be fostered and nurtured. Considering that, it is imperative for civic education to be part of a country's education curriculum, to prepare the minds of the young people who would learn and appreciate their roles as ideal citizens working towards the development of the country.⁵

The British colonial rule in The Gambia can be traced back to the 1889 convention between the French and the British. Thus, two distinct administrations of the Colony and Protectorate emerged. Whereas the Colony was directly administered by the Governor in Bathurst (Banjul) and its surrounding area of Kombo St. Mary, the interior area, known as the Protectorate, was administered through the indirect rule system. Within that, the traditional representatives handled the direct execution of the British rule

under their supervision. The colonial government divided the Protectorate into five divisions, with a total number of thirty-five districts.⁶ A traditional ruler, called chief, who received directives from the governor in Bathurst through Travelling Commissioners, led each of these districts.⁷ People within the Colony enjoyed constitutional privileges. The colonial system deprived the Protectorate of such privileges. The absence of necessities, for instance, had kept them in a state of retrogression and underdevelopment.

From broad analysis of the British indirect rule system in The Gambia presupposed, these chiefs would serve as a ready instrument for the realization of Britain's underlying aim. The chiefs facilitated the process of tax collection, which was a major characteristic of British economic model. As a result, they served as collaborators and agents of colonialism. Britain would not have colonized the area that became known as the Gambia without underlying interests. Was it because of its agricultural potential which allowed for production of peanut as cash crop or was it because of cheap labor services readily gained from the Protectorates?

Further, the British administration ensured that the Protectorate concentrated on the production of peanuts as a cash crop, while it denied them of universal education. The lesson drawn from this scenario is that when educational empowerment of people is not available; it limits their level of consciousness. Thus, the indigenous people's potential for agitation against colonial rule was limited. By implication, colonial exploitation operated under a freer atmosphere. Although independence provided a change in governance, most parts of the administrative legal system remained. The British monarch remained the head of state, represented by the governor-general, who was a native of The Gambia. Contrarily, the elected Gambian Prime Minister became head of government. This republican statehood in 1970, however, replaced the Independence Constitution that provided the monarchical form of government with a presidential system that abolished the positions of the governor-general and the prime minister.⁸ Despite this development, there was no direct election of the president until 1982. Following a coup d'état in 1994, the military suspended the constitution and superseded it with a degree until 1996, when a new constitution was promulgated, giving rise to another republican Constitution of 1997.

2. Politics of Citizenship

Citizenship might mean different things to different people because multiple factors shaped perceptions. Every country in the world has its own policies, principles, and legislation on citizenship. It becomes clear from the onset that citizenship carries with it a host of privileges. Literally, it means a legal status of being a citizen of a country. Technically, "citizenship typically refers to the relationship between the individual and the community, or nation".⁹

Gambians under colonial rule had different rights to citizenship, which was applied differently. We can examine the question of citizenship from two dimensions during colonial Gambia. First, the people living in the Colony area and its surroundings and second, people of the Protectorate were protected

persons of the British, which make them subjects. The status of citizenship was clarified in The British Nationality Act of 1948, which stated that persons born in the Colony were “citizens of the UK and colonies” (CUKCs),¹⁰ whereas those born in the Protectorate were referred to as the “British protected persons (BPPs).”¹¹ That said, not everybody in the Colony enjoyed equal rights. Specifically, before 1960, the protectorates were disenfranchised. The 1960 Constitution thus approved equal adult suffrage for all without gender discrimination.¹² Because it restricted them in exercising their political rights, these subjects were not entitled to vote or be elected to electoral positions. In Bathurst, people enjoyed certain rights and privileges, whereas indigenous people in the hinterland were deprived.

For instance, in the Colony, people could form political parties and involve in political activities. They could partake in elections (to vote or be voted for). But women could only enjoy these political rights if they owned property and were twenty-five years or older. This illustrates the significance of economic and political status, which reflects one’s position in society. It also shows the discriminative and exploitative nature of the British administration. As in elsewhere in Africa, this constitution deprived women of their political, social, and economic privileges and rights. Sometimes, women were subdued through harsh policies. But African women in British West Africa (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and The Gambia) had also revolted against the system despite the colonial, antagonistic environment. They defended themselves through collective action, as with market women associations, such as *kafoolu* and *kompins*.¹³

During British colonial rule, citizenship existed but was also absent. It would seem that what colonialism brought along or introduced was based on binaries and dichotomies. These dynamics of citizenship politics were dualism in the country: Colony versus Protectorate, civilization/modernity as opposed to the primitive, educated in opposition to uneducated, rural, and urban division, among other discriminatory patterns and practices. A Gambian nationalist leader, Edward Francis Small, challenged the colonial government. He made concerted efforts in organizing farmers to enhance their income. He sought overseas buyers for their products, but their conditions remained poor and unattended to by the Gambia government. Through the Gambia Marketing Board, later changed to the Gambia Farmers’ Co-operative Marketing Association (GFCMA), Small traveled to Europe seeking buyers. He aimed to create a fair-trading relationship between farmers rather than continue trading with Unilever, that appeared to be exploitative.¹⁴ This exploitation and mental control later created far more consequences. Ethnicity and regionalism, for example, were cultivated and promoted for political ends, consequently precipitating a huge divide between the urban and rural areas. British officials purposefully created political fragmentation by encouraging regional political identities under the Protectorate system. Another significant difference was the availability of social services in the city. These include education, health services, the consumer marketplace, and the modern court system. Such social facilities were mostly available in Bathurst, as the impact of education was also profound in the urban area. Because of this relatively unequal parallel of development, the city produced more educated people. It is safe to conclude from the foregoing that some of these elites replaced the colonial masters

after independence and followed a path similar to the colonial system, which had created distinct classes of society.

With the decolonization that gave rise to self-rule and eventually independence on February 18, 1965, independence has failed to resolve the question of citizenship and national development. Soon after the attainment of republican statehood, a new citizenship consciousness was expected to emerge that would shape and augment the national development paradigm people had envisaged or aspired to. But this aspiration became another form of empty rhetoric. Instead, there was an emergence of a new breed of citizens: politicians, patrons, and clients. Seeing these classes developed, which interfered with the healing of the country's development, people's hopes were dashed. The 1970s were better with the attainment of republican sovereign citizens, but these aspirations failed. In the 1980s, the condition of the people improved neither, because of the economic crisis caused by new economic policies introduced by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to revamp African peripheral economies, established with President Jawara's Economic Recovery Program (ERP).¹⁵ The country was hugely in debt. By 1985, the indebtedness escalated to over two thousand million dalasis.¹⁶ Considering the debt relative to the size of the fragile economy, this amount was substantial. As a result, The Gambia's creditors refused to provide new loans unless it settled the old loans.

The country's economic and financial situation deteriorated significantly. The economic crisis was further exacerbated by fiscal and structural areas. As exports remained relatively stagnant, the deficit was growing exponentially. Therefore, life became unbearable for average citizens, while government increased direct and indirect taxations. The PPP government's attempt to diversify the economy failed as market prices increased. Based on this reason, the Gambian government was ready to do anything to postpone its economic collapse.¹⁷ The then IMF got involved, bringing recommendations, among which was the restructuring of the economy so that the government would have money to service its debts. The government agreed to retrench workers, sell its assets, cut down on expenditure of services to the people, and introduced cost recovery, such as incremental increases in school fees and medical charges. Instead of the government collecting revenue from the people to address their needs, it was busy collecting taxes to pay for loans, which had no significant benefit to the people.

The Gambia's lack of visionary leadership and readiness to forge ahead probably accounted for its poverty. For most part, as Frantz Fanon put it, nationalist parties in Africa later failed to pursue what they claim to stand strictly for as independence became an event rather than a continuous struggle for national development. Some have no economic programs that could ease poverty due to lack of capacity and completely ignorant of economy of the country.¹⁸ Because of unavailability of proper civic education for the citizenry, that affected civic consciousness, the economy has always generated outside the limits of their knowledge. Many African politicians have relied on book knowledge instead of innovating a path to transform potential resources of their countries. Hence, economic conditions remained, leading to deplorable stagnation. The Gambia depends on agriculture without diversification of that sector.¹⁹ That, the government focuses on the peanut production; the same methods of agricultural production that

characterized colonial era. Considering that, the Gambia government has established no industry or empower artisans to enhance local industry such a weaving or pottery. For example, the state also failed to start a parallel industrial model. Because of leaders' incapacity to think or proffer solution to societal problems, Gambian farmers are among the poorest whose produce could barely feed them all year round, despite selling their harvest peanuts to the government. Instead, the country was a ready consumer nation with everything imported, including rice and legumes. The intellectual know-how that was lacking in the system escalated the situation, combined with a lack of initiative and proper planning.

Many scholars have added their voices to the literature to explain Africa's underdevelopment after independence. These scholars include Walter Rodney, Redie Bereketeab, Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, Aime Cesaire and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni. The dominant discourse centered on inequality of (neo-) colonialism simultaneously highlights that African states in the postcolonial era inherited the colonial structure, while most leaders failed to get involved in radical transformation.²⁰ Instead, they maintained colonial-designed structures, which eventually stopped to serve the aspirations and the needs of newly independent African states.²¹ For example, the post-independence period was expected to be an era of deconstruction and reconstruction.²² Per that intention, the newly independent states were to replace the colonial systems with a new, functional, and sustained a system of institutions, power relations, and a common value system. For many reasons, there was no systematic change of the colonial structures and institutions, despite efforts made by the nationalist leaders. Redie Bereketeab asserts that the post-colonial states were reconstructed on the old structure of colonialism, rather than building supra-ethnic national identity, socio-economic, and national institutions,²³ therefore leading to a failure of reconstruction of new African nations representing aspirations of the continent. To Bereketeab, multi-linguistic, multicultural, and religious societies inherited from colonialism were a challenge for nationalist leaders who were looking for mechanisms and policies to create an integrated, coherent, and viable nation despite the existing diversity.²⁴ But Walter Rodney explains that Africa's underdevelopment is not an absence of development; rather, he suggests that "African development is possible only based on a radical break with internationalist capitalist system."

Another source of failure in postcolonial Africa was the low level of civic consciousness of the people; the state failed to provide an education that would make people politically aware and feel empowered. In this way, people would have become more engaged citizens, and would have built a more civic society. But mobilization at independence stopped at the celebration and did not translate into organized societies that would create civic-minded populations who would have been committed to service based on loyalty and honesty to the state, rather than loyalty to personality and party, which eventually engulfed most parts of Africa. Instead of producing more informed citizens, politically effective and fully liberated, lack of purpose and essence appeared to characterize the masses. To portray lack of preparedness and unwillingness to cut the umbilical cord with the former colonial masters, some Africa leaders advocated for reinforcement of such relationship. Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal well captured this view. In his view, 'in Africa, when children have grown up, they leave

their parents' hut, and build a hut of their own by its side. Believe me; we don't want to leave the French compound. We have grown up in it and it is good to be alive in it. We simply want to build our own huts.'²⁵

This French relationship with former colonies led to Francophonie. The neocolonialism, therefore, made citizenship and development of newly independent states questionable as the French government continued to control the economy of French West African States, except for Guinea. For anglophone countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and The Gambia, "Lancaster House became the political maternity ward for the delivery of truncated African re-birth with British and American powers overseeing the overall process and channeling it straight into a neocolonial direction."²⁶

Once people became dominated or subdued to totally controlled, they became subjects with their rights seized. Under such circumstances, they no longer dictated their own affairs. Hence, with total liberation, they become citizens with rights and privileges. It is imperative to reiterate that, while slaves have no form of entitlements, subjects have some rights, albeit limited. Citizens of a colony have very limited rights, while citizens of a sovereign state have rights to determine the government they want, which requires awareness. This consciousness must extend to being able to make informed choices. For example, the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia provides citizens are the source of power, and government derives its mandate from such authority.²⁷ It affirms the principle that all power derives from the sovereign will of the Gambians in the decision-making process.

Since independence, The Gambia's economy has remained relatively the same. Because of a lack of proper development planning, the state institutions remain weak, interfering with leaders and noncompliance with citizens. Likewise, the educational system has underperformed in knowledge production, innovation, and invention of new ideas to address societal problems. Almost in all sectors, for example, no serious change has taken place, or as necessary initiatives to drive the country towards national development. Both Presidents Jawara and Jammeh's governments failed to put sustainable measures in place to address problems in various sectors, which prevented the country from being self-sustaining. For most parts of the country, there was an emergence of a new class of elites. Their description perfectly fit Fanon's projection of the petite bourgeoisie class. Most of these elites would rather spend large amounts of money on landed properties, cars, and houses—sometimes marrying multiple women—than fight for a collective good problem that would ease poverty of the masses.

3. Correlation of Citizenship and Civic Consciousness

Citizenship is essential to African politics. The level of a citizen's civic consciousness dictates the degree to which of (s)he takes part in politics. Basically, consciousness means a state in which one is aware of oneself and one's situation. Therefore, civic consciousness is community members having knowledge of their existence as a people with a common sense of belonging. Every nation has within its territory persons who owe allegiance to it, who have a stake in its existence, and to whom the nation owes some obligations, which are usually embedded in the constitution. It aptly captured this idea as a

status given to those who are members of a society.²⁸ Those who gain the status were equal regarding the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. Civic education is referred to as “the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are needed for effective and responsible citizenship in a democratic society.”²⁹ Civic consciousness means citizens recognizing their own rights and duties. We may also see consciousness at different degrees of understanding.³⁰ For example, citizens’ consciousness on political participation includes the rights to vote and be voted for. While this is the most common form of political participation, there are many others, such as holding a public official position, joining an activist or interest group, writing a letter to a public official, volunteering for a campaign, signing a petition, donating money to a cause, occupying a building in an act of protest as the case of “Occupy Westfield Protest”, and blogging about a political issue. Most Gambian activists challenged the Gambian government through social media, particularly on the rejection of 2016 Draft Constitution.³¹

Citizens’ legal consciousness is how a citizen should know, understand, and observe the laws so that they act within the ambit of the law. They should know their legal system, as obeying and respecting the law is a civic responsibility. However, testifying in open court is a civic responsibility but one also has a personal responsibility to obey and respect the law and to “do the right thing.” Moral consciousness has to do with family virtues, professional, social-morality, and individual integrity, as well as ecological consciousness that has to do with environmental protection. The ideal system of government should encourage active involvement and participation of people in several tasks. For instance, the government should promote participatory democracy whereby citizens must run for office, and others must take part in elections.

Mostly, citizens’ rights in The Gambia complement those found in most international conventions. Hence, rights are the inherent dignity and inalienable rights afforded to all members of the human family as set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976), and articulated for the African peoples through the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (1986), African Charter on the Rights of the Child, and the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia, among others. All citizenries must enjoy the rights of citizens. Civil rights are those that are specified in a constitution, or in specific laws.³² Citizenship entails responsibilities, and citizens perform their duties in a state as in expression of their civic responsibilities. Some of these duties include regular payment of taxes and participation in the national army when necessary. Other responsibilities include preservation of other citizens’ rights to personal safety, security and prosperity, service in the judicial system with a view for the common good of all, and respect for the laws of the state.

Regarding citizenship, obligation³³ involves a moral consideration both in exercising the rights of citizenship and in discharging the duty to serve the state. A citizen who has a voting right, for instance, has a moral obligation to exercise that right during elections. Failure to do this may lead to the election

of the wrong people into public office. It is the duty of a government to make laws which are in tune with fundamental needs and aspirations of the people. Otherwise, if a government does not serve the best interest of the people, they bound it to provoke a negative reaction from them. As a last resort, it may be necessary for citizens to follow their conscience and withdraw their loyalty to the state.³⁴

As discussed below, the people's perception of development and civic consciousness varied, as some opinions focus on political education as the basis for ideal citizenry.

4. Importance of Civic Consciousness

Although civic consciousness has raised a lot of questions, some individuals believe it is a prerequisite for national development. While others claim that the level of consciousness will always influence the informed decision or choice made by citizens, as consciousness is based on reason and not mere sentiment. To answer some of these questions, we interviewed multiple experts for this study. How can one claim to be a citizen when he or she cannot play his or her role in society? This is one of many questions answered by Ali Dukuray, a community leader. "Whatever one intends to do, the first thing is that it must be based on knowledge. Whatever you intend to do without the requisite knowledge, it will bring destruction."³⁵ According to Dukuray, both the state and political parties should try to educate and enlighten Gambians about their rights and responsibilities as sovereign citizens. "Your rights as a citizen of the government and your duties you should do as a citizen. These are the two that are incumbent upon every citizen and they are like a bird feather because a bird cannot fly with one feather."³⁶ Civic consciousness, thus, is necessary as a person can live but not existing. For example, it is possible for people to have families and other luxuries, yet they do not know why they are living because they may not know the essence of their existence. Therefore, it becomes important for citizens to be aware of their civic rights and obligations. Where their rights are respected, they can also contribute to the development of the society or take part in public life.

Further, no society can advance when its citizens are lawless, hostile, intolerant, dishonest, uncooperative, and destructive. Rather, the society desires an atmosphere of discipline, security, peace, unity, and tolerance to plan and execute development projects. The greatest contribution the society expects the youths to make is to show a high level of civic responsibility. This is one way they can make the country to be proud of them. First, civic consciousness, enhances individual citizens and groups to pursue their diverse interests based on the common good. Second, it encourages critical debate and reflection on progressive politics and tolerance among people. Next, civic consciousness promotes active involvement of people in collective decision making in their own local communities. In addition, civic consciousness provides that the civil society plays an active role in setting priorities and making the needs of the most vulnerable people in society known.

The Constitution of The Gambia has mandated the National Council for Civic Education (NCCE) to embark on citizenship engagement.³⁷ As a nonpartisan institution, it aims to serve and inform citizenry to realize their civic duties and general principles of good governance, democracy, and human rights.

Some interviewees are of the view that the institution appears to be weak and, hence, unable to carry out most of its duties. According to Ibrahim Juwara, a university student, noted that the NCCE is under-funded by the government, consequently affecting this body to execute its mandate of civic education across the country. To him, “what I believe should happen is that they should have offices and staff across the whole seven administrative areas of the country with their staff coming from each administrative area and working in those areas.”³⁸ This will enhance the institution’s easy access and staff’s movement to every village or town in the country and sensitize the people about their rights, duties, and responsibilities as sovereign citizens. Those staff from the Local Administrative Areas understand the language, culture, tradition and beliefs in their areas and they can easily sensitize them on matters of state, culture, education, women’s and children’s rights and all other issues affecting society.³⁹

Interviewees highlighted many challenges as being responsible for the low performance of NCCE. They identified lack of substantial knowledge and training of constitution as a key problem. It was, however, suggested that the government must fully train the staff of the NCCE and have background knowledge on the subjects they are to discuss with the local people. They must especially have a deep understanding of the constitution and other relevant matters. The employees of the NCCE must be fully independent in carrying out their duties as dictated by law so that they can be free from pressure by the incumbent government. According to these interviewees, once the NCCE has substantial funds to execute their mandate and have enough staff, offices, and logistics across all the administrative areas to reach out to every village and town at least twice every month, and citizens well sensitized and informed, such a population (citizens) would have a duty to elect good, responsible, conscious, and pragmatic leaders to manage the affairs of the country.

Some interviewees, Kaddy Dibba a civil servant, and Juwara asserted that an informed citizen is more likely to refrain from troubles such as fighting, and such individual can understand the right approach to take whenever problems occur. There a consensus was that the government has the leading role to play to improve civic consciousness of the people by incorporating civic education in school curriculum. They suggested that the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) must also play a part by intensifying radio shows on civic education in national languages. The interviewees further stated that when people learn the importance of being sovereign and patriotism, they will take part in the country’s defense and security. Such actions have to be nurtured right from primary schools to tertiary institutions, so that one can be well-informed and become a conscious of what is expected from an individual as a good citizen of the nation.

Most agreed that NCCE should step up their efforts and create more awareness of issues of national importance. Dibba emphasized that civic consciousness contributes to national development. First, a conscious citizen knows what his or her rights are, what the rights of others are, they will respect the rule of law and be law always abiding. Second, only if citizens are fully aware of their circumstance can they scrutinize their representatives and evaluate all development projects such as good roads,

quality and affordable health care, system clean drinking water, excellent schools, and quality education. It is only through civic consciousness that citizens can demand these basic rights from government. In a similar vein, NCCE should hold regular radio talk shows and television programs in all the national languages across the whole country at least twice every week. They should also tour the entire country at least once or twice every month to reach out to people in remote areas of the country and sensitize them about education, leadership, elections, the constitution, and other relevant matters.

Primarily, civic consciousness allows for equal sovereign power. By that, it facilitates individuals and groups to mitigate the *majoritarianism* that can otherwise make a democratic government insufferable for marginal groups that can never win backing to see their ideas and values reflected in the policies of the state. In doing so, it enhances societal development, thus promoting good governance. For instance, after the proclamation of The Gambia becoming an Islamic state, the Christian community fought hard to see that the Jammeh government reverse its position. In addition, civic consciousness encourages and drives citizens to be independent members of society, such as self-discipline, adhering voluntarily to self-imposed standards of behavior rather than requiring the imposition of foreign controls. It fosters respect for individual worth and human dignity, such as recognition of the rights of others. This also means tolerance for divergent views and joining associations.

Another importance of civic consciousness is the promotion of free and fair elections. This was reiterated by Dukuray when he stated that:

The main reason for election is to elect a President and Members of Parliament to work on our behalf. The meaning of electing people is to serve the national interests. Those people we voted for should serve our interest and work not only on behalf of his or her constituent but also the country. There are many political parties in the country, but people must vote based on the ideologies, policies and programs of the party that come with the best policies and programs. After fifty-six years of independence, our country is still in the same situation. We must ask ourselves what caused this. The answer to that is we failed to vote for good, committed, trustworthy leaders to manage our affairs.⁴⁰

He further noted that “most people usually vote based on ethnic and other reasons and not question their competence, credibility, and integrity. We also fail to listen to the best policies and programs. The leaders we vote for are not interested in our well-being but power, self-interest, and self-enrichment. What preoccupies them is to enrich themselves and their families while the entire country suffers. They are not interested in any human development. For many of them, government service means self-enrichment, not service to the people. After a few years, they become rich because of the loans and grants they took on behalf of the country while everyone else is suffering”⁴¹

Nevertheless, civic consciousness inclines the citizen to public affairs, such as attentiveness to public affairs, civic-mindedness, and patriotism. It facilitates thoughtful and effective participation in public affairs, such as civility, respect for law, honesty, courage, persistence, and a willingness to negotiate and compromise. While schools must play a role in the overall development of the character of students, the primary responsibility for the development of ethical behavior and private character, including

moral character, remains with families, and religious institutions and the larger society. This shows that society values and respects diversity among people. “If we do not change the system, our country will still be in the same position for years to come. If we truly want change, we must fight corruption and nepotism, refrain from appointing family and friends in a government position while they lack the knowledge and experience to serve the best interest of the nation,” Dukuray warned.

Considering that, Nkrumah was explicit and apt to say that:

Africa needs a new type of citizen: a dedicated, modest, honest, informed man and woman who submerged self in service to the nation and mankind. A man and woman who abhor greed and detest vanity. A new type of man and woman whose humility is his and her strength and whose integrity is his and her greatness.⁴²

5. Conclusion

The paper explores that the state’s failure to improve the lives of the citizens was because of the absence of proper civic education for the citizenry and the British colonial model that was inherited after independence. Citizenship is about nationalism and patriotism, and The Gambia requires new and conscious citizens who will stand and defend its integrity and be ready to serve the state and to promote good practices. It shows from the above discussion that citizenship and civic consciousness are essential for democracy and national development because they are an integral part of nationhood. The concept of citizenship has broadened from a national focus to a more global one. Every sovereign republic has a constitution that paves the way for the government in relation to its policies and programs. The article highlighted that, without citizenship and civic consciousness, national development cannot be attained.

Endnotes

¹ Karl Mar, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” 1852, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumair> accessed April 10, 2021.

² For detailed analysis on Gambian citizenship, see the work of Gaye Sowe and Marie Saine, “Report on Citizenship Law: The Gambia,” *European University Institute* (March 2021): 1-14.

³ Ibid. Gaye Sowe is a Human Rights Lawyer and Constitutional Specialist; See chapters II and III of the Constitution of The Gambia, 1970 and 1997 respectively.

⁴ *Aristotle’s Politics: Book three*, <http://www.novelguide.com/aristotles-politics/summaries/book3-> accessed April 10, 2021.

⁵ The Gambia Education Curriculum does not prepare students to be conscious of citizenship and importance of patriotism or nationalism.

⁶ See Patience Sonko-Godwin, *Leaders of the Senegambia Region: Reactions to European Infiltration 19th-20th Century* (Banjul: Sunrise Publisher, 1995), 85; Patience Sonko-Godwin, *Social and political*

Structures in the Pre-Colonial Period: Ethnic Groups of the Gambia (Banjul: Sunrise Publisher, 1986), 70.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See Halifa Sallah, *The Road to Self Determination and Independence*, (Serekunda: People's Centre for Social Sciences, Research, Civic Awareness and Community Initiatives, 2010).

⁹ Kathleen Knight-Abowitz, "Citizenship Education," in *Encyclopedia of the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education* 1-3, eds. Eugene F. Provenzo Jr., et al. (CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 128.

¹⁰ Gaye Sowe and Maria Saine, "Report on Citizenship Law: The Gambia," *European University Institute* (March 2021): 3; see Constitution of The Gambia, 1965.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See Fatou Janneh, "*Kafoolu* and *kompins*: Women's Grassroots Movements in Postcolonial Gambia, 1970-1997," (M.A Thesis, Ohio University, 2021), 15.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See Nana Grey-Johnson, *Edward Francis Small: Watchdog of The Gambia* (Kanifing: Book Production and Material Resources Unit, 2002); Arnold Hughes and David Perfect, *A Political History of The Gambia* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006).

¹⁵ Halifa Sallah. "Special interview with Hon. Halifa Sallah (Secretary General-PDOIS)." 140 Minutes. Paradise Radio and Television, November 7, 2019. www.youtube.com/watch?v=g15yb93nkb accessed April 13, 2021.

¹⁶ See Foroyaa publications for budget analysis- *Foroyaa supplement*, September 30, 1988; June 15, 1990; August 12, 1992.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Franz Fanon, "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," 1961.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*; Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*; Kwame Nkrumah, *Neocolonialism Last Stage of Imperialism*; Aime Cesaire, "Discourse on Colonialism;" Redie Bereketeab, "Education as an Instrument of Nation-Building in Postcolonial Africa," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 20, no. 1 (2020); Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa: Myths of Decolonization* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2013)

²¹ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa: Myths of Decolonization*, xiii.

²² Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (New York: Times Books, 1992)

²³ Redie Bereketeab, "Education as an Instrument of Nation-Building in Postcolonial Africa," 72.

²⁴ Ibid., 86.

²⁵ Leopold Sedar Senghore, cited in *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa*, 15.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ See Section 1, subsection 2 Constitution of The Gambia, 1997.

²⁸ Thomas H. Marshall, "Citizenship and Social Class," (1950)

²⁹ Monalisa M. Mullins, "Civic Education," in *Moral Education: A Handbook*, eds. Clark F. Power, et al. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 79.

³⁰ Franz Fanon in his book, *Wretched of the Earth* (1961) asserts that a government which calls itself a national government ought to take responsibility for the totality of the nation; and in an under-developed country the young people represent one of the most important sectors. The level of consciousness of young people must be raised; they need enlightenment.

³¹ See Kebba A.F Touray, "Westfield Protesters Dispersed," *Foroyaa Newspaper*, November 13, 2017; "Gambia: Gambian Police Say No To "Occupy Westfield Protesters," *Freedom Newspaper*, November 3, 2017. <https://www.freedomnewspaper.com/2017/11/03/gambia-gambian-police-say-no-to-occupy-west-field-protesters/> accessed April 14, 2021.

³² Voting is a civil right, as is the right to hold office. Even in a democracy, not everyone has these rights; infants and children are excluded.

³³ Obligation means something that must be done because it is legal or moral duty

³⁴ R. N. Okwodu, *Government for West Africa* (Indiana: Macmillan Publisher, 1982), 8.

³⁵ Ali Dukuray, WhatsApp conversation, Demba Kunda, Kurumba, Basse, April 3, 2021.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ See Sections 198-199, Constitution of The Gambia, 1997.

³⁸ Ibrahim Juwara, telephone conversation, April 11, 2021; Ali Dukuray, WhatsApp conversation, Demba Kunda, Kurumba, Basse, April 3, 2021.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ali Dukuray, WhatsApp conversation, Demba Kunda Kurumba, Basse, April 3, 2021.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Kwame Nkrumah, "Africa Must Unite," 1963.