Innovations

Education for democratic values: the role of civic education for sustainable democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper looked at examines education for democratic values; civic education role in promoting sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The paper discussed the role of civic education in promoting democratic values and sustaining democracy in Nigeria. It looked at the challenges militating effective democracy in Nigeria. These challenges are corruption, political violence and assassinations, God fatherism, electoral malpractice, ethnicity, poverty, greed, and favoritism. It also discusses the role of civic education in developing the right types of values for a sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Some suggestions were made and these include: The curriculum of civic education should emphasize teachers and students' active participation in activities such as voting supporting, exchange of peaceful political power and accepting defeat without violence.

Keywords: 1.Education; 2.Democratic Values; 3.Education for Democratic Values; 4.Democracy;5. Civic Education; 6. Sustainable Democracy

Introduction

Nigeria is a pluralistic nation, created through European colonialism. The colonial government created regions without due consideration of the different ethnic background and due consultation with the people (Oni, 2014). This shortfall of the colonial master has created some problems and unhealthy interactions among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Thus, conflict is rampant in different parts of the country. Conflicts range from ethnic, socio-political, economic and religious considerations among others. Ibietan and Ajayi (2015) observed that no major elections had ever been conducted in Nigeria and other parts

of Africa without the orchestration of vote rigging. It significant to note that the rate of rigging of election in Nigeria is still very high. Consequently, there have been political crises in most parts of the country. In most cases, some of these crises are masterminded or fuelled by those seeking political power to control economic resources in their area. The citizens have always been denied their legitimate right to vote. Corruption has been the order of the day. Those who loot public fund are sometimes backed up by their relatives, cohorts and ethnic groups to circumvent punishment. It could be rightly argued therefore, that the Nigerian democratic process is still associated with a number of obstacles militating against its practice. These include: corruption, ethnic and tribal chauvinism, the north-south dichotomy, religious bigotry and so on. Virtues such as honesty, tolerance, hard work, sympathy, national consciousness, patriotism, integrity dedication to duty and other democratic practices have been distorted by political leaders and other unscrupulous citizens whom they use to achieve their aims. Most of these people know the implications of what they do but because of their selfish desire or tendency to enrich themselves, they violate the law. Others compromise their rights because of fear of victimization and intimidation. The political and social environments of the Nigerian society therefore have been very unhealthy and unstable and this has been affecting national development (Falade, 2014). This paper therefore, is focused on the significant role civic education plays• in cultivating democratic values necessary for sustainable democratic system.

The concept of democracy

Democracy consist of two Greek words "demo" meaning "the people" and "kratein" meaning "to rule" (Ndifreke, 2014). It is the government of the people by the people and for the people.Democracy, according to Okoroafor (2010), is a work in progress, not a finished product; rather, it is a journey toward completion. That is the finest government that cares about making the people happy and knows how to make them happy "a sort of political system that delivers to the people as a whole". Direct or indirect assent of the majority of individuals under government is required to make key policy decisions in a representative democracy. For Iorun and Aondoakaa (2016),democracy is a form of government in which the citizens of a country pick their own representatives to serve as their voice in matters of speech, religion, and politics. An alternative term for representative democracy would be a democracy in which all members of society have a voice in the formulation of public policy and where elected officials are chosen on the basis of merit.

As defined by the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995), democracya system of rule by all the people of a country, usually through representatives whom they elect, supposed to provide freedom of speech, religions and political opinions. One of the most eloquent proponents of the democratic republican form of government was Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States of America. For this paper, the author prefers this definition of democracy because it offers a basic and direct representation of what democracy entails, making it a good fit. Due to its accurate portrayal of democracy as a system in which the people are free, content, and properly represented, it has become a widely accepted definition of what democracy truly means. The government, on the other hand, is always keeping an eye on what the people want. As a result, democracy can be viewed as a form of government in which the citizens control the government. The people of Nigeria, on the other hand, may be reasonably argued to be the employees of the country's leadership.

Leaders are not elected. They are selected the leaders control all government policies and decisions. Thus, the masses are excluded from participating in government affairs. These definitions of democracy imply that in a democratic system of government, the people governed are the masters, while those ruling are the servants. This is because they are voted by the people to represent them for the good of the society.

The characteristics of democratic system

All citizens are treated equally in a democratic government. Citizens have access to information regarding government choices. The political elite can be held accountable for their acts and decisions. It is the responsibility of citizens to exercise their freedom of expression, participate in government activities and represent their interests without bias. There are no barriers to entry for people with various political viewpoints to engage in the country's administration. Voting rights for all adults are guaranteed by democratic institutions such as the free and fair conduct of elections, the existence of many political parties, and the availability of a variety of media sources (Galston, 2018). A government that is responsive to the needs of its citizens and compliant with legal requirements is one in which elected and appointed officials have a common goal. No one, including the kings and queens, is above the rule of law. However, does this apply to Nigerian leaders. Keeping in mind that Nigerian politicians are above the law, it's important to point this up. Everyone in a democratic society must adhere to the law, and no citizen should be treated differently. Additionally, the people must be aware of what their government is doing and how it makes its judgments. Politicians who lose elections in a democratic form of governance should not view policies as a "do or die" situation; rather, they should accept the outcomes of elections and congratulate their opponents (Olaniran& Williams, 2020). This is essentially a guarantee for all citizens of fundamental human rights like the right to life or dignity, the ability to own property or enterprises, the right to vote or be voted for. Additionally, the rights of marginalized groups are safeguarded, and participation by more than one political party is permitted in government.

Challenges against effective democratic practice in **Nigeria**

There are numerous challenges working against effective democratic practice or system in Nigeria, but few of them will be discussed here for the purpose of this paper. These include:

- **Corruption:** Nigeria's democratic system of government and national development have been negatively impacted by corruption among political leaders and other public officials since the country's independence. Massive election fraud and the subsequent overthrow of a democratically elected government have been caused by corruption in government and financial transactions. Many politicians, according to Linus and Shamiji (2004), see their newly won power as a way to enrich themselves at the expense of the public. We can infer that public funds are being misused by our leaders, as some of them treat public funds and properties as their own. They take money intended for development and put it in their own pockets. This has an impact on the smooth operation of a democratic government system.

- **Assassinations and Political Violence:** The political climate isn't ideal for a democratic system to thrive in Nigeria. Many Nigerians have been killed because they attempted to critical the evils of a particular govern in power. Others are being held for the same reasons. This can be confirmed by reading the newspapers on a daily basis. As a result, Nigeria's democratic system has been negatively impacted by political conflicts between various parties.

- **God fatherism:** The term "godfatherism" refers to the practice of most politicians receiving financial support from wealthy donors. Because of this, these people try to exert control over and dictate to them (the sponsored) what type of program they should carry out and who should be given an interview. This has adversely affected democratic system in Nigeria.

- **Malpractice in the Conduct of Elections**: Figures are always manipulated and, in most cases, political thugs intimate the electorates and run away with ballot boxes. Sometimes, electoral materials are deliberately hoarded to disenfranchise people by those with political power. The 2019 election is a good

example of this ugly situation. In most places there were no elections yet results were announced in those areas.

- **Ethnicity:** The ethnic factors have played a divisive role in the Nigerian democratic system. People pay loyalty to their ethnic groups more than the nation level. Essentially, every ethnic group want either a state or political leader irrespective of the integrity of the person.
- **Poverty and Greed:** Democracy in Nigeria is synonymous with poverty. This is because poverty has contributed to poor democracy. Most people do all sorts of things during elections because of material benefit. They do not vote according to their conscience and this has adversely affected the Nigerian democratic system.
- **Favoritism:** The manner in which the government establishment and national cake are shared shows favoritism. Our leaders show favoritism a lot in matters of employment or political appointment on basis of state, ethnicity, religion and political parties.

Sustainable democracy

Sustainable democracy may be defined as an enduring one, which last for a longer period; within which another party takes over from the ruling party in a free and fair elections. Thus, sustainable democracy operates in a free and conducive environment. It should be able to transit the nation from one civilian government to another. Obro (2021) identified the following as requirements for sustainable development in a democratic system.

(1) A political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making without coercion.
(2) An economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on self-reliance.
(3) A social system that provides for solutions for crises for disharmonious development
(4) A production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development
(5) The national system that blends well with international system for fostering sustainable patterns of trade and finance
(6) An administrative system that is flexibleand has the capacity for self-correction.
(7) Empowerment/strengthening of the security institutions to ensure a higher degree of effective horizontal and vertical security coordination and coverage for protecting the citizenry.

The above factors are not yet attainable in Nigerian democracy. The political system is diarchy in nature, while the economy is not stable. The environment is not conductive for foreign investment. There is state of insecurity, most especially in the oil producing area (Niger Delta) which is yet to be resolved.

The role of civic education for a sustainable democracy

Okoro (2004) defined civic education as a process of inculcating the democratic culture in the people or instilling in them the essential principles of democracy and sensitizing them to the tenets of democratic values. The above definition implies that civic education has a significant role in the sustenance of democracy. Through the teaching of civics education people imbibe certain basic democratic values ad firms such as political tolerance, accountability, honesty, respect for the right of others integrity and fair play that promote sustainable democracy. By encouraging support for citizens' democratic behaviours and ideals, civic education, according to Utulu (2011), becomes extremely relevant as it primarily strives to introduce learners to the process of democratic socialization. Civic education, according to Falade and Adeyemi (2015), is an educational method used by sovereign states to help citizens or individuals become socially and politically aware, integrate into society, gain skills and competencies, and become socially responsible members of their community. productivity and maximum growth, all for the benefit of the State.

By educating people on how their government functions, what duties government officials have, which aspects of the political process are most amenable to citizen participation, and what kinds of things citizens can do to influence political outcomes, civic education encourages people to become active participants in their political systems. Civic education enables children to develop norms and a sense of civic duty through the teaching of civic education, people are taught how to register, identify and vote for the political parties and candidates of their choice during elections.To ensure that elections are free of violence and that citizens' concerns and opinions can be heard without resorting to violence, education is essential. As a result, civic education empowers citizens to better understand their fundamental rights. Finally, civic education is an essential instrument for fostering democratic principles in Nigeria and ensuring long-term stability in the country. Civic education helps citizens develop the right values for a successful democracy.

Suggestions

The curriculum of civic education must continue to emphasize accountability, transparency, rule of law, due process and the right of citizens to express their own opinion and practice their own social rights of other. The teaching of civic education must go beyond chalk and talk. The teaching should be concretized with modern equipment such as computer and television so that students would see with their optical eyes the way our leaders behave. More so, the curriculum should emphasis teachers and students' active participate in political activities such as voting, supporting exchange of peaceful political power and accepting defect without violent. The teaching ad learning of practices and beliefs of any particular ethnic culture that contradicts basic national values should be discouraged in the school curriculum. The right types of values such as human dignity, justice, political tolerance equality of opportunity, humility, honesty, co-operation and so on should be encouraged through the teaching as civic education. The objectives of government agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Offences Commission (ICPC) should be included in the civic education curriculum so that students would be expose to the implications of a corrupt leader. Seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized for civic and social studies teachers on regular basis to discuss issues and problems that affects Nigeria's democratic development.

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