



THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the problems or challenges of democracy as well as poor educational development in Nigeria. The objectives of the paper is anchored on the following: (i) Assess the relationship between poor democratic practice and educational development Nigeria, (ii) identify the nature and activities of poor governance in Nigeria, (iii) identify the consequences of poor governance on the socio-economic activities in Nigeria. The study adopted the system theory as theoretical framework and the qualitative research analysis method. This enabled the researchers to have case studies amongst others. The major findings include the following; poor democratic practice resulted to poor educational development in Nigeria, poor affected socio-economic activities in Nigeria, etc. The study concluded that poor democratic practice has destroyed the educational development in Nigeria. It was recommended that government should come up with rational and sustainable ways to improve the democratic practice in Nigeria in order to enhance meaningful and sustainable education. There should also be better measures put in place to promote good governance that is geared towards egalitarian society. Stake holders of democracy should endeavor to maintain some decorum, ethics, good behavioural conduct that will bring about good governance.

Keywords: Challenges, Democracy, Education, Development, Governance, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's educational development, until very recently, has been described as one and cohesive, ultimately geared towards the purposeful and conscious actualization of the hopes and

aspirations of the average Nigerian. The country's educational development has been consistently threatened by the poor democratic practice. This poor democratic practice has resulted to poor educational system. The worse of it all is the country's higher institutions that have been terribly jeopardized. Before now particularly in the 1980s and 1990s parents and teachers were going about their education lawfully and orderly without any skirmishes or disorderliness. Even if some of these skirmishes were there, it was not that serious to disturb the peaceful co-existence as it is currently being witnessed. The leadership of Nigeria then was such that every aspect of national development and unity were adequately and particularly addressed and given the best of attention. It is the result of this seeming relationship that cuts across every echelon of government that enhances and sustains good governance and promotion of national unity.

Gone are those good days that were anchored on better and sustainable relationship that is borne out of good governance. The reverse becomes the case today. A situation where democratic practice is built on ethnic consciousness, religion prejudice, terrorism, kidnapping and other such terrible vices that have completely disunited the country and consequently have thrown the entire nation into some highly unprecedented state of hulabaloo and quagmire. A nation faced with consistent interruptions with strike arising from the inability of government to live up to its expectations. A very damaging situation that has made the country most intolerable and two discomfoting to live in. The democratic practice rather than promoting an ambience of peaceful atmosphere and harmoniousness, has rather entangled itself with divisiveness, desperation for power, treachery and some levels of avarice and hostility that has retarded the pace and speed of educational advancement and socio-economic activities. According to Chilaka and Egbuchulam (2020), the democratic practice in Nigeria have not lived up to the standard of ensuring credible elections since 1999 till date as well as effective political leadership, development and the actualization of the dividends of democracy. In line with the above, Igbokwe-Ibeto et al. (2016, p. 11) opined that “the whole idea of democracy among Nigerians to have been equated with holding of election at regular interval, irrespective of how these are organized and their outcome. That is, elections have historically been an instrument of authoritarian control”.

The poor democratic practice introduced brigands, intellectual misfits and all sorts of people into governance. Consequently, the people who are supposed to be the objective of good governance become victims of the poor caliber of persons that rigs their ways to power. The just concluded Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) strike of 14th February 2022 to October 2022 is the most recent and terrible effect of poor governance arising from poor democratic practice in Nigeria.

Therefore, this paper is set to interrogate the seemingly intractable problem of poor democratic practice, poor educational system of Nigeria as it affects and hinders the initially smooth educational system and its attendant effects. The reality is that no country can make any meaningful progress and development in a situation where there is pretentious relationship going on among the political class and other members of the society and expect to make the much anticipated progress that is expected of any democracy.

Problem Statement

The Nigerian democratic practice has been halted and distorted by the sharp and ridiculous practices that have consequently made governance a laughing stock. Further to it is the poor educational standard and weak and the epileptic effort to resuscitate it. Elections in Nigerian democracy have never been free and fair. This is obviously because it is always characterised

and marred by a lot of innuendos ranging from character assassination, thuggery and other terrible vices. The implication of this is that it has damaging effect on the electorate as neglected educational sectors keep asking for succor to alleviate their pathetic situations. The June 12 elections of 1993 where late Moshood Abiola had the mandate of the people and was denied is a case in point. Many have inevitably asked to know what would have necessitated this situation such that things are increasingly and uncontrollably getting worse on daily basis. According to Zimako (2009), could it be traceable to the failure of thinking, collapse of reasoning, shortage of common sense, lack of wisdom or abandoned values? It is questions such as these that have become the fulcrum of this discourse. Nigeria as a nation has been crawling as a result of the seemingly over bloated and unhealthy democratic practice arising from pretensions and fake norms, values, and practices over the years. Consequently, this has hinder the much anticipated progress which by implication has terribly affected education and further collapsed other existing institutions. Today, People have become victims of what they know nothing about because of failed governance arising from poor democratic practices. In the words of Alapiki (2010), in the era preceding independence, and mainly in the post- independence era, there is enough evidence to support the argument that electoral behaviour in Nigeria was not guided by ideology, party programme or quality of candidates, but by a political calculus based on ethnic geopolitics”.

It is against this backdrop the paper intends to interrogate some of these unending problems arising from poor democratic practice in Nigeria and possibly see how this paper can help proffer solutions borne of altruistic motives that can help pull out this country out of the quagmire and situational crisis it has found itself. Objective of this paper is to examine the challenges of democratic practice on educational development.

METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted the qualitative research method. It is therefore imperative to note that documentation and critical review were anchored on clear interpretation of secondary data recorded through observation. Past events were analysed in an attempt to understand the present situation of things and to provide suitable answers to research questions earlier raised in this study.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

In order for a thorough and clear understanding of this paper to be achieved some concepts regarding the research topics were examined below.

Governance

Governance implies the process of leadership. It means leading the people with an expectation that will affect their lives economically, politically, socially, psychologically and even culturally. Davis (2022) defined governance as the process of managing the affairs of the people through the instrumentalities of government. For Ogunchiya (2010), it is the process that is employed to achieve the noble of the state. So, it encompasses a whole lot of responsibilities and expectations. According to Nimi (2019, p. 17), “governance refer to the practice of command (coordination or control) in an organization or polity”.

Democracy

Democracy connotes a majoritarian rule. It is a system of government of elected representatives. According to Atani (2021, p. 45), the hallmark of democracy is hinged on the ideas that power emanates from the people and is used for the actualization of the aspiration of the people. Diamond (2005) argued that "governance is good only when the authority and the sovereignty exercised by the government rest finally on the people as well as respond to their aspiration. In the same vein, Badru (2005, p. 77) opined that:

"democracy is the foremost representative of an increasing citizen's political equality and equity when it comes to popular participation, asserting further that in democratic system, both the leaders and the led are enabled to be conscious of what is required and get accordingly for the social, political and economic good of society otherwise referred to as development."

Education: This is the means by which individuals get developed through the process of learning after undergoing examination or some formal practices. According to Whawo (2000, p.1) "Education is also a process of developing the individual physically, mentally morally and socially for his own welfare and for the benefit of the society".

Development: Development connotes some levels of change that reflects on the life of the citizens. It is a process of economic, political as well economic transformation of an existing society. Development brings about improvement in the quality of life a people. Okowa (1996) sees development as hard work, skills, discipline, commitments and the intelligent utilization of the faculty of man over a fairly long period of time. At the level of the individual, it implies increase social skill and capacity to interact efficiently with one's environment. For Obi (2006), development can equally be seen as a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in other to produce higher per capital income and level of living through more modern production, methods and improved social organization.

Theoretical framework

Although a lot of theory ranging from the elite theory, group theory, conspiracy theory, power theory just to mention a few are logically suitable for this study but the system theory has been singled out for this study because of its peculiarity and suitability. The system theory is a theory that interacts with every part that makes up the system. The interdependence of the existing parts makes it a system. No part of the system is irrelevant. The neglect of a particular part may have a negative and harmful effect on the others. The system theory is reminiscent of the entire body framework of the human species. Here, the entire body framework functions interdependently in other to keep the entire system working." Each small system, (sub system) affects the working of the large system. The mutual relationship between the two systems is called feedback which may be both negative and positive" (Obi, 2006, p.142). The proponent of this theory is David Easton. According to Oronsaye (1996, p. 69), his position is that " a political system is composed of many interrelated institutions or parts and activities." Oronsaye posited further by saying that "political system theory is important because it draws our attention to forces and activities that takes place in the subsystem of the larger social system. Here lies the nitty-gritty of the entire

discourse. The theory exposes the neglect of some parts (the educational sector) while some parts appear to be more relevant.

It is logical to argue that the system theory is a reflection of the entire political system of Nigeria being managed by leadership that is prejudice towards a section of the system(educational sector) to be so weak and unattractive. It does reflect the weakness of the theory which says that “ while it talks of the subsystem which interact to formulate public policies, it does not tell us the dynamics in their interaction or the dominant forces in the decision making process (Oronsaye, 1996, p. 69). This explains why some sections in the political system such as the educational sector suffer some setbacks in a system that is supposed to complement each other. The level of governance is such that a sector (system) is disregarded at the expense of others, not minding the cumulative effect.

It is this type of scenario that manifests itself in our everyday relationship over democratic failures by the leaders. Often time, leaders make promises in the name of party manifesto, the resultant effect is disappointment and anguish. According to Markovits (1977), if African societies were so great in the past, where is the evidence for this today? Corroborating the above, Akukwe (1988, p. 12) opined that “when it adversely affects a significant number of people and they feel that something must be done through collective effort then we have got a social problem”.

The challenges of democratic failure and educational development in Nigeria

The poor culture of democratic practice in Nigeria has unending effects on education particularly on the tertiary institutions. Often, the procedure and pattern of elections of candidates into governmental positions leave much to be desired. This is obviously because the desperation of power seekers makes them to always part with gifts ranging from bag of rice, money to induce the electorates into voting for the wrong candidates. The implication of this is that candidates without the right initiative find themselves in authority. At the end, better programmes that should help to promote the welfare of the electorates *viz-a-viz* their expectations are jettisoned for personal interests and desires. According to Ekekwe (2015, p. 60), “if there was any doubt that the Nigerian governing class that controls these states that thoroughly trivialized the serious concept of development, it is to be seen in the much-banded about terms like” dividends of democracy”- vacuous phrases that irritate the serious minded and degrade political discourse”. It is not enough, to have citizens and to protect them, it is also necessary to give some thoughts to their subsistence And seeing to the public needs is an obvious consequence of the general will, and the third essential duty of the government (Rousseau, cited in Cress 1987, p. 127).

So, the point in emphasis is that the actions of these leaders towards the practice of democracy have led to the neglect of the society in virtually all ramifications of human endeavor including education. It is this neglect that has continuously made some of our parents to send their Children abroad to a relatively stable and more orderly society. The just concluded Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike is a very glaring case in point. As a matter of fact, during the periods there were female students who became pregnant. Others were exposed to other social vices that stagnated their educational pursuit. Again, some lecturers left their teaching jobs in search of better opportunities elsewhere. The consequences are endless. According to Macpherson (1977, p. 34), “the political system should both produce governments which would establish and nurture a free market society and protect the citizens from rapacious

governments (for by the grand governing principle of human nature, every government would be rapacious unless it were made its own interest not to be so, or impossible for it to be so)”.

Still in line with the aforementioned facts, the practice of the system of governance often times makes some of these powers seekers to even use some of the University Students as party thugs for their nefarious activities. They could use them to maim, kidnap and sometime kill their political opponents. The immediate consequence of this is that the desire to go to school is far from their minds since they have been exposed to quick means of making money and therefore it is time consuming and waste of precious time to go to school. However, some factors have been identified as the causes of this unpleasant development. Below are some of them:

Corruption The degree of this social factor has done very terrible havoc to the country's and educational standard and development. The recent Academic staff Union of University strike is one of the most recent challenges of the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. When a man faces economic difficulties, his social and economic security is being threatened. In the words of Oyovbaire (1992, p. 14), “Leadership that is poor, uninspiring, corrupt, oppressive and sectional can only generate resentment, dissension and revolt.

Poverty is another problem causing poor democratic practice in Nigeria. In recent time, people have started using their fellow human being for ritual. Consequently, it has increased the embers of disunity and fear amongst people that have agreed to cohabit. According to Njoku (2004), poverty dehumanized individual and rob them of dignity. It pushes under aged children to assume the position of adults and this leads to child abuse. The desire to occupy office to enrich oneself at the expense of the people is a compelling necessity

Democratic governance in Nigeria: The democratic governance is a system of governance that is geared towards the yearnings and aspirations of the citizenry. The idea is for the citizens to have a voice in the modus operandi of the democratic system of governance. It is the place of the citizen to protest against a policy or program that is not welfare oriented. Policies that will help improve the quality of lives of the citizens constitute democratic governance. More often than not, what is currently being witnessed and experienced is an orgy of violence by the political class to always resist a people that they are supposed to serve or protect. A person that they are accountable to, at least within the stipulated period of the democratic era helps to enhance the quality of governance. According to Nwaorgu (2014, p. 29), “the sham of democracy most developing countries especially in Africa and particularly in Nigeria practice is best described as cabalcracy - a government by a cabal”. Corroborating the above, Alapiki (2015, p. 26) opined that “this is the character of the state in Nigeria; it is the character of politics in our society. It is a state where governors act with impunity and remain above the law; a state where Senators and Assembly men do not represent any constituents but themselves; a place where police brutality is common place, a place where thuggery and gangsterism have become attractive ways of life”.

So, it is crystal clear that the adoption of democracy in our political system has assumed some of these qualities mentioned above. Consequently, the educational system like other institutions of government have suffered total disconnect and by implication their services are not being felt by those the system of government is supposed to serve. Thus, the system keeps oscillating like a pendulum without any target group. Little wonder the educational system has been so weak and epileptic both in content and in structure. This is because some of our leaders ostensibly play politics with virtually everything. The terrible remark this whole unpleasant remark has on the educational sector is for some of the students to see education as scam. The

passion to go to School is almost dead. According to Ikechukwu (2020, p. 109), “this type of representative democracy has brought problem because the politicians who are elected to represent the people, go there to represent themselves, taking care of themselves at the expense of the electorate and do not come back to the people. In summary, this has been the faith and pathetic situation of the educational system as a result of poor democratic practice in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The unhealthy state of the country, poor educational development arose as a result of low standard democratic practices. Leaders who emerged out of some desperation in politics have little or no idea of what do when voted into power. As a matter of fact, some of them even aid and abet the miscreants that often make the system ungovernable. Many of such miscreants have been sent to correction centre and regained their freedom through the poor judicial system and consequently find themselves in the society to create more havoc. Some schools in the past have been shut down because of the activities of these hoodlums. Consequently, the pace and speed of the education in this country, was retarded. Mosques, Schools and churches have been invaded by these blood- thirsty terrorists. Apart from the Nigeria civil war of 1967-70, Nigerians have never had it so bad. A lot really need to be done to reposition the country in order to get it right. It is in the light of this, the following recommendations should be considered:

Recommendations

The under listed are recommended:

- Very strict and unpardonable measures should be adopted to curtail the activities of the terrorists.
- Politicians without the relevant qualifications and moral upbringing should be barred from partisan politics.
- If it is possible, people with the burning desire to use people for ritual purpose should have their legs amputated when caught.
- Again, the benefits of political offices should be drastically reduced at least to discourage people from desperately seeking for political powers.

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