THE ROLES OF CIVIL SOCIETIES, GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN SUSTENANCE OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The cardinal goal of democracy and democratization in different parts of the globe is to address the aspirations of the people in all the constituencies that made its political entity. In Nigeria democratic governance has not produced the expected results of the dreams of Nigerian. Nigeria as a nation has made attempts since 1960 when it attained its political independence to establish durable democratic governance. The first attempt was parliamentary system and the transition to a presidential system in 1979. It has generally been assessed that only little have been delivered as a dividend of democracy in Nigeria because of institutional and human failure. Democratic system in Nigeria has been characterized by corruption, misplacement of priorities, wastages in governance and gross human rights violate, etc. This paper intends to examine the role of governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations and citizenship education in the re-engineering and sustenance of democratic governance in Nigeria. The methodologies adopted

include; reviews the use of primary and secondary sources and interdisciplinary approach.

Introduction

Democratic governance has been the tone of the contemporary period world over.The global campaign for democracy and good governance since the end of the Cold War era has been of historical significance looking at how military regimes are becoming obsolete in global political enclaves today. In the late 1980s, only a third of the world's populations were experiencing democratic governance. From the early 2000s, with the advancement of political pluralism in Africa, Asia, Central Europe, Latin America, the waves of democracy increased to about 75 per cent (Liberty, et al 2017), (Siegle 2012).

It is believed that "ultimate power lies in the ballot…" Ibrahim (2004) stated that democracy is believed to be the best modern day civilized option for choosing credible leaders. Nigerians have recorded some notable gains and suffered some damaging reversals. Much indeed a great challenges remains to move us irreversibly along the path of true democratic politics that will usher in good governance, rule of law and above all growth and national development that cut across socio-economic and

educational transformations. Ake (1981) observed that much that is required will involve a new kind of popular struggle to reinvent the normal basis of our democratic politics in ways that will be decisively anchored to our true natural dispositions as black Africans. Sani (2006) shared the opinion that it appears the system has continually failed because it has not adequately taken care of human factors.

The contemporary political system Nigeria operates is a presidential system of government which guarantees the independence of the judiciary, legislature and the executive arms of government. The country operates a multi-party system and an independent electoral body founded by the federal government. Democracy is not only about forming political parties, general elections and voting a civilian government in power. It is a continuous process that does not stops after election but involves full and effective participation of citizens in determining policies and decisions which affects their lives at all levels and at all times. It involves effective evaluation of the performance of elected representatives, the responsiveness of the government to the needs and aspirations of the citizens.

Nigeria runs a federal system of government with thirty-six (36) states and seven hundred and seventy-four (774) local government areas (Anyanwu et al, 1997). Nigeria has a federal constitution which has undergone various amendments to conform to contemporary political arrangements. The electoral system has undergone series of reforms. Therefore, the objectives of this paper are to:

i. Define the key concepts in the paper
ii. Discuss the problems of electoral process in Nigeria
iii. Discuss structural and cultural compass for understanding electoral crisis in Nigeria
iv. Discuss the role of citizenship education in sustaining democratic governance
v. Identify and highlight the role of civil societies, religious bodies and governmental agencies in sustaining democratic governance in Nigeria
vi. Offer some recommendation on how to improve upon the existing practice.

Crisis of election administration and management (electoral governance) and poor governance has undermined the growth of democracy in Nigeria. Unless there is a change by discouraging the

use of money and undue influence, the country may not be credible elections. Isichei (1978) posits that Nigeria required a focused political leadership that will deliver the goods by the electorate.

Definition of key concepts.

1. **Democracy**: This is the exercise of legitimate political authority and the use of institutional government to manage in society's problems and affairs. It also refers to a system of government in which the people of a country can vote to elect their representative through parliamentary or presidential system (INEC Training Manual (2011) and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary).
2. **Governance**: According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary 7th Edition, governance is the activity of governing a country (legal control or managing the affairs of people of a country).
3. **Development**: Todaro (1977) define development a multi-dimensional process involving major changes in social structure, popular attitudes, eradication of poverty and acceleration of economic growth.

4. **Civil society**: This is connected with the people living in a county who formed an association for a common goal and for the benefit of humanity.
5. **Governmental agencies**: These are organized bodies or institution empowered by the law to implement government policies.
6. **Citizenship Education**: Dubey and Barth (1980) d citizenship education as indoctrinating individuals on considered as a society's basic values.

Crisis of electoral governance in Nigeria

Ikara (1985) observed that elections into public offices and electoral governance in Nigeria's post-colonial history have been characterized by inconsistencies and crises since the attainment of our political independence. Various factors have accounted for this unhealthy development. This section will unveil some instance of poor electoral government. Nigeria's electoral governance in practice has consistently not been able to institutionalize the procedural certainty, which should characterize electoral competition, in way that will guarantee peoples' confidence. Modibbo (2009) maintained that this much is clear from some reports like the Babalakin commission reports, and the political

bureau reports of the 1980's and the Uwais report on electoral reform of 2008 and also in numerous devastating reports of international and domestic observers and monitoring teams since May, 1999.

In most of these reports, it was noted with dismay the high level of electoral malpractices in the conduct of 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections. These reports also indicated how the administration and management of the electoral process and elections in the country since 1999 have contravened domestic electoral laws and internationals conventions to which Nigeria has acceded (Valentine, 2007).

Structural and cultural compass for understating electoral crisis in Nigeria

Dugje and Ahmed (2008) contributed that the violent manner in which some Nigerians conduct themselves in their bid to gain political offices appears behind civilized standards of acquisition of political power which has been strongly motivated by the desire to control and amass vast economic resources. This party explains why our electoral politics has over the years increasingly assumed violent war-like forms. Modibbo (2009) shared the opinion that the

structural basis of our democratic politics with its physo-cultural derivatives remain a major obstacle to electoral governance and, therefore, to democratic consolidation in our country. It has turned politics into a huge business enterprise where competitive rules are openly and grossly violated and where regulators become active or inactive collaborators in gambling with voters' electoral mandate.

Balkisu (2007) also believed that another area of structural imbalance is the violation of institutional hallmarks of liberal democratic politics. This has undermined the independence or autonomy of public institutions and in the light of electoral governance has been the abuse of the power of incumbency for unfair partisan political advantage.

Ali (2007) opined in a similar view on the problem of electoral administration and management in the country that the Nigerian Bar Association in its submission to the Justice Uwais' led electoral reform committee, was emphatic in attributing a major source of the problem to a legal framework for the conduct of elections which encourages impunity. Generally, our legal framework and the judicial process are gradually creating an anti-democratic legal culture in which they patently deliberately abuse the procedural due process, through the manipulation of

technicalities and of the ambiguities in the construction of the law which has been a complex barrier in resolving cases on electoral malpractice.

The objectives of citizenship education

According to Ikem (2007). Citizenship Education has the following objectives:

- To create awareness of the provisions of the Nigerian constitution on the need and relevancy of democracy in Nigeria.
- To create adequate and functional literacy among Nigerian learners.
- To sensitize learners on the functions and obligation of governments.
- To prepare learners to be conscious of their rights, duties and the right of others.
- To facilitate the production of well informed, self-reliant and responsible citizens.
- To impart the right type of values for the development of the individual and the society

- Awoyemi (2001) added: To instil value and skills to recognize and solve socio-economic and political problems.

Asowa&Ekweme (2007) maintained that these objectives can be achieved in a conducive learning environment, availability of instructional facilities, properly trained specialist in the subject area, and more importantly the availability, of library services. The school library is anretrieval of information. Library has been said to be a place the dead is alive.

The roles of citizenship education in the sustenance of democratic governance in Nigeria

- Citizenship education as enshrined in the school curriculum has significant role to play in the sustenance of democratic culture and governance in Nigeria. The knowledge of citizenship education mould the character of an individual to respect the law of the land. He knows his right as a citizen and has respect for the right of others both Nigerian and non-Nigerians regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds.
- It also play an important roles in keeping and individual informed on the political history of Nigeria; its historical

evolution and the need to respect the unity and corporate existence of Nigeria.

- It provide learning experience that produces a Nigerian that will become a productive member of the society, a good future leader that will govern with all sincerity and have respect for the hope and aspirations of the electorate.
- Citizenship education also prepares Nigerians with political education which frowns at all form of political violence. It has produced Nigerians that have been acquainted with their duties to government and legitimate procedures to follow in seeking for redress on any matter of personal or public concern.
- Citizenship education also plays a significant role in preparing individuals to see the vision and the mission in the philosophy of democracy and the need for its continue practice.
- It provides through its teaching, a moral basis for the conduct of individual and growth of the society and this encourages love and affection towards one another.
- It also promotes patriotism, respect for national obligations; such as payment of taxes, respect for constituted

authorities, right of franchise, security obligations and respect for public facilities.

- Citizenship education also help citizen to acquire knowledge about their country and the wider world. This will prepare them to face different challenges at different point in time.

The roles of government agencies, non-governmental agencies and the civil societies in sustenance of democratic government in Nigeria

This section will discuss the roles of the above stated organizations in promoting democratic governance in Nigeria. Political parties have a crucial role to play in producing credible persons that will contest for political offices. A political party can field a candidate who will implement campaign promises in accordance with party's political manifesto and the law of the land. Nuhu (2004) averred that a political party promotes political socialization process by highlighting members on the objectives of the party and the needs of the country, therefore, it helps to consolidate development through a well define agenda. A political party also brings people from different background together and to infuse in them leadership training. In the democratization process, political parties

provide one of the best platforms for national mobilization and also provide a link between the people and the government (Adeyemi 2012), (USAID2014).

The electoral body: Globally attaining political power through elections have become the most acceptable means of changing leadership in any given political system. In best global practices, it is the conduct of a free and fair election that ushers in a legitimate democratic government. Past political experiments has demonstrated that it is usually difficult to hold free and fair elections even in first class democracies but what is fundamental is the attempt to gradually remove imperfection to the an insignificant level. Therefore, the role of the judiciary is the administration and the supervision of election in Nigeria and to ensure fair play in the conduct of all elections. . It should play a neutral role and disseminates all necessary information such as election guidelines to the political parties (Omoruyi, 2007).

The media (both electronic and print) play a non-partisan role in political education, in conveying political party's adverts. The media also serve as medium of sending government messages to the electorate and political mobilization towards clarion calls.

The judiciary: This is an arm of government that adjudicates on legal issues including election disputes. Its role is to ensure that party candidates and political parties are not denied their conduct of all procedures in the electoral process. In event of violation, they adjudicate according to the provision of the law. In recent reports by USAID (2016), the judiciary at the federal level has been enjoying little autonomy particularly; the Supreme Court and the Federal Courts of Appeal are clearly emerging as islands of integrity. In the context of increased competition among the country's political blocks however, political elites have themselves increasingly turned to the judicial system to resolve their disputes. Budgetary constraints, however, remain particularly worrying when it comes to judicial and court reform in Nigeria. It has always been characterized and influenced by selfish regional and personal interests. Another disturbing development undermining rule of law and building is the rise of ethnic-based militias across several sections of the country. This has grossly undermined the unity of Nigeria, political stability and economic prosperity.

The role of the police, military and civil defence as government workers and law enforcementagents are to ensure that laws of the electoral process and the laws of the land are respected at all levels

e.g. Polling stations, collation and returning centres and election result on transit.

Christians' religious organization under the umbrella of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Muslims organization under the auspices of Jama'atulNasrul Islam, and followers of traditional religion can mobilize and educate their followers on tolerance and respect for electoral laws. They can also provide mass political education for their members on evils of political violence (Usman, 1987; Pat, 1991).

Similarly, civil societies and professional bodies such as Human Right Organizations, Branches of Transparency International, Human Right Watch, Action Aids International, Women Emancipation Organizations, Cultural and Tribal Unions, Progressive Association, trade Unions, Clubs, Boys Scout of Nigeria, Student Union and Professional Bodies are good forums for political mobilization. They can enlighten their members on their roles in the sustenance of democratic governance in Nigeria; e.g voting right, conducts at polling stations, respect for electoral law and law enforcement agency. As interest and pressure groups, they exercise an over whelming control and enjoy support of their members.

Conclusion

Nigeria requires good and responsible leadership for the growth and development of all spheres of its national life. Tremendous resources both human and finance have been committed in the past to institutionalize democracy in Nigeria, but it appears that a lot has to be done to restore sanity in our system for viable and sustainable developments. As a developing country, it requires strict adherence to principles of equity and justice.

This paper has attempts to highlight early attempts towards democratization in Nigeria, problems of electoral governance, the Nigerian society and the role of citizenship education, the media, the judiciary, faith-based organization (Muslim, Christians and the followers of traditional religion), the civil society and the law enforcement agencies in playing their constitutional responsibilities according to the law of the land.

Recommendations

There is the need for harmony in theory and practice in addressing political phenomenon in Nigeria. The inability of public officers in Nigeria to discharge official responsibility has constituted a solid barrier to the realization of sanity, control and sustenance of good

policies in our country's political history. This has accounted for slow pace of our development derived.

Election system and electoral administration: There is the need to adopt some modified forms of proportional representation in preference to the simple majority system. This amendment will make the electoral process more competitive by being more reflective of the relationship between the proportion of electoral votes won by a political party and its legislative representation. A major overhaul and strengthening of election administration to make it independent of federal and state of money in campaign should be discouraged.

Adjudication of election disputes: There is the need to look into the delay in settling election petitions. Judgments should be passed before assumption or few month after assumption to office as the case may be. Prolonging adjudication has provided opportunities for executive interference in judicial process.

There is the need to review the 1999 constitution to ensure the autonomy and credibility of INEC and sections 132(2) and 178(2) on adjudication of election disputes. INEC should be removed from the list of federal executive bodies charging its funding to

consolidated revenue fund of the federation. Its board should include professional bodies and the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC). Perpetrators of electoral crimes at all levels should be prosecuted inaccordance with the provisions of the law. Political parties require a code of conduct to govern the conduct of partisan political activities in order to reduce political irregularities.

There is also the urgent need to have an understanding of the electoral geography of this country to meet the challenges posed by geographical peculiarities of each area. Similarly, the recently concluded revision of voters register, though characterized by some logistic shortcomings is a laudable development. The use of Direct Data Capture machine (DDC) will improve the conduct of voting in Nigeria.

Law enforcement and security agencies should be properly trained and equipped for the responsibility of providing security during elections in a professional manner especially with transportation and communication facilities, to enable them communicate with one another effectively in situations where reinforcement or additional support is required. There is the need for proper and systematic distribution of law enforcement agents across the country to ensure that all parts of the country are adequately

provided for and in area prone to violence or other crimes, additional provisions are made.

The media should ensure that the principles of fairness and balance in the coverage of political party campaign and activities are observed. This should include distinguishing between government activities in which incumbent public office holders feature and election campaigns by such office holders. The media should also ensure that political parties and contestants in elections have equitable access to the media during campaigns and elections. In particular, state-owned broadcast media should, as part of their social responsibilities, ensure that a number of slots for campaign broadcasts are given to all the political parties to outline their programmeand candidates for elections as this will ensure that all the parties and candidates have the minimum level of visibility required for a genuine election in a democracy. The absolute dominance of the airwaves by a single political party should be discouraged.

Communities and members of the public should build broad-based coalitions for the purpose of resisting electoral fraud and defending their mandate. The coalitions should include community leaders, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations,

political parties, women groups and all other democratic stakeholders. Beyond voting in election, democratic stakeholders should be vigilant to ensure that the vote is not manipulated.

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