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**IDENTIFIED TRIPARTITE PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA
ELECTIONS: RECTIFYING AND REINFORCING
THE NEW SOCIAL STUDIES' ROLES**

Timilehin Olayinka **OMONIYI** & Matthew Olusegun **ABEBISI**
Department of Arts & Social Sciences Education
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

Throughout several years of colonial, military and democratic rules in Nigeria, democratic aspiration has been a powerful driver of political change. This paper highlights the identified tripartite problems in Nigeria elections from literature and as witnessed in the changes which occurred in the process. Efforts have been made by Government, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Non-governmental agencies among others to stem the spate violence, encourage voters as well as educate them on the specifics and mechanics of elections but this yield minimal results as evident in the recent literature reviewed. It is discovered that tripartite problems of electoral violence, invalid vote cast and declining voter turnout can be ameliorated if the discipline of Social Studies which is meant to inculcate in citizens ingredients for nation-building and development of civic competence for better engagement is given the rightful position. If the challenges are properly curtailed, it could also activate free, fair, credible and inclusive elections in Nigeria and beyond. It is concluded that the new Social Studies role can help stimulate citizens to avoid violence in elections as well as be encouraged

participation in the electoral process and other democratic activities effectively. It is recommended, among others, that the Social Studies as a discipline should be accorded the dignity position its deserve in helping to galvanise people to comport themselves and participate in elections as well as promote galvanizes sharper articulation of its curriculum objectives.

Keywords: Electoral violence, Social Studies, Invalid Vote Cast, Voter Apathy.

Introduction

Election is veritable vehicle which drives any democratic settings. There are principles of engagement in any democratic elections for it to be free, fair, democratic and credible. Peaceful and credible elections are essential for democracy to thrive as it is the hallmark of modern democracy. Election in a democratic system offers a unique opportunity to the electorate to exercise their franchise by voting in candidates of their choice into office. When elections are peaceful, free, fair and inclusive, it can help facilitate a smooth transfer of power from one administration to another and confer legitimacy on elected officials. Despite its importance, the process of electing leaders in Nigeria has been plagued by a myriad of problems ranging from voter intimidation and suppression, to harassment and outright violence etc (Ajayi & Ojo, 2014). Since the return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has conducted five successive elections between 1999 and 2015. The 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections were regarded as the worst due to electoral chicanery and the high level of malpractices that characterized the elections.

Nigeria can be characterised as a stable representative democracy with background in colonial and military rules. This, alongside features of the Nigeria system concerning the relationship among citizens, electorate, political leaders, government, opposition and pressure groups, has caused experts to describe Nigeria as “budding democratic society” with primitive features of violence and inability to participate effectively and efficiently in growth and

development of the nation. The international communities and bodies such as UK, US, UNO, European communities have expressed deep disappointment about the quality of elections in Nigeria describing the process as marred by “vote-buying, low voter turnout, voter suppression, violence in some locations and interference by security agencies.” These do not inspire enough confidence in Nigerians and discourage the majority from undertaking the civic responsibility of going out to vote. With several violence that permeates Nigeria elections over the decades, her democracy has been exposed as vulnerable. Thus, building a successful democracy is, therefore, hinged on getting the electoral process right as well as having a strong education system such as Social Studies to galvanise citizens’ attitudinal problems before, during and after elections. The country’s politics suffers greatly because the electoral process has proved to be incapable of producing quality leaders. The electoral culture is such that the elaborate rules are breached with impunity by desperate politicians. The ensuing system favours corrupt politicians and godfathers with deep pockets, providing paved ways to elective offices for the highest bidders, the most violent and the least qualified candidates.

Scholars such as Toros and Birch, (2019); Verjee, Kwaja, and Onubogu (2018); Timmer, (2012); Usman (2009) have identified several factors which affects Nigeria elections among which are; thuggery, stuffing and snatching of ballot boxes, voter intimidation, open manipulation of results, flagrant abuse of electoral laws, disregard for lives and property, campaign threats and physical attacks, kidnapping/assassination of perceived enemies, extraordinary display of “*do or die affair*”, use of security agencies against perceived political opponents, criminal manipulations of voters’ list etc. However, Von-Borzyskowski and Kuhn, (2020) remarked that of all these factors are the recurring of the tripartite problems in Nigeria since the 1999, which are Electoral violence, invalid vote cast and low voter turnout. Bardal (2016) defines electoral violence as a sub-type of political violence which erupts for the purpose of controlling, intimidation and oppressing opposing individuals, powers, parties or group’s right to participate in the political processes and institutional arrangement.

Laasko (2007) viewed it as an activity motivated to tamper with elections results either by manipulating or subverting electoral procedures and participation or even by contesting the legitimacy of the elections results. These acts which many Nigerians believe are sponsored by the political class have denied citizens their rights to participate in governance in a way that benefits them and society, directly or through chosen representatives. Marginalized groups like youth, women and people with disabilities are impacted the most. The role of Nigeria's youth in election-related violence has been particularly dynamic, in that they have been perpetrators and victims at the same time. Due to eroding societal values and poverty, they are easy recruits for attacks on political opponents. In the same vein, there has been consistent low voter turnout as well as voter apathy in Nigeria Elections. These are blamed largely on lack of trust in the system and the calibre of people it produces as leaders. Several factors have been traced to these tripartite challenges among which are citizens' poor voter education.

Table 1: Consequences of Electoral violence in General Elections between 1999 and 2019

Year	Total No. of Reg. Voters	Total No. of Turned out Voters	Valid Vote	Invalid Voters
1999	57,938,945 35.3%	30,280,052 52.3%	29,848,441 98.6%	431,611 1.4%
2003	60,823,022 35.3%	42,018,735 69.1%	39,480,489 93.9%	2,538,246 6.1%
2007	61,566,648 69.1%	35,397,527 57.5%	35,419,262 99.93	21,735 0.06%
2011	73,528,040 53.7%	39,469,484 53.7%	38,209,978 96.8%	1,259,506 4.36%
2015	67,422,005 43.7%	29,432,083 43.6%	28,587,564 97.1%	844,519 2.9%
2019	84,004,084 34.1%	28,614,190 34.1%	27,324,583 95.5%	1,289,607 4.5%

Note: Statistics from INEC.gov.org (2015)

Previous elections have been marred by violence among supporters of different political parties that at times sparked sectarian clashes. Schedler, (2002) have stated that a credible and relatively calm poll would open a new chapter in the checkered political history of Nigeria, where nearly six decades of independence have been tarnished by military coups, endemic corruption and secessionist movements. With the lofty Nigerian objectives and the role Independent National Electoral Commissions (INEC), and in the last six (6) general elections (1999-2019) which spanned 20 years of INEC existence, there has been the recurring tripartite problem of invalid vote cast, declining voter turnout and electoral violence. Hence, the study assessed the challenges facing the conduct of elections in Nigeria as well as how the discipline of Social Studies can help in rectifying the damages done so far and the new roles of Social Studies new in engendering citizens' participation in Nigeria elections.

Effects of the Tripartite Problem Identified on Nigeria Elections

Timmer (2008) found that the people are fed up with stolen elections and they are demanding the free and fair conduct of elections through the use of violence. Obakhedo (2011) asserts that these challenges have result into of the rascal politics that the political elites engage in and has been the greatest obstacle to democratic consolidation in Nigeria, Sometimes, it could be intra-party and most of time, inter-party. Thus affects the affects the credibility of the electoral system, the democratic system and the rule of law, the nature, extent and magnitude of violence and rigging associated with elections in Nigeria had assumed alarming proportions. In his research, Odoziobodo (2015) discovered that such highly competitive elections, candidates enthusiastically pursued vote buying because they see that it can be critical for determining electoral outcomes. It helps in generating narrow but sufficient victory margins.

Haider (2008) aggregated some studies and found that civic education and specifically non-violence training programmes can

reduce violence by encouraging voters to vote outside of ethnic and religious lines, to avoid vote-buying and to support non-violent tactics. Toros, and Birch, (2019) emphasised the importance of conducting voter education programmes in unsafe areas of a country. In their study, Iwu, M. M. (2008) submits the energies of the youths can be properly channeled into meaningful use as Nigeria may not likely experience sustainable democratic government if the political elites fail to engage the youths in active political activities. While in Ogun State, a study by Ogbeide (2013) found that youths' involvement in violence does not have any significant effects on the electoral process in Ota. Jega, A. (2013) explained that internet-based Instruments Increase Civic Literacy and Voter Turnout as well as improve democratic decision-making.

Another study by Ugwuja, Rotimi, and Onwuasoanya (2016) found that get-out-the-vote interventions have been shown to increase turnout significantly and they are widely touted as beneficial for democracy, but surprisingly, these interventions actually increase inequalities in turnout by primarily mobilizing more of the types of citizens who were already voting. In short, low voter turnout and inequalities in voter turnout have significant political and policy consequences, but the problem is hard to fix. Even seemingly benign cures like social capital, electoral competition, and voter mobilization have little benefit or may even be detrimental. In explaining voter turnout through a review of aggregate-level research, IDEA (2013) found that 'core' model of voter turnout including, among other elements, population size and election closeness can be used as starting point for extending people's knowledge the need to vote.

Efforts at Preventing Violence in Election

Elections and democracy promotion have thus become central strategies to build peace in many countries of the world. Elections play a significant role in peace processes since it is widely considered to be the main method of achieving a peaceful resolution to political issues. However, various efforts have been made to stem the spate of violence through the introduction of MAMSER which

later became National Orientation Agencies (NOA); Not-too-young-to-rule policy, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Youth ambassadorial activities, Street jingles and media advertisement among others. At international level, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has strengthened the capacity of some local civil societies in Nigeria on how to educate citizens on election matters. Also, there is the introduction of school-based discipline like Social Studies, Civic Education, Religious Studies and some others which are saddled with responsibility of inculcating required societal values and pattern of doing things in the young ones. However, it is believed that the discipline of Social Studies can do better. The discipline is imbued with the abilities to avail students with the orientation of emerging concepts, themes and generalization as well as the acquisition of values, skills and other competences for active social life, better political engagement as well as its application to real life situation. The discipline of Social Studies is modeled along a coordinated platform for individual and collective shared efforts at ameliorating social problems such as election violence in Nigeria.

Social Studies as Participatory Model of Democracy

Politics and elections are virtuous features of democracy. Democracy is a form of government in which all eligible citizens have an equal say in law-making. It institutionalized participation, so also promotes competition (Adeyemi, 2010). In today's world, no doubt, there are variants of democracy. Diamond (2004) asserts that democracy can be conceptualised in quadrant with key elements of such as; a system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections; active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life; protection of the human rights of all citizens; and a rule of law in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens. It is expected that citizens of a democracy should govern their nation however, there is an omission, which is an essential part of the idea of democracy as practiced in countries around the world. The principal purposes for which the People establish democratic government are the protection and promotion

of their rights, interests, and welfare.

Democracy requires that each individual be free to participate in the political community's self-government. Thus political freedom lies at the heart of the concept of democracy. Each must of democracy, liberalism and constitutionalism must exist in a political system for it to be a genuine democracy. The core democratic values are the fundamental beliefs and principles of the Nigerian multi-ethnic society which is expected to unite all tribes and tongues. These values are enshrined in the constitution. However, discipline like Social Studies is a formal structure to galvanize participatory citizens in and outside the school system. The National Council for Social Studies – NCSS (2000) explained that the field of study integrates various disciplines of the social sciences and humanities to provide the contents, information and ideas for the young citizen. The discipline has the potential to build in citizens three key relationships which are participatory in nature. These are relationship to self, other people and environment as well as the world at large (Akinlaye, 2003).

Social Studies embodies the main principles of democracy, such as freedom, equality, human dignity, justice, rule of law, and civic rights and responsibilities. The discipline avails students to translate what has been learnt into becoming good citizens in the democratic society. According to Sofadekan (2012), Social Studies is the study of human being. People are the domains of Social Studies, whether they are nearby as families and friends or far away in others countries of the world, also include people currently living, the dead and the unborn generation. It is believed that as children learn about others, they are fascinated by differences among cultural groups, while at the same time find the commonalities that create a shared sense of humanity. Thus, Nassbaum (2000) asserts that the capacity of all voters to participate freely and fully in the life of their society of paramount importance to life and democratic and Social Studies is availing citizens, especially the youths the opportunity to excel in a democratic and interdependent world.

There are various models of democracy. Notable in literature are the six models of classical, protective, developmental, participatory, cosmopolitan and Marxist. However, Social Studies

as a model of participatory democracy lays emphasis on the availability of opportunities for the people to control their leaders without recourse to a revolution. It is an integrated discipline draws contents, principles and ideas from these models to develop responsible behaviour in students in and outside the classroom situation. Thus, Social Studies as participatory model celebrates the need for people's involvement in the day-to-day administration of the country. It aimed making people interested in the political, legal and economic processes of the state. Through this they will learn to think critically and intensively on state affairs and how to proffer plausible solutions to emerging issues. Psychologists believe that every man has his own qualities and importance, thus Social Studies is introduced to make people more responsible.

Two decades ago, Nigeria became a constitutional democratic nation. No doubt, Social Studies teachers are obligated to teach students democracy and its principles. This builds their democratic practices and experience as well as essential to students' out-of-school democratic participation. Kazi, (2004) remarked that the knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed through the Social Studies curriculum empower students to be informed; responsible citizens of Nigeria and the world, and to participate in the democratic process to improve society. In particular, the Social Studies curriculum; integrates the concepts, processes, and ways of thinking drawn from the diverse disciplines of the social sciences (including economics, geography, history, and political science). It also draws from literature and the pure sciences; provides the multidisciplinary lens through which students examine issues affecting their lives from personal, provincial, national, and global perspectives.

The New Social Studies' Roles

It is discovered that Social Studies at the primary and junior secondary school have focused attention on personal development while methods of inquiry at junior and tertiary levels of education. Martorella (1985) remarked that the role of Social Studies should revolve around (1) transmission of the cultural heritage; (2) methods of inquiry; (3) reflective inquiry; (4) informed social

criticism; and (5) personal development. However, with the new waves in socio-economic and political circle, such role may not be able to proffer plausible solution to violent conduct and behaviour during, before and after elections. Thus, the new role of Social Studies should be revolved around these six critical mainstreams of life; education for living, cultural integration, dynamic education, skill development, citizenship education and ecological studies (Abdul-Kabir, 2014). The new role of Social Studies should be with purposes worth carrying about, processes worth engaging in, and knowledge worth learning Poatob (2015) as well as provide the essential framework needed to educate young people for the challenges of citizenship.

Citizens, who should see beyond violence, banditry, thuggery but exercise judgment and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice as well as being equipped with the capacity to make sense of their world, active, informed and committed to democratic principles and ideals. According to Fadeyiye, (2005) it is to develop among the citizens, the national spirit, the spirit of self-government, national morality, good physique, scientific knowledge and the ability to earn a legitimate living devoid of violence, crises and any form of malpractices in socio-economic and political sectors. The values of human rights, leadership traits, civic responsibility and respect for the environment are infused throughout the curriculum. Dalyop, (2014) remarked that it is to instill in children shared, not our separate cultures and values which could make them survival the pressure of violence in elections. The need for reflections for greater consistency in the new role of the discipline is of paramount importance (ADO, 2013). Social Studies should begin to help citizens develop appropriate practices.

The discipline should educates students the more on citizenship, providing them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help them to become competent and responsible citizens who are informed, thoughtful, participate in their community and exhibit moral and civic virtues. The discipline helps students understand the world they live in, so they can make informed decisions about issues affecting them, especially when they grow older. Through Social Studies, students develop historical thinking and literacy as

a way of navigating the world. The new role of Social Studies is to help students learn emerging concepts, themes and generalization as well as its application to real life situations. Thus, the integration of current events into lessons and also the facilitation of healthy debates and classroom engagement is sacrosanct to the discipline in the 21st century where there are challenges of classroom discussions (Poatob, 2015). It is to help both the ruled and the ruler to create better institutions and systems that affect people's lives every day. Thus, Social Studies should help people understand how to interact with the socio-economic, political and cultural world in terms and how to influence policy, develop networks, increase government accountability, and promote democracy (Abdul-Kabir, 2014). This is necessary as it helps one to gain knowledge of the society people live in.

In the past, Social Studies was remembered by several as a complete triumvirate of history, geography and civics with the sole aim of making students memorize, cram and regurgitate people's ideas and belief systems. That is, the discipline celebrates names, events, dates, places and capitals (Adeyemi, 2010), but this has no basis in the knowledge construction. Thus, the current Social Studies provide a framework for teaching, learning, and assessment without a sharper articulation of curriculum objectives as evident in several issues and challenges including tripartite problems of electoral violence, invalid vote cast and declining voter turnout. However, the discipline has been found worthy of facilitating the realisation of nation's philosophy with specific responsibility of humanizing the learners based on the philosophy of the society they find themselves. The need to educate learners in the culture thereby establishing the role of education as socio-cultural and political agent through its emphasis on citizenship education is sacrosanct to fight the tripartite problems in Nigeria Elections.

Social Studies as school subject is expected to perform the vital roles in the Nigeria society through the development of national consciousness and commitment as necessary ingredient for nation building; the inculcation of social values and skills for active social life; the development of intellectual skills, knowledge and abilities for better (Kazi, 2004). The knowledge of Social Studies is to provide

holistic analysis of societies, how it works and the appreciation of events that happened long ago as it helps to shape the world. Thus, one of the basic skills of Social Studies is to discover human (Ajiboye, Adu & Amosun, 2005), that is, the ability to know, understand and relate well with self, people, environment and the world at large (Dalyop, 2014). In doing so, there are skill set such as; observational skills; which explains the need for people to be observant to predict trends and human behavioral patterns; communication and interpersonal skills which celebrate relationships and interactions which is the hallmark of living as well as the reading and interpreting events, items and parameters of occurrence within the context of unman behaviour.

The concept of integration lays emphasis on the comprehensive body of knowledge and inter-relationship of knowledge as it explains the relationship among people, relationship between people and institutions, relationship between people and goods, services and relationship between people and the environment and the earth in general (Poatob, 2015). The aim of Social Studies is the promotion of civic competence – the knowledge, intellectual processes, and democratic dispositions required of students to be active and engaged participants in public life. Although civic competence is not the only responsibility of Social Studies nor is it exclusive to the field, it is more central to Social Studies than to any other subject area in schools. By making civic competence a central aim, NCSS has long recognized the importance of educating students who are committed to the ideas and values of democracy. Civic competence rests on this commitment to democratic values, and requires the abilities to use knowledge about one's community, nation, and world; apply inquiry processes; and employ skills of data collection and analysis, collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving.

Ajiboye, Adu, and Amosun, (2005) stated that young citizens who are knowledgeable, skillful, and committed to democracy are necessary to sustaining and improving democratic way of life, and participating as members of a global community. The new roles of the discipline is the cultivation of good citizens, creation of new ways of life, as well as serve as clearing house for electorates (Abdul-Kabir, 2014). In any democratic classrooms, the deep understanding

of civic issues such as democracy, elections, violence, rule of laws and several other concepts, themes and generalization is of paramount importance. The discipline is expected to marshal the civic task of humanizing young citizens even before they turn voters. The civic mission of Social Studies demands the inclusion of all students addressing cultural, linguistic, and learning diversity that includes similarities and differences based on race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, exceptional learning needs, and other educationally and personally significant characteristics of learners (Adeyemi, 2010).

Ado (2013) also affirmed that diversity among learners embodies the democratic goal of embracing pluralism to make Social Studies classrooms laboratories of democracy. It requires more than the acquisition of content but heart application of useful knowledge for solving personal and societal problem in spirit of oneness and equality. Since Social Studies has as its primary goal the development of a democratic citizenry, the experiences students have in their Social Studies classrooms should enable learners to engage in civic discourse and problem-solving, and to take informed civic action.

Implications for National Development

The Nigeria democracy is plagued with myriad of intrigues, discordant opinions, and electoral violence which are capable of impeding development. The national development focuses on the ability of the leaders and people of a country to raise the standard of living through the scaling of livelihood requirements and supplying them with employment as well as providing social amenities, enhancing equal distribution of power and wealth as well as aiding the economy of the country (Fadeyiye, 2005). The objectives is to increase in per capita income; even distribution of income; reduction in the level of unemployment; increasing the supply of high level manpower, diversification of the economy; balanced development and indigenization of economic activities (Falade, 2007). Thus, the process of reconstruction and development in various dimensions of country and reflections of its impact on the citizenry may not be achievable if there is the recurring of

the tripartite problems of electoral violence, invalid vote cast and declining voter turnout. The participation and election of sound leaders could help in the full-growth and expansion of industries, agriculture, education, social, religious and cultural institutions.

Social Studies learners, if properly grounded, stand to gain better reading and learning, citizen responsibilities and values, cultural understanding, economic education, critical thinking, real-world understanding, political skills, respect history among others (Abdul-Kabir, 2014). The Social Studies instructional delivery of democratic values build a democratic classrooms which encompasses by demonstrating fair behaviour towards students' ranges of personal freedom, and providing them with equal Implications, The need to upscale the role of Social Studies can never be over-emphasized as it inculcates in citizens the capacity to develop good habits and interests which could promote their knowledge and conducts before, during and after elections which are applicable to the real life situation (Adeyemi, 2010). The need to develop of social outlook, national and international Understanding, leadership skills and vocational efficiency are positive distraction from electoral violence which have been recurring the annals of elections in Nigeria

As matter of fact, when students are provided with a platform like Social Studies, it affords them the opportunities to express personal opinions, make meaningful choices, and solve problems together in ways that reflect democratic processes inherent to society, the seed of such engagement is likely to translate to getting elections right. Also, when a child is imbued with the ability to understand self in relation to the world, it is easier for him or her to explore the roles, responsibilities and cultural traditions without conflicting stipulated rules and regulations guiding institutional arrangement and its framework, it provides avenue to enrich democracy devoid of electoral crises. The study of democracy in schools through Social Studies, prepares the children for active participation in democratic society as a critical element in children's approach to education, and reflects best practices in curriculum and instruction across all content areas. This is also likely to promote the spirit and letters of the constitution.

Conclusion

Democracy embraces, inevitably and inescapably, an uneasy tension between conflict and consensus as it originated more than 2,400 years ago in ancient Greece. As Nigeria move forward to undo past wrongs as well as to embrace democracy, election becomes necessary. Election makes a fundamental contribution to democratic governance as well as reinforces the stability and legitimacy of the political community. It serves a self-actualizing purpose by confirming the worth and dignity of individual citizens as human beings. However, it is discovered that several challenges have been recurring in the space of conduction and maintenance of election among which are electoral violence, invalid vote cast and declining voter turnout. It is discovered that Social Studies as a participatory model for democracy and citizenship and be effectively utilised to curb social issues and problems including the identified tripartite problem of electoral violence, invalid vote cast, declining voters turnout. It is discovered that if Nigeria is surmount some of challenges accompanying her elections, Social Studies needs to be reinforced with necessary curricular and extra-curricular activities to be able to achieve its objectives as fashioned in the modern world. The new roles of Social Studies must be able to stimulate as well as galvanise socio-political institutions which could guarantee sound orientation against violence before, during and after elections, widen citizens' democratic horizon, guarantees national stability, peace, and economic growth.

Suggestions

The discipline of Social Studies should be accorded the dignify position its deserve in helping to stimulate people to conduct themselves before, during and after elections. It is sacrosanct that the discipline should be provided with the wherewithal; human and material resources across all level of education, as well as enabling policies to help in galvanizing a sharper articulation of its curriculum objectives. It is also very important that there is need for out-of-classroom activities which could enable citizens' participation in democratic engagement in the country.

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