

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION TOWARD ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to investigate and explain the role of political science education toward achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The study also traced the origin, historical antecedence as well as changing dimension in the development of political science as a discipline. The paper also explained some teaching methods relevance to Political science as a discipline which covers different forms of specializations in politics such as political theory, political philosophy, political ideology, comparative politics, public administration, conflict and conflict resolution, international relations and organizations. In the study, the authors also identified some challenges encounters by Nigerian political science teachers in both post primary and tertiary institutions. This paper used the descriptive research method to examine the role of political science education in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. Methodologically, the study adopted secondary sources of data collection and used functionalist theory borrowed from sociology as theoretical framework and basis for explanations on the role of political science education toward achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The findings of the paper established that just like other disciplines, political science education is very importance for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. Finally, the study made some recommendations such as national curriculum review by making political science a compulsory course for all disciplines, field trip/excursion as well as in cooperating information and communications technology in teaching and learning political science education for prompt realization of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria, Political Science Education, Role, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Political Science is fundamental to the understanding of one's rights and responsibilities as a citizen and to understanding international politics and laws (American Political Science Association, 2020). In other words, it is the systematic and analytical study of the acquisition, control and exercise of power by individuals, groups and organizations within the political system. As such, it will be an essential mechanism for achieving sustainable development in a polity like Nigeria.

The study of political science education is very important for the understanding of relations among states and international organizations, their interdependence, co-operation, peaceful co-existence and mutual assistance (Minimum Standard for NCE Teachers, 2012 P.85). The scope for political science as a discipline includes: public administration, international relations, comparative politics, political theory, political philosophy and political institution (Kadiri, 2017 p. 97-98).

Robert (cited in Kwasau, 2013) further explained that the Bachelor of Arts degree in political Science education is available to students wishing to teach at the secondary level. Students supplement

their study of political science with a combination of education, history, economics and geography courses. The degree certificate prepares the graduates for the secondary teaching certification.

In Nigeria, college and undergraduate study of political science usually consists of courses on Nigerian government and politics, comparative politics, international relations and political theory. This paper used the descriptive research method to examine the role of political science education in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted secondary or documentary sources of data collection which has to do with information gathered from textbooks, journals, articles, newspapers, online documents and official documents. Report and data collected were analyzed utilizing content analysis.

The study used functionalist theory borrowed from sociology as its theoretical framework and basis for explanations. The functionalist theory or functionalist analysis refers to the contribution of the parts to the whole. That is the contribution it makes to meet the functional prerequisites of the social system. Parts/institutions such as family, religious, political as well as economic institutions work together in an inter-related manner to sustain the development and continuity of the society (Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman and Moore, 2013 p. 954-955). Functionalists view society as a system made up of different parts which work together to make it functional and sustainable. The functionalist theory is prominent in the works of Auguste Comte (1789-1857), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) and Robert K. Merton (1910-2003) (Haralambos et al, 2013). The theory is relevant to the extent that the paper aims at revealing the role of political science education toward achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Politics: The term “politics” is said to have been first used by Aristotle who is generally regarded as the father of political science and was derived from the Greek word “polis”, meaning a city (Muhammad, as cited in Adamu, 2010). In ancient Greek the “city” was the state and the discipline that dealt with the city-state and its problems was depicted as politics. In ancient Greek, politics aims to achieve moral guide for the actualization of the good life in all its ramifications. In modern times, the term politics has received a new meaning that is essentially viewed from a holistic way as of human activities including clubs, associations, institutions, organizations, and even family etc. Ramaswamy (cited in Adamu, 2010) defined politics as an activity that is universal to all societies, at all levels and all times- past, present and perhaps even the future. It is not unique to state, groups, institutions, political parties, and trade unions but also exists in the family, clubs, schools, colleges, religious organizations, multinationals companies, and work place.

The central concept of politics is power, and therefore struggle for power is regarded as politics and this is why Ernest Barker (cited in Ologbenla, 2015) sees politics as the process of making and execution of governmental decision or politics. Moreover, Heywood (cited in Kadiri, 2017 P.95) noted that politics is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rule under which they live. Politics is thus, inextricably linked to the phenomenon of conflict and cooperation. For Ezema (cited in Kadiri, 2017 P.95) politics is the science of art of governance in a given country or geographical unit.

The concept of politics is further classified into three viz: formal politics refers to the operation of a constitutional system of government and publicly defined institutions and procedures. Semi-formal politics is politics in government associations such as neighborhood associations, or student governments where student government political party politics is often important. Informal politics is understood as

forming alliances, exercising power and protecting and advancing particular ideas or goals. Generally, this includes anything affecting one's daily life (Political Science, 2020).

Political Science: Political science is a social science discipline which deals with systems of governance, and the analysis of political activities, political thoughts, and political behavior. It deals extensively with the theory and practice of politics which is commonly thought of as determining of the distribution of power and resources. Furthermore, political science is related to, and draws upon, the fields of economics, law, sociology, history, philosophy, geography, psychology/psychiatry, and anthropology (Political Science, 2020). Specifically, when used as a science discipline, political science refers to the study of politics by the use of scientific methods in contrast to political philosophy which is free to follow intuition. (Dare, *undated*).

Political Science Education: Education is the process of developing knowledge, skills, and ability in learners for personal and societal enhancement. Political Science Education is a discipline concerned with teaching and learning as well as critical analysis of political theories, political institutions, political organizations and activities of the State. It examines political dynamics, adjustment of the individual to the state, international laws, international relations, the concept of power and power relationship among members of a given society (Kwasau, 2013 and Dauda & Garba, 2017 P.4).

Political Scientist: A Political Scientist is a person who studies politics using scientific methods in analyzing human behaviour, political phenomena, public and private institutions as well as conflicts among men. This is one who takes keen interest in the study of fundamental principles of political science, governmental organizations, etc. A Political Scientist may be a well-informed political scientist and seasoned politician. Political scientists see themselves as engaged in revealing the relationships underlying political events and conditions, and from these revelations they attempt to construct general principles about the way the world of politics works (Political Science, 2020 & Mahajan, 2000).

Politician: Politician is a person who is active in party politics and usually a seeker or holder of public/political office who is more concerned about winning election or retaining power than about maintaining political principles. A Politician could be a skillful person in political administration, or a person who seeks to gain power or advancement within an organization in ways that are generally approved or disapproved (Kwasau, 2013).

According to Okoli (2003) there are two types of politicians, viz: Statesman and demagogue. A statesman devotes all his mental and physical energies to the cause of the state and its citizens even to the detriment of his personal convenience, while a demagogue glorifies political power for his own sake and for personal aggrandizement. In other word, a statesman is that politician who loves his country and considers himself a servant rather than a master of his people. The demagogue on the other 'hand, uses all skills, cunning, trick, deceit and intrigue in his power to manipulate political power.

Sustainable Development: Alexander (2000 as cited in Kwasau, 2013p.95) sees Sustainable Development as "Competent Management of a country's resources and affairs in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to people's needs". It may also mean economic, political, social and technological advancement of a particular nation.

Literature Review

Development of the Discipline of Political Science

The discipline of political science is one of the oldest in the pedigree of social sciences in particular and sciences in general (Mohammad, as cited in Adamu, 2010). It was the need for social organization guided by specific rules in the history of human development that necessitated the need for science of the understanding of the organization and control of social relationships, particularly when

contested values, interests and preferences create discords. Consequently, this prompted political thinkers to philosophize on various issues of political concern to society with a view to proffering adequate mechanism of regulating the actions of people. The discipline started from ancient Greek city-states as historical and descriptive understanding of political phenomenon with reference to ideas of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle etc., and not the study of the science of politics as it is known in modern times.

The advent of political science as a university discipline was marked by the creation of university departments and chairs with the title of political science arising in the late 19th century. In fact, the designation "political scientist" is typically for those with a doctorate in the field, but can also apply to those with a master's in the subject as a result of the breakthrough in the science of politics. This was as a result of the work of numerous scholars who emphasized new methods and techniques of scientific research. Shift in focus from the traditional to scientific methods of political analysis was also informed by what is considered by the proponents of scientific study of politics as "Behavioural Revolution". Central to behaviouralism was the development of research in political science using scientific procedures and methods as well as emphasis on interdisciplinary approach. (Mohammad cited in Adamu, 2010, Political Science, 2020).

The advent of World War II brought about a re-think by political scientists that the Legislature, the Executive, agencies, and the Courts did not exist by themselves and that they did not operate independently of one another or of the other political organizations in society. Political scientists in America and Europe embarked on new fields of study by examining the political parties, interest groups, trade unions, as well as corporations and church organizations. Ideologies have also commanded the attention of political scientists because of their ideological role in the formation of Ultra-Right and Ultra-Left political parties and movements (Ologbenla, 2015).

Chicago University is one of the leading institutions in the development of modern political science today. Consequently, this led to development of post behaviouralism which aims to bridge the existing gap between theories and political relevance of the discipline to humanity. David Easton was one of the leading scholars in modern political science (Mohammad, cited in Adamu, 2010).

Like all social sciences, political science faces the difficulty of observing human actors that can only be partially observed and who have the capacity for making conscious choices unlike other subjects such as non-human organisms in biology or inanimate objects as in physics. Despite the complexities, contemporary political science has progressed by adopting a variety of methods and theoretical approaches to understanding politics and methodological pluralism which is a defining feature of contemporary political science (Political Science, 2020).

Methods of Teaching Political Science Education

Olutade (2009) and Kwasau (2013) identified the following methods for teaching and learning political science:

i. Teacher-Centered Methods of Teaching Political Science

The teacher-centered methods of teaching political science comprise the use of lecture method, storytelling method, Repetition and drill method, Review method, Note-giving method, controlled question and answer method, etc. There is no one single best method of teaching political science. It depends on how they are being used. Lecturers/Teachers are free to use any of them or to combine two or more methods to teach a single lesson in an effective way.

ii. Learner-Centered Methods of Teaching Political Science

The learner-centered methods of teaching political science include; inquiry method, discovery method, problem solving method, springboard method, case study method, Role playing method, small group discussion method, Homework, supervised study, and field work. Kwasau (2013) further explained that a student learns best when the action is centered on him/her. He/she should be reading, discussing, looking, listening, analyzing, writing and thinking. The student-centered methods put the action where it belongs. The center of attention is the student, not the teacher or the textbook. Daughtrey (1974) believes that the students-centered methods create a far better atmosphere for learning than the teacher-centered methods.

Instructional Materials for Teaching Political Science in Educational Institutions

Kwasau (2013) argues that the followings instructional materials will be very helpful in teaching and learning political science.

Print Learning Materials

1. Textbooks, Magazines and Newspapers

Olawepo (2003) argues that textbooks are the principal learning materials in most schools. Textbooks on political science or government include those written by Akinbade (2008), Oyebola and Ojebabi (1971), Ologbenla (2001), Ball (1975), Adebayo (1984), Odumosu (1993), Ologbenla (2015), Walter Rodney (1973), Kadiriri (2017), Andy (2012), Oyediran (2002), Chris (2015), Robert (2007) and Okoli (2003) etc. Apart from textbooks, periodic magazines, journals and daily newspapers are also used in teaching political science. They both contain items on political behavior and political actors (Olawepo, 2003).

2. Pictures

Both newspapers and magazines sometimes carry large flat pictures that are of political significance. Lecturers/Teachers of political science normally collect maps and such pictures to mount them on cardboards and provide titles written at the top (Olawepo, 2003).

Non-Print Instructional Materials

- a.** Geographical Environment: The local environment contains materials that can be used to teach political science. Museums, palaces, courts, legislative houses, and offices of political parties could be visited by the learners in the company of the teacher. The visit could be a short one, lasting a few hours or a long one lasting for two or more days (Olawepo, 2003).
- b.** Instructional Films and Videos: Videos and films are also used to accomplish the objectives that cannot be attained by the use of books and other materials. Films and videos are used so that students should know what to look for. After the show, they should discuss the moving picture and follow it up with written work (Corbin 1981). Some examples of these films on African and Nigerian government and politics include: Tears of the Sun, Book of Negroes, Black November, October First, The First Grader, Hotel Rwanda, Beasts of no Nations, Naija by Jide Olanrewaju, Blood and Oil, Half of the Yellow Sun, Cry Free Town and Amina etc.
- c.** Tapes and Records: Record player has a place in political science. Tape is used to record interviews with political actors, committee meetings, legislative debates, radio presentations and telecasts of political events and play back in class.

Human Resources for Teaching Political Science

Jarollimek, (cited in Kwasau, 2013) and Olawepo (2003) explained that people within and outside the school community can also assist students in learning in political science. These people are called human resources for learning political science. They are also in four categories:

1. Teachers as Resource Persons
2. Learners as Resource Persons
3. Guest Speakers as Resource Persons
4. Interviewed Political Actors as Resource Persons

Political Science Education and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The United Nations General Assembly (1987, p.54) defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Emas (2015) further clarified that the concept aims to maintain economic advancement and progress while protecting the long-term value of the environment. Moreover, for the development to be sustainable, it must be distinguished from traditional developmental policies i.e. it must have a long term stability of economy and environment. Thus, it is only achievable by integrating and acknowledging economic, environmental, social as well as political factors throughout the decision making process (Cerin, 2006, Dernbach J.C. 1998, Dernbach, J.C. 2003 & Stoddart, 2011 as cited in Emas, 2015).

Kazi (cited in Kadiri, 2012 P.162) corroborates the above views on sustainable development by noting that the primary aims of sustainable development in Nigeria is to bring sustainable national development which is the advancement from low level to a higher levels of various aspects of a nation as an organized and matured society. It involves a process of progressively creating conditions in which the citizens are able to exercise and utilize under the rule of law all their rights socially, politically and economically.

For the development of Nigeria as the biggest economy in Africa, sustainable development is achievable in Nigeria if proper political science education and other related disciplines are well integrated.

The study of political science education is a great value to sustainable development and with its help citizens can be well informed on how and why the state was organized in the past and why its continuation is justified. Political science education enlightens people about their rights and obligations. People who are mentally equipped with the knowledge of political science constitute a great source of asset to the state.

Political Science Education in Nigeria

At the degree level, political science major, combined with other courses are taught in more than ninety (90) public and private universities in Nigeria. As a field of study, Political science is combined with other disciplines in universities such as political science and conflict resolution, political science and diplomacy, political science/international law and diplomacy, political science and international studies, political science and defense studies, public administration and international relations etc (UTME Examination Brochure, 2018). At the level of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), teaching and learning political Science is very essential so much so that it is combined and studied as single major with eighteen (18) different subjects in more than hundred (100) colleges of education and polytechnics in Nigeria. Political science at NCE level is combined with computer Science, English, French, Geography, Fine and applied Arts, Islamic Studies, Igala, Tiv, Yoruba, Mathematics, Social Studies, Hausa, Ibibio, Igbo, History, Music and Special Education (UTME Examination Brochure, 2018 and Minimum Standard for NCE Teachers, 2012).

Roles of Political Science Education and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Political science education or the knowledge of political science has become indispensable in modern times as its very important considering the role the discipline can play towards achieving sustainable development in Nigeria due to the following reasons:

First, as a discipline, political science education plays a vital role in achieving sustainable development due to the fact that it is very useful for the molding and development of good, effective and efficient citizenry. Citizenship training is one of the goals of political science. Citizens who know their rights, duties and obligations to their government are a precondition for good governance. If citizens do not know their rights and duties, they are either exploited by the government or they immobilize the government. Proper citizenship training is, therefore, very important for good government and sustainable development. This is precisely what political science seeks to inculcate in all members of a given state (Okoli, cited in Kwasau, 2013). In the 21st century, it's imperative to note that political science education will greatly help in understanding the nature and dynamics of Nigerian government and politics. This is very essential in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

Second, when citizens know their rights, duties and obligations and perform them, there will be harmony, stability and peace. It will be very important to adopt modern political science methods in understanding issues in Nigerian politics such as socio-cultural and ethno-religious differences between and among our heterogeneous societies. Political stability is a sine-qua-non for good governance and sustainable development.

Third, sustainable development cannot be achieved in any country that has no good governance. Good governance cannot be realized unless there is good administration. Good administration involves effective and efficient implementation and execution of government policies and programs. Public administration is a sub-field of political science and deals primarily with mobilization and utilization of men, materials, organizations, rules and regulations in the execution of governmental objectives. Political science education through its subfields of public administration, the discipline produces competent administrators who in turn, ensure good administration of government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). This is very essential toward helping the Nigerian government's efforts in achieving sustainable development (Okoli cited in Kwasau, 2013).

Fourth, Political science education in Nigeria will enable youths/students to acquire and hone the writing, communication, analytical and data skills that are fundamental to a liberal education. This type of education will prepare Nigerians to think critically over the current national issues which will eventually promote government efforts in achieving sustainable development.

Fifth, studying political science could be a golden opportunity among Nigerian youths as the discipline enriches students with different administrative and diplomatic skills which can reasonably enable them to change jobs and have more than one career. This means political science education is excellent in preparation for flexibility in employment and this will greatly promote sustainable development in Nigeria as graduates of political science can work in public or private organizations with careers as businessmen, law consulting professionals, journalism and communications, polling and campaign management, international and nongovernmental organizations officials.

Sixth, Political science or the Government is offered at the senior secondary school level. It is taken as one of the examination subjects to obtain the Senior Secondary School Certificate. Both the National Examination Council (NECO) and the West African Examination Council (WAEC) conduct the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations in different subjects, government inclusive. Not only that, both the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) have political science curricula in their manual of minimum standards. This will

surely help in achieving national sustainable development through educational policies and programs (Kwasau, 2013).

Finally, it is important to know that political science education is taught at NCE and B.Sc. Ed or B. Ed in Political Science Education level in the Nigerian Colleges of education and universities to prepare future Primary and secondary School teachers. It helps the students to develop their intellect and also gives them training in step-by-step logical analysis. For instance, at this level the course aims to produce proficient teachers of government. These inspiring teachers will help greatly in disseminating and teaching Nigeria's core values and attitudes for sustainable development (Kwasau, 2013 & Minimum Standard for NCE Teachers, 2012).

The Challenges of Political Science Education in Nigeria

Some of the challenges of political science education identified by Wallace (1954), Muhd (2008) and Kwasau (2013) are explained below:

First, lack of required number of qualified, skilled and experienced political science professionals capable of providing standards in political science education in both classical and contemporary context (Robert cited in Kwasau, 2013).

Second, lack of conducive atmosphere that will accommodate both teachers and students for teaching and learning political science education. Most of the secondary schools, colleges of education and universities in Nigeria where political science education is taught encounter this challenge. This may emanate from large number of students in one class or shortage of classroom facilities. Conducive environment for both lecturers and students is a platform for better academic excellence as argued by Muhd (2008).

Third, poor funding of political science education programs which leads to poor application of methods of teaching and learning the subject. Consequently, this leads to poor instructional materials, poor research attitudes, lack of good academic commitment and devotion of the students, less attention on the practical aspects of teaching and learning the course such as excursions and media programs (Adendoff, 2008 as cited in Kwasau, 2013).

Fourth, laxity in encouraging modern political science teaching techniques such as interactive classes, effective human resource methods, forum for debates, conferences and internet models. This problem comes especially from the side of teachers and school/college management.

The fifth challenge of political science education in Nigeria is that, most of the colleges of education where the course is taught have problems of conflicting lecture time and venue with other departments due to lack of enough classes and lecture halls which also leads to poor teaching condition (Kwasau, 2013).

Sixth, shortage of modern technology base instructional materials especially in secondary schools and colleges for teaching and learning political science. These greatly create obstacles in curriculum implementation of political science education. This consequently constitutes a drawback to government efforts in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

Seventh, lack of cohesion or uniformity of teaching strategies or methods where there are more than one arm at the same levels especially in secondary schools and colleges. This may create poor comprehension among students as the teachers may adopt different teaching methods and interpretations of political science concepts.

Eighth, cult and other social vices such as drug abuse in secondary schools, colleges of education and universities as in other disciplines hinders smooth and spoil conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning of political science in Nigeria.

Finally, being a newly introduced course in some Nigerian colleges of education, political science education encounters challenges of shortage of enough textbooks and other reading guides in their libraries.

Conclusion

Political Science Education has a vital role to play in attaining sustainable development. This is for the simple reason that the knowledge of political Science enriches one's mind and widens intellectual horizon. Eventually, this training in citizenship will broaden students' sense and scope of participation in community as well as national affairs and fostering growth of international co-operation and co-existence which is very essential to Nigeria's sustainable development. Those who specialize in various fields of Political Science discipline conduct researches to discover hitherto unknown principles underlying political phenomena and make rich contributions to the realm of knowledge. If the ultimate philosophy of human life is to enrich knowledge, political science education makes a major contribution to the storehouse of knowledge from ancient to present times.

Finally, the key contributions of political science education toward achieving sustainable development in Nigeria is so crucial as the paper explores and emphasizes on the need for integration of political science education in promoting sustainable development efforts which is the leading tool for understanding Nigeria's ethno-religious, socio-cultural, economic and political difference.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that, political science education, being the core-course in some Nigerian universities and colleges of education should be made a compulsory borrowing course to all disciplines because, it teaches the lesson of cooperation, adjustment and toleration. National Development cannot be achieved or society cannot progress without cooperation and adjustment. The absence of toleration leads to anarchy. Politics teaches the principles of toleration and coexistence. It preaches the gospel of "live and let live".

Secondly, there is also a need for government's involvement in the promotion of teaching and learning of political science education in both universities and colleges of education. This could be achieved by funding the institutions adequately to provide conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning of the course thereby encouraging research works to develop students' passion and determination for the effective realization of the desired goals.

Thirdly, there is a need for both government and non-governmental organizations to support teaching and learning of political science education by providing more text books and other instructional materials.

Fourthly, e-learning in teaching and learning of political science should be promoted by government of Nigeria at all levels.

Finally, field trips, project and excursion methods should be promoted in teaching and learning of political science as this will concretize the knowledge of political science among Nigerians.

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