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# THE ROLE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION IN INCULCATING GOOD CITIZENSHIP AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS

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## **Abstract**

*This study was prompted by the need to assess the role of political science education in the inculcation of good citizenship among Nigerian youths. This study in its analysis adopted the theory of political culture as its theoretical framework. Furthermore, the concept political science education and good citizenship since they served as the fulcrum of discussion in the study were conceptually clarified. The study adopted the descriptive method and relied on secondary data in its analysis. It was argued in the study that given the fact that a very significant number of Nigerian youths are engaged in heart-breaking social vices such as armed robberies, kidnapping, prostitutions, drug trafficking and abuse, cyber-crimes, advanced fee frauds, etc., there is need to reverse this trend. The study came to the conclusion that political science education would inculcate the much desire good citizenship among Nigerian youths. It was recommended in the study that concerted efforts should be made in bringing about the political science education of Nigerian youths. This could be achieved by making political science education compulsory at all levels of our educational system.*

**Key Words:** Political Science Education, Good citizenship and Nation- Building.

Youth involvements in social vices and crimes is becoming an increasingly troublesome phenomenon in Nigeria today. Indeed, it has become one of the most serious socio-political and economic problem confronting the nation state-Nigeria.

Nigerian youths are engaged in all forms and manner of criminalities. These range from armed robberies, cyber crimes and advanced fee frauds, child trafficking, prostitutions, drug trafficking and abuse, kidnapping, militancy and most recently, the youths constitute the foot-soldiers of the dreaded insurgency known as Boko Haram that is threatening the peace and security of the Nigerian state.

To curb this menace, it is necessary to re-orientate and re-position the Nigerian citizens; especially the youths not only to participate actively and effectively in the decision-making process of the state but also contribute meaningfully their quota to the task of nation-building. Indeed, Appadorai (1975) and Thompson and Umoh (2001) contend that a democratic governance thrives best when the citizens are politically enlightened. This obviously could enable the citizens to take an independently and informed stand on public issues and also work assiduously towards the socio-political and economic stability of the Nigerian state.

It is against this background, that this paper attempts to assess the relevance of political science education in inculcating good citizenship among Nigerian youths. However, it would not be out of place to proceed discussion by adopting a theoretical framework for the study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is anchored on the proposition evolved by the proponents of the theory of political culture. The proponents include David Sills, Gabriel Almond, Bingham Powell, Syney Verba and Lucien Pye to mention just a few (Nna, 2000). Political culture according to Eminue (2007) borders on the knowledge of and belief about government held by the citizens.

Elaborating further, Almond and Verba (1965) in their celebrated work titled “The Civic Culture” viewed political culture specifically as the pattern of individual political orientations, their attitude towards the political system and the role of self in the political system. Indeed, political culture in its simplistic analogy, refers to the nature and patterns of individual attitudes and orientations towards the political system. Dowse and Hughes (1972) borrowing from the works of Talcott Parsons opines that political culture consists of three internalized orientations. These are cognitive, affective and evaluative orientations. Cognitive orientation is concerned with the knowledge an individual (citizen) has about the political system; affective orientation is made up of feelings of involvement/ attachment or otherwise of the individual towards the political system and evaluative orientation refers to the judgement/ opinions expressed by individuals about the political system.

Consequently, Almond and Verba (1965) identified three types of political culture. These are parochial, subject and participant political culture on the basis of which citizens could be classified or distinguished in terms of their knowledge of the political system, their feelings towards it and their evaluation of government. Citizens under a parochial political culture have little knowledge of the existence and operation of government and also have very little or none in the decision-making processes and therefore, do not expect anything from the political system (e.g. many African states and Italy). Citizens in subject political culture have little awareness that their participation is an important input in the governmental process and that government has authority but they are largely passive and apolitical because public policies are imposed from above by leaders in such a way that the citizens lose faith in the ability of the political system to provide for them (e.g. Germany). The participant political culture is the ideal type in the sense that the citizens know how they could influence policy making and they actually do so. In this type of political culture, the citizens participate actively in public policies formulation and implementation. Classical examples of participant political culture are the United States of America (USA), Britain and the Scandinavian Countries (Eminue, 2007).

According to Varma cited in Nna (2000), political culture as the theoretical framework of this study is predicated on two basic assumptions. These are:

- i. That a political system is not only distinguished by its structures but also by the cultures in which the structures are embedded; and,
- ii. That the working of the political system is tremendously influenced by the culture in which it functions.

Elaborating further on these two basic assumptions of the political culture, Almond cited in Dare (1979) submits that:

*every political system is embedded in a particular culture or patterns of orientation to political actions. There is an ordered subjective realm of politics which gives meaning to the polity, discipline to institutions and social relevance to individual acts.*

*... the traditions of a polity, the spirit of its public institutions, the passions and collective reasoning of its citizenry and the style and operating bodies of its leaders are not just random products of historical experience but put together as a part of a meaningful whole and constitute an intelligible web of relations for the individual, the political culture provides controlling guidelines for effective political behavior and for the collectivity, it gives a systematic structure of values and rational*

*considerations which ensure coherence in the performance of institutions and organizations.*

The relevance of the theory of political culture to this paper could perhaps, be better appreciated from the fact that the Nigerian youths in Nigeria's nascent civil and democratic government which came into being in May 1999 have drifted far away from contributing their quota to nation-building to heart-breaking social vices such as armed robberies, kidnappings, prostitutions, drug trafficking and abuse, militancy, terrorism, electoral malpractices, cyber-crimes, advanced fee frauds, etc. These vices if not curb could spelt doom to the socio- political and economical stability of the Nigerian state.

These social vices are a negation of the attributes of political culture which are our youths are expected to imbibed. Consequently, in improving and facilitating the role of the citizens in contributing their inputs in the decision-making process in contemporary Nigeria's political configuration, there is the need to inculcate the spirit of good citizenship among Nigerian youths and this could be achieved through the political science education of Nigerian youths.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

For a proper analysis and appreciation of the role of political science education in inculcating good citizenship among Nigerian youths, it is imperative to proceed discussion by attempting a conceptual clarification of what political science education and good citizenship are all about. After all, these two concepts - political science education and good citizenship constitute the fulcrum of discussion in this study.

### **Political Science Education**

Indeed, for a proper delineation of the concept of political science education, it is imperative to consider what politics is all about. Etymologically speaking, the concept politics emanates from the Greek word polis which connotes city-states. Ofcourse, Aristotle, the great Greek philosopher was the very the first person to make use of the concept politics referring to it to mean the general affairs operating in the Greek city states of the time (Oyediran, 1998). This essentially describes how the Greek city-states were politically organized and administered towards the realization of their objectives of the goals of existence. Consequently, for any society to enjoy some sort of political stability, it must fashion out a system of law and order regulated by some selected individuals, otherwise known as government. Such government must be vested with the authority to make and enforced laws as well as to claim obedience from its citizens. In return, the government must be able to protect the lives of the citizens and property and strives to improve their lots in all ramifications.

Politics therefore, according to Appadorai (1975) deals with the state or political society, meaning ... a people organized for law within a definite territory. This no doubt views politics as a state- centered phenomenon. However, politics as viewed in our

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contemporary world is much more complex and tends to revolve around the struggle for positions of power and influence. Thus, Lasswell (1980), described politics as who gets what, when and how? To Dyke (1960), politics could be seen as a struggle among actors pursuing conflicting desires on public issues.

Corroborating on this point of view, Easton (1965), defined politics as the authoritative allocation of values in the society. By values, Easton refers to those things desire by man to live a comfortable life in the society. Indeed, adopting an operational definition of politics for this study, it is necessary to blend both notion of politics as state-centered as well as a dynamic political process. In this connection, Nnoli (1986) perceives politics as comprising all those activities which are directly or indirectly associated with the seizure of state power, the consolidation of state power and the use of state power.

Political science education on the other hand, could be viewed as the formal transmission of scientific knowledge, facts and values of what is both politics and political to an individual in an educational institution. It is the sum total of knowledge, facts and values that are acquire from the study of Political Science which is an academic field of study within the Social Sciences that is taught in tertiary institutions. Political Science has a very wide scope and include sub-fields such as Public Administration, International Relations, Political Theory, Comparative Politics, etc. Anifowose and Enemuo (1999) viewed Political Science specifically as the systematic study and analysis of politics with focus on the understanding of the political behavior of individuals, groups and societies, the factors and conditions that affect political actors, political events and institutions and most importantly, the scientific study of the state, its relationship with individuals, groups and with other states of the world.

### **Good Citizenship**

Citizenship according to Udokang (2006) implied the legal status or condition of a person in relation to a given geo-political community- the state. Therefore, to be addressed as a citizen, it means belonging to a said geo-political entity (state) and also enjoying the full rights and privileges (political, economic, social, religious) that are available to all members of the political enclave and as spelt out by the constitution of a state.

The state therefore, has the responsibility of protecting these rights and ensuring the welfare of the citizen. However, the relationship between the citizen and state is one of reciprocity of protection and allegiance. That is, while the state by virtue of its powers offers to protect the citizens, the citizens on their own part must pledge their loyalties and allegiance to the state in the spirit of give and take. Therefore, the status of citizenship demands allegiance and loyalty (Omolayo and Arowolaju, 1987). Invariably, with due consideration of our contemporary and complex Nigerian society, the ultimate aim of citizenship entails that Nigerian youths must be sound and effective citizens. This

translates to good citizenship which implies that Nigerian youths should be responsible and actually participates in the efforts of nation-building. Therefore, good citizenship borders on inculcating in the Nigerian youths the capability to be thoughtful and responsible and to participate positively to the development and growth of the political, economic, social and cultural life of the Nigerian state. Indeed, Meziobi (1992) opines that good citizenship could be viewed as the meaningful contribution of the individuals towards the development and progress of an over enhancing dynamic and complex world. Therefore, good citizenship borders on transforming the individuals to become socially, economically and politically, relevant in the society and to contribute effectively towards the task of development and the survival of the society.

### **The Role of Political Science Education in Inculcating Good Citizenship Among Nigerian Youths**

As already mentioned in this study, the Nigerian state is bedeviled with various socio-political and economic problems. The Nigerian state is experiencing so many breath-taking social vices and most of these are undertaken by the Nigerian youths. These social vices include armed robberies, kidnappings, drug trafficking and abuse, child trafficking, prostitutions, militancy, to mention just a few. Indeed, if this trend is not check-mated, the Nigerian state may be the worst for it.

Here in lies the role of political science education in inculcating good citizenship among Nigerian youths. Political science education would play a prominent role in inculcating in the Nigerian youths the much desired political consciousness and awareness which would ultimately engender the youths to take active participation in both the decision-making process as well as in the implementation of public policies in the Nigerian polity. Ofcourse, having, transisted from several years of military rule to a civil and democratic governance, the political education of the youths would aid them to understand and appreciate the various governmental efforts geared towards the improvement of the standard of living of the citizens. The acquisition of the knowledge and values of political science education according to Eninue (2001), would inculcate the desire consciousness and awareness in the citizens and this invariable would enable the citizens to be better informed, more articulate, progressive and patriotic since they would be more knowledgeable about their state, their rights, privileges and obligations and this would facilitate their active participation in governmental programmes and policies.

Furthermore, political science education would play a very relevant role to the realization of good citizenship among Nigerian youths because it would inculcate in the individual good citizenship training, national loyalty and patriotism to the Nigerian state (Udokang, 2006). Citizenship training is very important because it inculcates in the Nigerian youths the spirit of nationalism, political participation and democratic values (Appadorai, 1975) and Thompson and Umoh, 2001). Indeed, when the citizens are well acquainted with the knowledge and working of government, government

responsibilities, duties and obligations, this would engender the Nigerian youths to take active participation in the business of governance. Thompson and Umoh (2001) contend that if citizenship training is properly directed, it will deepen and develop the citizens' intellectual ability to think reasonably, critically and logically. As a result, the citizens will be endowed with brevity, skill, vision, foresight and capacity in contributing their quota to nation- building.

Moreover, political science education plays a vital role in the task of inculcating good citizenship in Nigerian youths because it exposes the citizens to knowing their rights and the rights of others, duties, obligations and privileges. Of course, political science education in the words of Eminue (2001) is instrumental to the awareness of the existence and the enjoyment of freedom.

Finally, political science education is very relevant because it plays a vital role in the inculcation of good citizenship among Nigerian youths. Indeed, it helps the citizens to acquire leadership training which could place them in a vintage position to contribute their quota to nation-building. Of course, leadership in any sphere of life requires adequate preparation of the citizens with such qualities as discipline, devotion, dedication, courage, wisdom, imagination, vision, selflessness, honesty, creativity and respect for justice and equity.

### **Conclusion**

This study has critically assessed the role of political science education in inculcating good citizenship among Nigerian youths. The study contends that considering the various social vices such as armed robberies, kidnappings, drug trafficking, etc., that the Nigerian youths engaged in, it is imperative that a programme aimed at re-orientating and re-positioning the Nigerian youths to shun these social vices and imbibe/inculcate desirable attitudes and values which would enable them to contribute meaningfully their quota to the task of nation-building of the Nigerian state.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the conclusion drawn in this paper, it is highly recommended that the political science education of the citizens should be intensified by making political science education compulsory at all levels of our educational system. To achieve this, qualified and dedicated teachers versed in the teaching of the discipline-political science education be employed and assigned to teach the subject at all levels of the Nigerian education system. More importantly, adequate instructional materials/ teaching aids should be made available to facilitate the effective teaching and learning of political science education.

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