

VIABLE PRIMARY EDUCATION AS A STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

The study sought to examine how viable primary education could enhance sustainable democracy among pupils in Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. Three research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The population of the study comprised 514 teachers from public primary schools in the area of study. The sample for the study consisted of 100 teachers, from 30 public primary schools. The random sampling technique was used for the selection of the teachers. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire titled “Viable Primary Education for Sustainable Democracy Questionnaire” (VPESDQ). It had two parts with part 1 designated for respondent’s bio-data while part 2 had items structured to elicit responses from the respondents on the subject matter. It was a four-point rating scale. 100 copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents, out of which, 97 copies were retrieved. The instrument was validated by experts. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while chi-square was used to test the hypothesis. The findings in the study revealed among others that the activities of primary education are significantly related to democracy processes; that viable primary education is an effective tool for sustainable democracy and that the strategies for sustaining democracy includes; inculcating the spirit of patriotism, social responsibility, efficiency and productivity, citizenship skills and attitude, critical thinking and debate, decision making in selection of leaders and transparency in the selection process. Consequently, it was recommended among others that teachers should engage pupils in practical activities on democratic process in selection of school leadership among pupils. This will help pupils imbibe political and democratic values and principle that could transcend to sustain the democratic process in the society.

Keywords: Viable Primary Education and Sustainable Democracy

The regular yearning of patriotic, all-round development minded nations and nationals the world all over, is to achieve sustainable democracy. While some countries are making waves towards achieving this feat, others are plunged into perpetual political conflicts which tend to under mind the democratic processes. However, the inability of a nation to achieve sustainable democracy is often times attributed to the inability of such a country to manage her problems which may not be peculiar to it. Nigeria falls into the categories of nations struggling to sustain her nascent democracy which is perhaps due to constant changes in government emanating from thirst for power, ethnic sentiment and sometimes religious intolerance. These problems are mostly found with adult population and not school age children. That is why education is a very crucial tool in the transmission of cultural knowledge and development of attitudes towards democratic activities and sustainable integration and development of any nation.

In traditional societies, the family institution was regarded as the most dependable of transmitting and perpetuating societal values, beliefs and other essential elements of societal existence and continuity. But with development of formal education, the narrative has long changed, giving education more bulk of the work to do, including the preparation of the younger ones for national development, including sustainable democracy. Education according to Nnabuo and Asodike (2009), is defined as power and a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, ideas that shape and condition man's attitude, actions and achievements. Hence, education is important as a tool to be used to equip pupils with potentials such as literacy, confidence and attitudes that they need to promote active participation in democratic life. This suggests the inculcation of knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired in a free and effective manner as influenced by values and motivation for personal fulfilment, development, active citizenship, inclusive society as well as sustainable development. Therefore, it is reasonable to start early to inculcate these in the lives of the learners through active and sustainable learning activities, for which primary education does.

Primary education, according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) in her National Policy on Education, is the first formal education given for children between the ages of six to eleven plus. It went further to explain that the rest of the education system is built upon it and is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. The purposes of primary education among others are to inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively, character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes, to give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society. It enables them to realize their hidden potentialities fully, for a fully developed person can contribute his/her bit to the success of democracy. Democracy is said to be the government of the people, for the people and by the people. In this form of government, the interests of the majority of the citizens are taken into consideration in the formulation and execution of policies. This means that democracy calls for the people's participation in all its ramification (Mezieobi, 2010). Therefore, the aim of primary education in democratic process is to

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produce democratic citizens who can understand the social, political, economic and cultural problems of the society and also form their own independent judgement on these problems through self-awareness programs and activities.

The primary school years are considered as the formative years of a child, where basic concepts are internalized. Uhie (2015) opined that at the age of six the Nigerian child is considered mature enough to express his feelings through the means of creative activities, but may lack genuine interest in concepts. This reveals the vulnerability of a child at this stage, and makes it quite easy to cultivate and help grow the right values that will be harnessed in the future. Since all other levels of education is built upon the primary education, the sustainability and functionality of democracy in Nigeria rest on the primary education (Jaiyeoba, 2011). Perhaps, it is in the light of this that UNESCO (2015) emphasized the review of primary school curriculum and incorporate basic elements of democracy as efforts to ensuring a sustained society. In the same vein, Ikeche & Obikwelu(2018) posited that, civic awareness, civic knowledge and civic dispositions needed by youths in Nigeria as a basis for a functional Citizenship Education curriculum should be taken to the primary education which is the basic foundation for social and communal life. Further more, Nnabuo and Asodike (2009), opined that primary education is an important tool used to equip young people with knowledge and potentials such as literacy, confidence and attitudes that they need to promote active participation in democratic life. The basic knowledge and access to information made possible through functional primary education enables people to choose good government. This implies application of knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired in a free and effective manner as influenced by values and motivation for personal fulfilment, development, active citizenship, inclusive society as well as sustainable democracy.

Democracy has gain prominence largely because it is believed to be a sine-qua non for growth, development and sustainability of the body polity as opposed to a military autocracy. it is a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives, periodically elected by themselves (Asemah, 2013).Ordoñez (2015) mention the essential criteria on which democracy is based, such as:

- The ultimate political decision-making rests on the people.
- The existence of periodic, free and fair elections in which coercion is relatively un-known.
- The existence of political parties.
- Free press, where people will have the opportunities of freely articulating their opinions and views.
- Respect for the rule of law.
- The existence of independent and impartial judiciary.
- Equal opportunity for all-in decision-making process, i.e. one man, one vote.

- Minority rights are protected,
- Respect for individual and group differences.

One of the greatest advantages of democracy is that its power is dispersed into many hands and right of all are guaranteed. It can be inferred that for democracy to be sustainable, it has to be free, fair and credible in terms of elections. To achieve this, it has to be instilled in the minds of the young ones right from the primary school level to enable them grow into responsible patriotic members of their communities. This can be done through primary school prescribed subjects such as civic education, social studies and other national values-based subjects which are enriched with themes that can be used to inculcate peaceful behaviors in the primary school pupils.

According to Pirsl, Marusic & Pokrajac-Bulian (2007), our learners need to understand how democracy works and how they can help to keep and improve it. This is because good democracy education as a content of primary education is necessary to assist every young person in acquiring knowledge, understanding, skills and democratic values pertinent to efficient functioning as an individual and as a citizen in a local setting, national society and the world at large. Subba, (2014). identified some democratic values, beliefs or principles which include: freedom, equality, justice, autonomy, cooperation, shared decision-making, sense of community, respect of life, justice, self-esteem, tolerance, responsibility, safety, peace and development. Establishing democracy mostly depends on the understanding, skills and attitudes of people which would be the primary responsibility of education. Subba asserts that democratic values must reflect in both the formal curricula and through unambiguous teaching, as it is done in primary education. Therefore, in any democratic society, primary education remains at the core of national stability, security and an instrument for political and economic growth and development. This is because primary schools have the essential role in this process as they maintain structured and formal educational programs. It seeks to develop in children a sense of universal brotherhood of man and develops an awareness in them that they are not the citizen of one's own country rather citizens of the world.

It is important to identify and put forward strategies for enhancing civic knowledge, skills and active participation in democratic activities. To equip the younger populace with change of attitude, action and participation towards democratic activities by acquiring relevant education and skills in order to promote developmental efforts in our nation Carr (2008). Efforts to promote sustainable democracy involve training and information aimed building and equipping the populace to abide by the following principles which include: social and work ethics, integrity, responsibility, respect for laws and regulations, productivity, punctuality and change of attitude towards work and national development all enshrined in primary education curriculum. This implies not only providing our youths with knowledge, laws and regulations but also to impact the necessary skills needed to promote, apply and sustain these values and attitudes in their daily life (Eduardo & Yeaji, 2015). The present writers believe that, if these democratic

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values and attitudes are developed and inculcated in children through primary education, there is likelihood of achieving sustainable democracy.

Statement of the Problem

Education has been found to be the most supported tool for peace, unity, democracy, development and social change in the society of any nation. This can only be achieved if a critical understanding of the need for democracy is created and practiced by all including the younger generation. Democracy is based on equity and justice, the rule of law and the preservation of human rights. Fundamental elements of a thriving democracy are usually based on equity and equal access to social needs, a strong civil society, an active and free press, strong and fair legal system, checks and balances on power, and free and fair elections. Primary education has been long identified as a lasting strategy for molding efficient values and patriotic mindset in learners due to its curricular content. Through and through, it is meant to promote democracy by influencing the competence and cognitive orientation of learners, and by providing experiences that instill democratic values through its content. The challenge facing societies and humanity today in terms of achieving sustainable democracy is how to motivate people to change basic behaviors and activities that are problematic to our environment. If the above stated challenge was curbed in the early years of primary education of every individual, then achieving a sustainable democracy wouldn't be such a great challenge. Sustainable democracy relies on the understanding, skills and attitudes of people which would be the primary responsibility of education because schools have the essential role to maintain structured and formal educational programs which would create such democratic and patriotic awareness in learners through intentional value educational learning. The question now should be how to understand the word democracy and how it is taught in schools throughout the academic years of pupils? This is because it has become an obvious factor that schools have an important role to play in cultivating and shaping the democratic experiences for pupils in relation to their present and future attitudes, behaviors, belief system and commitment regarding democracy. To this end, it has become important to measure the extent primary education could influence sustainable democracy and ascertain the possible strategies to achieve sustainable democracy through viable primary education.

Purpose of the Study

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to;

1. Ascertain the relationship between viable primary education and sustainable democracy in Nigeria
2. Ascertain the effectiveness of primary education for sustainable democracy in Nigeria
3. Identify strategies for promoting sustainable democracy through viable primary education in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study

1. What is the relationship between viable primary education and sustainable democracy in Nigeria?
2. What is the effect of primary education for sustainable democracy in Nigeria?
3. What are the strategies for promoting sustainable democracy in Nigeria?

Hypothesis

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between viable primary education and sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

Method

The descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Oshimili South Local Government Education zone of Delta State. The population of the study comprised 514 teachers from public primary schools in the area of study. The sample for the study consisted of 100 teachers, from 30 public primary schools. The random sampling technique was used for the selection of the teachers. This represented 20% of the population.

The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire titled “Viable Primary Education for Sustainable Democracy Questionnaire” (VPESDQ)”. It was a 22 item instrument with a four-point rating scale options tagged Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). It was divided into two parts. Part 1 was designed to provide information on the respondents while part 2 had items that elicited response from the respondents on the subject matter. The instrument was subjected to face validation by two experts in Primary Education and Measurement and Evaluation. 100 copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents but 97 were returned dully filled. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while chi-square was used to test the hypothesis. The mean score of 2.50 and above were accepted and 2.50 and below were rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between viable primary education and sustainable democracy in Nigeria?

Table 1: Frequency Distribution, Mean scores and Standard Deviation Presentation of Respondents’ Responses on Relationship Between Viable Primary Education and Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	x	SD	Decision
1	The content of primary education curriculum in	25	33	30	9	2.76	0.94	Agree

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	Nigeria supports the sustainability of democracy								
2	Primary education uses its subjects to create national consciousness and prepare pupils for adult life	37	26	25	9	2.94	1.01		Agree
3	As grassroot of education, primary education is committed to ensure early effective participation to the life of the society through its curriculum contents	36	32	18	11	2.96	1.01		Agree
4	Primary education subjects such as social studies, civic education and religious studies help to foster democratic mindset in pupils.	41	31	17	8	3.08	0.96		Agree
5	Cultural values and citizenship education are better taught at early age to ensure effective and monitored participation.	23	35	25	14	2.69	0.99		Agree
6	Primary education objectives give room for a relatives change in behaviour of the pupils	18	48	29	2	2.85	0.74		Agree
7	Each subject in primary education is targeted at developing social and moral awareness for better citizenship	20	53	22	2	2.94	0.72		Agree
8	As the foundation of education whatever a child learns at this stage determines his response to democratic society	45	32	16	4	3.22	0.87		Agree

9	Primary education policies prepare teachers to be models of citizenship and democracy	77	14	3	3	3.70	0.68	Agree
Grand Mean/SD						3.01	0.88	Agree

Table 1 revealed that, respondents agreed to all the items with mean scores that ranged between 2.69 and 3.70; values that are significantly higher than 2.50 benchmark for acceptance or otherwise of a value as agreed or disagreed. This is supported by the grand mean score of 3.01 and standard deviation of 0.88. The results showed that viable primary education is significantly related to sustainable democracy process. This revealed further that the curriculum content of primary education and the subjects encourage democratic process of national consciousness, participation, democratic mindset, awareness, attitudinal change, response and functional citizenship among pupils.

Research question 2: How effective is primary education for sustainable democracy in Nigeria?

Table 2: Frequency Distribution, Mean scores and Standard Deviation Presentation of Respondents' Responses on The Effectiveness of Primary Education for Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	x	SD	Decision
10	Primary education is the basic means for the widespread of democratic values social participation	47	40	4	6	3.32	0.82	Agree
11	Primary education as a foundation level is an instrument of social emancipation and value learning toward sustained democracy	30	51	8	8	3.06	0.85	Agree
12	Primary education helps in development of personality which includes discovering of hidden talents and cultivating rich interests in equity and social justice	41	48	5	3	3.31	0.71	Agree

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13	Primary education ensures discipline in democratic society by teaching doing the right thing in the right manner in and outside the school	30	47	9	11	2.99	0.93	Agree
14	Primary education creates awareness for national responsibility towards democratic government.	39	47	5	6	3.23	0.81	Agree
15	Primary Education helps to create the ability to make right decision as a result of guided learning from teachers through citizenship education	21	22	29	25	2.40	1.10	Disagree
16	Cultural and creative art in primary schools helps pupils to learn democratic values such as respect for cultural differences	34	27	20	16	2.81	1.09	Agree
17	Primary Education helps in producing democratic school system and learning	36	36	8	17	2.94	1.08	Agree
Grand Mean/SD						3.00	0.92	Agree

Table 2 revealed that respondents agreed with items 10 to 17 except item 15 with a mean score of 2.40. The mean scores for the other items ranged between 2.81 and 3.32 and were significantly higher than 2.50 benchmark for decision making on an index value. The grand mean score and standard deviation for the table were 3.00 and 0.92 respectively; which supported the status of the results. The results showed that primary education is an effective tool for sustainable democracy in schools and Nigeria in general as serves as a means for widespread of democratic values and ideal, emancipation from democratic slavery and ignorance, inculcating discipline in pupils, civic responsibilities, respect for constituted authorities and promotional of democratic attitude and skills.

Research Question 3:What are primary education strategies for promoting sustainable democracy in Nigeria?

Table 3: Frequency Distribution, Mean scores and Standard Deviation Presentation of Respondents' Responses on Primary Education Strategies for Promoting Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria.

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	x	SD	Decision
18	Adequate training of teachers in the aspect of strategies to inculcate the spirit of patriotism in learners	41	39	8	9	3.15	0.93	Agree
19	Training and equipping pupils with information aimed at social responsibility and efficient productivity at work	41	44	9	3	3.27	0.76	Agree
20	Giving pupils citizenship education in every level of education.	51	32	7	7	3.31	0.89	Agree
21	Reorienting pupils on the importance of democracy through critical thinking and debate	49	25	9	14	3.12	1.08	Agree
22	Teachers' transparency in decision making and leadership selection in classrooms	51	22	12	12	3.15	1.06	Agree
Grand Mean/SD						3.2	0.94	Agree

Table 3 revealed that, respondents agreed with all the items (item 18 to 22). The mean scores for the items ranged between 3.15 and 3.31 and are significantly higher than 2.50 benchmark for acceptance of a mean score as agreed or disagreed. The grand mean and standard deviation of 3.2 and 0.94 were attained and highly supported the result. The result indicated that, primary education strategies for sustaining democracy include; inculcating the spirit of patriotism, social responsibility, efficiency and productivity, citizenship skills and attitude, critical thinking and debate, decision making in selection of leaders and transparency in the selection process.

Research Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between the curriculum content of primary education and the strategies for promoting sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

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Table 4: A 2x4 contingency table of table 1 and 3 on the significant relationship between the curriculum content of primary education and the strategies for promoting sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

Category	SA	A	D	SD	Df	χ^2	C. Val	Decision
Table 1	322 (356.78)	304 (300.01)	185 (146.01)	62(68.78)				
Table 3	233 (198.21)	162 (166.42)	45 (82.14)	45 (37.46)	3	1.18	0.59	Upheld
Total	555	466	230	107				

Table four shows that Df is 3 while the χ^2 is 1.18 with a calculated value of 0.59. The values show that the calculated value of 0.59 is significantly less than the χ^2 of 1.18. The rule for the computation of Chi-square states that where the calculated value is less than the critical value, then the hypothesis should be accepted, and the alternative rejected. The values show that the χ^2 (1.18) is significantly higher than the calculated value of 0.59. As a result, the hypothesis was accepted and the null rejected. It therefore implied that primary education curriculum content and the strategies for attaining sustainable democracy are significantly related.

Discussion of Findings

Findings in the study revealed that the activities of primary education are significantly related to democracy processes and that a sustainable primary education can meaningfully influence sustainable democracy, especially in a developing nation. The study revealed further that the curriculum content of primary education and the subjects encourage democratic process inculcate in the learners, values of national consciousness, participation, democratic mindset, democratic awareness, attitudinal change, response and functional citizenship among pupils. These findings align with the position of Jaiyeoba (2011) and Nnabuo and Asodike (2009), who, though in different studies, corroborated that, primary education is an important tool use to equip younger people with the knowledge, attitude and potentials, such as literacy, confidence and courage needed to promote active participation and decision making in a democratic society.

Again, finding in the study revealed that, primary education is an effective tool for sustainable democracy in schools and Nigeria in general as it serves as a means for widespread of democratic values, principles and ideals; emancipation from democratic slavery and ignorance, inculcating discipline in pupils, civic responsibilities, respect for constituted authorities and promotional of democratic attitude and skills. This is because, children depend greatly on what they are exposed to at an early age and such experiences

would linger in them to an advanced age. This finding compliments the finding of PirsI, Marusic and Pokrajac-Bulian (2017) who posited that, learners need to be exposed to how democracy works and how they can keep and improve it in the future. This can only be achieved by catching them young through primary education. It also agrees with the findings of Subba (2014), who, unequivocally stated that, there are basic democratic values, beliefs, and principles such as freedom, equality, justice, autonomy, cooperation, shared decision-making, sense of communality, sanctity of life, justice, self-esteem, tolerance, responsibility, safety, peace and development that are transmitted in primary education which should be sustained.

Furthermore, results in the study revealed primary education strategies for sustaining democracy to include; inculcating the spirit of patriotism, social responsibility, efficiency and productivity, citizenship skills and attitude, critical thinking and debate, decision making in selection of leaders and transparency in the selection process. These strategies can only be achieved through well-articulated curriculum implementation plan. This finding is in line with the finding of Carr (2008) who stated that, sustainable democracy can only be achieved through training and information aimed at building and equipping the learners with social and work ethics, integrity, responsibility, respect for constituted authorities, laws, rules and regulations and change of attitude among others.

Finally, the hypothesis tested revealed that there is a significant relationship between primary education curriculum content and the strategies for attainment of sustainable democracy. This is evident as the values show that the χ^2 (1.18) is significantly higher than the calculated value of 0.59. As a result, the hypothesis was accepted and the null rejected.

Conclusion

Sustainable democracy is not just about voting and be voted for in electioneering activities; it implies practicing democracy without destroying the social structures that determine the continued existence of man in his social environment. Unfortunately, democracy in Nigeria is far from being sustained as anti-democratic activities such as vote-buying, ballot snatching, thuggery, kidnapping, maiming and killings of different degrees are experienced in the society during democratic processes. This suggests that something is missing in the education process, and what seems to be missing is viable primary education. Public primary schools in Nigeria, Delta State in particular, are not given the desired attention that could sustain it. This makes the children who grow to become adults bereft of democratic values, principles and ideas. For democracy to be sustained in Nigeria, primary education, which is the foundation of the education process, must be given its prime of place. With the quality and relevance of the curriculum content of primary education subjects, and proper attention given to the sector, sustainable democracy would be easily achieved; and there is no better time to prepare primary education for sustainable democracy in Nigeria than now.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Federal and state government, in collaboration local government councils should as a matter of urgency reposition primary schools in terms of infrastructure, working condition of teachers, and social security of the learners. If this is done, teachers would be motivated to transmit values (by modelling and teaching) that will promote sustainable democracy in the society.
2. Primary school teachers should engage pupils in practical activities on democratic process in the selection of school leadership pupils. This will help pupils to imbibe political and democratic values and principles that could transcend to sustain the democratic structure in the society.
3. Aside teaching pupils socially and democratically accepted values, ideas and principle, teachers, in conjunction with Parent Teachers Association (PTA) should set apart a day in every term for award giving to pupils selected by teachers and other pupils for outstanding behaviour and contributions to the development of the school. This will create a positive competitive mindset for excellence in behaviour, which could enhance sustainable democracy.

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