

POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: AN IMPERATIVE TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Political Science Education concerns with the study and analysis of the theories, Institutions and processes of political systems and their functions within complex societies. The field examines the structures of governments and their historical evolution over time as well as the question of how governmental authority is established and maintained in different eras and different societies. The discipline also acquaints students with the methods of teaching political science in tertiary institutions or Government in Secondary Schools. This paper has been divided into six main sections. Following the introduction is the conceptual clarification. Part three discusses the methods of teaching political science. The fourth segment of the paper examines the relevance of political science education in achieving sustainable development. Section five highlights the problems and challenges of political science education in Nigeria. The last segment of the paper is the recommendations and conclusion.

Keywords: Political Science Education, Sustainable Development

Introduction

For most Nigerians the word “Politics” or “Political” holds no charm, no special appeal. If anything it connotes deceit, graft, double talk and all that is evil. It is a term devoid of honor and respectability. Perhaps, this misunderstanding or misconception stems from the antics of some discredited politicians who regarded their call for national service as buccaneering expeditions for personal enrichment, for personal aggrandizement and for corporate group projections.

The bachelor of Arts in political Science education is available to students wishing to teach at the secondary level. Students supplement their study of political science with a core

of education, history, economics and geography courses. This degree prepares the graduates for the secondary teaching certification. The combined Bachelor of Arts program in French, German or Spanish with political science is designed for students who want to combine a comprehensive background in Political Science with the study of a foreign language. By completing the required five courses, students develop an understanding of political systems as well as acquire a fundamental understanding of political science as a basis for citizenship (Robert, 2007).

This paper therefore, examines the roles of political science education in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper also uses only a secondary source of data in collecting vital information for this research.

Conceptual Clarification

Sustainable Development: Alexander (2000) 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, an economic, political and social and technological advancement of a particular nation.

Political Science Education: Political Science Education is a discipline that concerns with the study and 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.

Political Scientist: This is one who takes keen interest in the study of fundamental principles of political science, governmental organizations, etc. and is an expert in the subject. Well-read statesmen or administrators may have a deep knowledge of political affairs. They may be well informed political scientists and seasoned politicians. A political scientist may not become an active politician. All of his activities may be restricted to the realm of reading, writing and discussing about his subject (Mahajan; 2000).

Politician: A politician is a person who is active in party politics, a seeker or holder of public/political office who is more concerned about winning favor or retaining power than about maintaining political principles, a skilled person in political administration, or a person who seeks to gain power or advancement within an organization in ways that are generally disapproved.

According to Okoli (2003), there are two types of politicians, viz **Statesman** and **demagogue**. However, while 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, a

demagogue glorifies in political power for his own sake and for personal aggrandizement. In other word, a statesman is that politician who loves his country and who, in the words of the Late President of the United States of America, John F. Kenedy, asks not what his country can do for him but what he can do for his country. He is a servant rather than a master of his people. The **demagogue** on the other 'hand, uses all skills, cunning and intrigue in his power to manipulate political power. He is a master rather than a servant to his people. He fans the embers of ethnicity when it suits his purpose and condemns it when it no longer serves his ends. He resorts to religion when he thinks he can gain from it; withdraws when he feels he can do without it.

Methods of Teaching Political Science Education

Political Science Education has various methods of teaching and learning the discipline. This includes:

i. Teacher-Centered Methods of Teaching Political Science:

The teacher-centered methods of teaching political science comprise the use of lecture method, story telling 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, Home work, supervised study, and field work.

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). The students-centered methods create a far better atmosphere for learning than the teacher-centered methods. Therefore, any of the above methods could be used along with lecture method so as to enable students learn in both practical and participatory ways.

Learning Materials for Teaching Political Science

A generous use of learning materials will do much to ensure the realization of a good political science program.

Print Learning Materials

i. Textbooks, Magazines and Newspapers: Textbooks are the principal learning materials in most schools Olawepo (2003). Textbooks on political science or government include those written by Akinbade (2008), Oyebola and Ojebabi (1971), Ologbenla (2001), Ball (1975), Adebayo (1984) and Odumosu (1993).

Apart from the textbooks, periodic magazines and daily newspapers are also used in teaching political science. They both carry items on political behavior and political actors (Olawepo; 2003).

ii. Pictures:- Both newspapers and magazines sometimes carry large flat pictures that are of political significance. Lecturers/Teachers of political science normally collect such pictures to mount them on cardboards and provide titles written at the top.

Non-Print Learning Materials

i. 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. After the visit, there must be a follow-up lesson to discuss what the learners saw and learnt. The lesson will end up with a writing or oral composition to bring out the main points relevant to political science concepts (Olowepo; 2003).

ii. 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 viewers should know what to look for. After the show, they should discuss the moving picture and follow it up with written work. This is to make it evident to the learners that the moving pictures are not just for recreation (Corbin 1981).

iii. 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 (Dark; 1973).

Learning Human Resources for Teaching Political Science

People —within and outside the school community can also assist students in enhancing learning in political science classes. Human resources for learning are in four categories, as follows:

- i. Teachers as Resource Persons:** Teachers are considered as resource persons and professional in teaching and learning of political science. They are the organizers, guide and implementers of the learning activities.
- ii. Learners as Resource Persons:** In teaching political science, lecturers/teachers adopt the learner- centered approaches in their classroom practice. This is an excellent principle for resource based learning since the learners themselves become an important resource. They bring their knowledge, interests, aptitudes, values and life experiences to bear on teaching (Adendoff, Foster and Walter; 2008). The learner can be creative participants in classroom interaction. They can be peer tutors mentoring their classmates. They can also be educators of younger learners. They can also serve as members of safety patrol or playground monitors (Jarollimek; 1977).
- iii. Guest Speakers as Resource Persons:** Political actors such as legislators, commissioners, special advisers, traditional rulers and political party leaders are invited into the classrooms as visiting teachers occasionally. Their coming must be seen as a special occasion to students. It is an opportunity to teach learners in a fresh and lively way. The same lesson by the class teacher will be less interesting. The use of guest speaker, in this way, provides a variety (Olawepo; 2003).
- iv. Interviewed Political Actors as Resource Persons:** Students can be made to go and interview selected political actors. Teachers also do the same. In both cases, the interview should be tape recorded (Lawton and Dafour; 1976). A telephone interview in which all learners can hear the interviewee and even ask questions can be very profitable in teaching and learning of political science but it is expensive.

Political Science Education and Sustainable Development

The study of political science education is great value to sustainable development and with its help people can know how and why the state was organized in the past and why its continuation is justified. Political science makes people conscious of their rights and obligations. People who are mentally equipped with the knowledge of political science are an asset to the state. Political science education or the knowledge of political science has become indispensable in modern times due to the following reasons:

Firstly, as a discipline of study, 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 government. If citizens do not 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 and this is precisely what political science seeks to inculcate in all members of a given state (Okoli, 2003).

Secondly, when citizens know their rights, duties and obligations and perform them, there will be harmony, stability and peace. Political stability is a sine-quo-non of good government and Sustainable Development. A good government in turn provides a good and solid basis of welfarism. In other words, the provision of amenities is a function of stable and responsible government (Okoli, 2003).

Thirdly, Sustainable Development cannot be achieved in any country that has no good government. Good government cannot emerge 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 through its subfield, public administration, produces expert administrators who in turn, ensure good administration (Okoli; 2003).

Fourthly, 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. 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 is surely a way of achieving the National Sustainable Development through educational policies and programs.

The fifth important role is that, political science education is taught at NCE level in the Nigerian Colleges of education to prepare future Primary School teachers. It helps them to develop their intellect and also gives them training in step-by-step logical analysis. The table below presents some of the available colleges of education that offer political science at NCE level:

S/N	SUBJECT/COURSE	INSTITUTION
1.	Music/Political Science	EACOE
2.	Islamic St/Pol. Science	ANSAR, ASSOED, COE-OFFA, EACOE, FCE-ZARIA, IKERE, MOCPED, ORO,
3.	History/Pol. Science	ALVAN, IECE, IKWO, ILA
4.	Pol. Science! Social St.	AGBOR, AKAMKPA, AKSCOE, FCE-ZARIA, MUHYIDEEN,
5.	Pol. Science/Maths	AROCHUKWU, MOSOGAR, IKWO
6.	Geo. /Pol. Science	FCE-ZARIA, OJU, ILA, IGUEBEN, HCOE
7.	French/Pol. Science	CORNER, KAT-ALA
8.	English/Pol. Science	FCE-ZARIA, AGBOR, AKSCOE, ANKPA
9.	Economics/Pol. Science	ALL-STATES, FC-ZARIA, COEN
10.	Computer Sci./Pol. Sc	HAVARD, ASSOED, IKWO,
11.	CRS/Political Science	FCE-ZARIA, KAT-ALA, CITY.

Source: UTME Examination Brochure; 2011

The last monumental role of political science education in achieving Sustainable Development is that, the discipline gives an opportunity to any NCE holder to acquire his/her B.Sc. Ed or B.Ed in Political Science Education in so many universities so as to prepare them for secondary school teaching in various Nigerian Secondary Schools. This will also promote Sustainable Development.

The table below also presents some of the available Nigerian Universities where political Science Education is offered at the degree level:

S/N	SUBJECT/COURSE	INSTITUTION
1.	Education/Political Science	ABSU, OOU, EDPORT, LASU, UNN, EDALV, DELSU, UNAD, OAU, UYO and CALABAR

Source: UTME Examination Brochure; 2009/2010 Session

The Challenges of Political Science Education in Nigeria

Political science education in Nigeria has encountered a lot of challenges, some of these problems are explained below;

Firstly, lack of required number of qualified, skilled and experienced political science professionals capable of providing standards in political science education in its both classical and contemporary context (Robert. 2007).

Secondly, lack of conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning of political science education. Most of the colleges of education in Nigeria where political science education is taught face this problem. Conducive environment for both lecturers and students is a platform for better academic promotion (Muh'd; 2008).

Thirdly, poor funding of political science education programs which leads to poor application of methods of teaching and learning the subject, 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 escortions and media programs (Adendoff; 2008).

Fourthly, laxity in encouraging modern political science teaching techniques such as interactive classes, effective human resources methods, forum for debates, conferences and internet models.

The fifth important 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.

Finally, as a result of the fact that, political science education is a newly introduced course in some colleges of education, it encountered problems of lack of enough textbooks and other reading guides in the colleges' libraries.

Conclusion

Political Science Education has a vital role to play in attaining Sustainable Development. This is for a simple reason that, the knowledge of political Science enriches one's mind and widens his intellectual horizon. Those who specialized in various fields of Political Science conduct researches to discover hitherto unknown principles underlying political phenomena and make a rich contribution 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.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that, political science education, being the Core-Course in some Nigerian Universities and other 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 need for government's involvement in the promotion of teaching and learning of political science education in both universities and Colleges of Education. This would be achieved by funding the Institutions adequately to provide a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning of the course thereby encouraging research and filed works to develop students' passion and determination for the effective realization of the desired goals.

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List of Abbreviation

ABSU	Abia State University
AGBOR	College of Education Agbor
AKAMKPA	Cross-River College of Education Akampka
ALL STATES	All States College of Education, Ondo State
ALVAN	Alvan Ikoku College of Education
ANKPA	College of Education Ankpa, Kogi State
ANSAR	Ansar-Ud-Deen College of Education, Lagos
AROCHUKWU	Abia State College of Education (Technical)
ASKCOE	Akwa-Ibom State College of Education
ASSCOED	Assanusiyah College of Education, Osun State
CALABAR	University of Calabar
CITY	City College of Education, Abuja
COE-OFFA	College of Education Offá, Kwara State
CORNER	Cornerstone College of Education, Ikeja, Lagos State
DELSU	Delta State University
EACOE	Emmanuel Alyande College of Education, Oyo State
EDALV	Alvan Ikoku College of Education
EDPORT	College of Education Port-Harcourt, Rivers State
FCE-ZARIA	Federal College of Education, Zaria, Kaduna State
HARVARD	Harvard Wilson College of Education, Abia State
IKERE	College of Education Ikere, Ekiti State
IKWO	Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo
ILA	Ogun State College of Education, Ila - Orangun
JECE	Institute of Ecumenical Education, Enugu State
KAT-ALA	College of Education, Katsina –Ala, Benue State
LASU	Lagos State University
MOCPED	Michael Otedola College of Primary Education, Lagos State
MOSOGAR	Delta State College of Physical Education, Mosogar
MUHYIDEEN	Muhyideen College of Education, Illorin, Kwara State
OAU	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife- Oyo State
OUU	Olabisi Onabanjo University
ORO	College of Education, Oro, Kwara State
UNAD	University of Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State
UNN	University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State
UYO	University of Uyo, Anambra State