

Political Socialization through Social Studies and Political Science Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

Apparently, there exists inextricable connection and interaction between Social Studies and Political Science that is so glaring to academic scholars to warrant any doubt. The purpose of this Paper is to present the mutual interdependence and functional approaches that are brought to bear on political socialization of man. The link between these two disciplines makes it easy for creating opportunities to develop human knowledge, mould character, and inculcate values and promote conduct in individuals in order to become useful members of the society. The paper asserts that the development of right attitudes towards authority, law, rules and regulations is vital for the survival and sustenance of the society. It further opines that Political Science enables man to understand how government operates in terms of its structures and procedures how laws are made, how courts are organized and how lives and properties are protected. While Social Studies is interested in the

activities undertaken by man in order to survive in any environment, how the environment influences man and how man in turn influences his environment. Both disciplines seek to enlighten man on his obligations and rights in the society and vice versa. In spite of their similarities the paper identifies the differences between the approaches adopted by both subjects in their study of man's political behaviour. It concludes with policy recommendations and suggestions that should make the study of these subjects inevitable in our higher educational institutions because they help to cultivate in the citizens political awareness, consciousness and promote a sense of discipline and patriotism.

Key Words: Politics, Socialization, Education, Knowledge, Understanding, Attitudes, Norms and Values.

Introduction

Undeniably, humans are political animals and need to undergo an orientation that make them fit properly and participate actively in the political scheme of things in the society. Every society has a political system which members must key into if they want to be accepted to make their contributions towards the growth, development and well being of the system. Therefore, the acquisition of basic political orientations by such members is the hallmark of political socialization. The members of a political system are required to learn to adopt and internalize the principles and practices, norms and values, attitudes and behaviours, conduct and goals acceptable, uphold the dignity, and integrity of the system. It is through the process of political socialization that individuals become aware and conscious of their roles to support the nation and government in power and their leaders. This is necessitated by the fact that man is not an isolated being from his fellow humans. Through contact and Interaction, man gains knowledge and understanding about the workings of the political system and the type of government being practised and the

leaders saddled with the responsibility of piloting the affairs of the nation.

The fundamental imperative of political socialization lies in its ability to develop man to be politically active in order to build and develop a personality and the capacity to function as an individual and as a member of a political system. In other words, an individual member of a political system must know how to take part in politics, participate in voting in elections, belong to a political party and aspire to hold a political post or office. Besides, the individual must be vibrant and viable member, committed and relevant by contributing meaningfully to the success and sustenance of not only his political party but also the political system. Needless to point out that political socialization is an indispensable component of political system because it brings about the feeling of nationhood. It is necessary for democracy since democracy demands that the process of decision making is a shared responsibility. People cannot effectively exercise democratic decision-making without being politically conscious and politically enlightened otherwise, elections can become occasions when the rich and the powerful manipulate the masses for their own selfish interests. Therefore, political socialization is an important weapon for freedom and human development in any nation. Hence, its effective utilization in ensuring the survival and stability of the political system is sacrosanct especially when it concerns democratic principles and practice in a developing nation like Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification:

It is pertinent to clarify some basic concepts that underlie this discourse with a view to clearly demonstrate how indispensable and relevant they are to our understanding of the connection between these mutually interactive disciplines.

Socialization:

The concept of socialization is a popular one in the social sciences. It is a

life-long process by which human beings transmit and learn particular thoughts, feelings and behaviour processes and patterns required for social transformation of culturally determined conditions and expectations (Eteng, 1985). It involves behaving according to the norms and values of the society. It is concerned about understanding the social roles that an individual is expected to perform as he relates to others and developing complex skills and techniques which to adapt to as well as transform one's social and physical environment. It therefore, has to do with learning roles, and role expectations, values, skills, and techniques related to a social position and status an individual intends to occupy now and at a future date. Besides, Ukpokolo (2010) sees socialization as a process by which an individual acquires the attributes, language, norms and values necessary to function in a given society. It thus involves a continuous learning to perform various social roles throughout life time.

In the same way, Ezegbe (1989), opines that socialization is a process by which a person imbibes the culture of the society within which he lives through formal or informal education. This is to enable him live peacefully with others and participate effectively as an active member of the society. It is through this process that an individual is made to know his duties, responsibilities and rights in the society as well as those of others. The individual will be taught the laws and regulations, the norms and customs, values and practices of the society and will be expected to behave in conformity with such normative patterns. In essence, socialization teaches an individual to live a group life of interdependence and cooperation, shapes his life style and his personality. By living harmoniously and cooperatively with others and doing what is expected of him in the society, such an individual is fit to be called a socialized being. This can be achieved through certain channels commonly referred to as agents of socialization which are institutions such as the family, the school, the church/mosque, the peer group and the mass media (Ezegbe, 1989, Oyediran, 2001 and Ukpokolo, 2010). In general, socialization is a learning process that is

continuous and leads an individual to adopt the standards of his society, acquires a personality and develops the capacity to function as an individual and as a member of the society. Therefore, learning of basic political orientations begins from childhood and goes on to adulthood.

Political Socialization:

This concept refers to the process by which the citizens of the society are educated on the values, attitudes and beliefs of the political system (Anyaele, 2003). It is through political socialization that the citizens internalize the political culture of the society or the nation, which is transmitted from one generation to another. Effective political socialization therefore makes the citizens of a country to be aware and conscious of the political system that is being operated. The roles the citizens are expected to play in the system, how to raise their loyalty, pride, patriotism and nationalistic feelings to the nation are all learned thorough political socialization.

Likewise Oyediran, Nwosu, takaya, Anifowoshe, Badejo, Ogboghodo and Agbaje (2001) define political socialization as the acquisition of basic political orientations by new members of a political system. They see it as a process by which people learn to adopt the norms, values, attitudes and behaviours accepted and practised by the political system. Through political socialization, individuals learn to support the nation and the government in power and their political leaders. It teaches the citizens how to be politically active by participating in voting and being voted for, as well as how to occupy a political post, belong to a political party and sustain the political system. This is done by stressing particular patterns of political behaviours which the citizens of the nation must imbibe. It is important to point out that political orientation and behaviour patterns are not inherited but are learned. Hence, political socialization is a process of interaction and contact between the learners and certain elements of human environment referred to as socialization agents. Foremost among them are the family, the

school, peer group and communication media, religious institutions and the society at large.

Besides, political socialization can take place in different ways. One way an individual can be politically socialized is through direct, formal method whereby the individual consciously learns particular political behaviour. This can take place through imitation of the behaviour of others in terms of copying the values and beliefs, behaviour, skills and attitudes of adults or older members of the political system. It could also occur through formal training and education provided by parents, teachers, peer group as well as membership of other political associations.

Another way can be indirect, informal methods whereby the Individual learns roles, skills and attitudes without being aware of it. This occurs unconsciously and it involves acquiring values and orientations which are not political but which can influence an individual's political behaviour. It entails learning non- political but politically relevant aspects of behaviour. It is a type of interpersonal transfer where attitudes towards authority are developed and sustained by an individual as a result of the orientations learned in other social organizations such as the family, the church/mosque, the school peer group. By and by, political socialization is necessary for a political system like democracy to thrive in the nation because the citizens cannot effectively exercise their political rights without being politically conscious. Therefore, political socialization must be seen as indispensable component of political enlightenment programme geared towards national development.

Political Science:

According to Aromolaran (1976), most political scientists have attempted to define political Science but efforts at a consensus definition have not yielded any agreement. Amidst the host of attempts, one orientation has gained the greatest acceptance among its practitioners. Political science is

the scientific and systematic study of the fundamental ideas about states and man. Aranmolaran (1976:7) categorizes the study of political science into three, namely;

the study of states and their institutions, functions and laws governing their roles; the study of administration of human beings at internal, local and national levels; the study of the international community.

In the view of Mhaiki (1981), political Science deals with the history, structure of governments and parliamentary procedures, mainly the interest of academics. It is concerned, according to Laski (1977), with the life of men in relation to organized states. Political science therefore involves a systematic method of studying politics which is interested in the human behaviour and activities in politically relevant situations. It also involves the systematic classification and analysis of the facts of politics. Thus, political science entails the use of certain techniques and the body of knowledge to analyze any political situation or scene. It therefore, calls for the building of concepts, formulation of hypotheses, collection of data and analyzing them as well as explain development of theories or generalizations to explain or predict political phenomena. In the view of Ezegbe (1990), he summarizes political science as embracing the study of types of government, governmental and administrative procedures principles and practice of government, the art of decision-making, party system, elections and parliamentary practice. It is political science that enables man to fashion out a particular type of government that suits a country. Therefore, its role in political socialization cannot be over emphasized.

Social Studies:

This concept, according to Egbube, Olori and Ewiwilem (2014) quoting Adaralegbe (1975), describes social studies as a study of how man influences and is in turn influenced by his physical, social, political,

religious, economic, psychological, cultural, scientific and technological environments. Put simply, it is the study of man and his environment. Osakwe (2009), views social studies as a subject concerned primarily with the study of people, their environment, the society in which they live and their interactions with one another. Social studies therefore is a subject which is concerned with man and his environment. It studies man in politics, and in the nation as well as everywhere man engages himself in the programme of living. Social studies is thus an all-embracing and integrative subject that deals with man and his environment in all ramifications of human endeavour that continuously affect and influence his behaviour.

Interdependence and Functionality:

Social studies and political science perform complementary roles. In other words, the functions of one complement those of the other. There is no water-tight division in the functions which they perform. Hence, there is interdependence and cooperation between the two disciplines for the progress of the individual members of the society. The two disciplines are mutually involved in political socialization of the citizens of a nation. In this connection, both disciplines are poised to give individuals the orientations that are geared towards preparing them to develop attitudes and conduct favourable to participation in political and governmental processes. However, there is a tenuous difference between social studies and political science. Whereas political science deals in greater details about the science, logistics, intricacies-and principles of political behaviour, social studies is rather more interested in investigating the socio-cultural or environmental circumstances that have led to the adoption of a political system that the society is practicing as well as finding out how such a system is helping that society to survive (Ezegbe, 1990). When viewed against the backdrop of the methods or approaches, political science is vested with such parameters like opinion polls, mock interview, mock trials, elections and campaigns, holding mock sessions of legislature and so on which social studies copiously borrows from. On this basis lies their tiny disparity. Both

disciplines are indispensable and vital in sensitizing and conscientizing the citizens of a nation to adopt a political system that can create an atmosphere of openness, freedom, progress and stability necessary for national development.

Politics and Education:

The roles of politics and education in the society are indispensable and as such there cannot be independent and separate from each other. These inextricable phenomena are so vital in every society that one can operate completely devoid of the other. In other words, there cannot be an educational system without a political system operating it. In the same vein, there is no political system without educational system. Both exert some considerable influence upon each other and therefore the society is shaped and sustained by them. Put simply, there is no apolitical educational system and no educational system can be separated from political system that engenders and supports it (Ijov, 2015). It is in this regard that Nwankwo, (2014) opines that considering their societal responsibilities and objectives, education and politics are inextricably related. This is so because the policies adopted by any educational system are essentially drawn by the government in power - the political system. Ijov, (2015) asserts that educational policies are therefore those guidelines expedient both for political socialization and for national socio-economic and cultural development.

From such perspective, every government is conscious that to ensure the success of its political social and economic ventures, the schools must be involved in the promotion of the interests of the governing power (Nwankwo 1984). Invariably, the education system needs the support and patronage of the ruling political system, the public and other agencies of the government. This will enable the educational system and its operators to perform their functions or duties of socialization and training of the people. According to Nwankwo, (2014), no educational system can survive

without the financial support and protection of the government in power. He further opines that by having to unavoidably depend on government support and protection, education finds itself used for the promotion of political creeds and social views of the government and political leaders.

In the view of Ijov, (2015), politics involves the authoritative allocation of scarce social, economic and cultural resources to individuals, groups and classes. In the light of this, he quotes Harold Lasswell as stating that politics is concerned with "who gets what, when and how" and therefore, in reality, it involves the governing of men and women and spells out the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed, between the ruler and the ruled. In this way, politics should be seen as all activities that are directly or indirectly associated with the emergence, consolidation and use of state power. Okeke (2007) sees it as a civilizing agent and a way of ruling in divided societies without violence. Be that as it may, whether defined in terms of man being a political animal, the art of the possible of who gets what, when and how, the struggle for power, or the authoritative allocation of resources and values, politics has the state as its center piece. It has an abstract and comprehensive scope that makes it attractive as a possible source of laws of social life with emphasis on how resources are allocated by the system of authorities in the society.

On the other hand, one of the ways of promoting political socialization to achieve political awareness and consciousness of members of any given society is through the pursuit of aggressive and vigorous policies and programmes of education. Education is the bulwark of socialization and enlightenment to every society. The acquisition of education leads people to possess right attitudes, habits, skills and values for the development and sustenance of the society. No society can develop beyond the level of education acquired by its citizens (Ukejie, 1991). According to Peters (1973) and Akinpelu (1981), education is the 'intentional transmission of what is worthwhile' and the development of 'cognitive perspective' to enable an

individual fit in as a useful and acceptable member of the society. It is therefore vital that every society develops a system of education through which it can inculcate to the young and the adults norms and values necessary for the survival and stability of the society. Education is a process whereby the society inculcates worthwhile attributes of the society into its people to be able to cope with the problems and challenges of the society and contributes meaningfully to its well-being and development. Ortyoyande (2005) views education to include all the experiences and knowledge acquired through formal and informal settings. It is the process through which the society transmits its knowledge, culture and values from one generation to another. Therefore, educational policies and programmes that are functional and consistent with the political system of the society will justify the fundamental role education plays in political socialization of members of the society.

Conclusion:

There is no gainsaying that social studies and political science are important components of political socialization. Both disciplines have been identified as playing vital roles in inculcating sense of patriotism and national consciousness in the citizens of the nation. They provide invaluable knowledge for the citizens to understand the public affairs of the nation and how they can contribute to the political, economic and socio-cultural development of society.

It is in the realm of these subjects that the problems of our society are highlighted and how solutions can be proffered as well as give the society a sense of direction and purpose. These disciplines are of utmost importance in preparing the citizens for political leadership, civil service and expression of public opinion.

It goes without saying that the functional roles of these mutually interactive disciplines in achieving national development and stability cannot be

jettisoned. Therefore, they are very vital in instilling the feeling of nationhood in the citizens. Thus, there is a compelling need for people to embrace the study of social studies and political science in all institutions of learning to cultivate the spirit of cooperation and understanding, right attitudes and values for the overall well-being and ample opportunity for creativity and self-reliance of the people of the nation.

It is worthy to note that political socialization is a fact of the individual's overall socialization process of assimilating the culture of society. It ultimately leads to the formation of those skills in human beings, who in their capacity as the citizens of the society will be able to make a distinction between civil society and political society (Iovan, 2015). This will enable the individual to understand and evaluate political facts, to make political options and participate in addressing political issues as well as promoting the political affairs of the state.

Above all, political socialization within the context of the discourse is a complex, multifaceted process for forming and developing the political culture of individuals, for assimilating roles that render them capable of participating in political life of the society. This important process by which an individual develops his own identity, and manifest himself as active members of society has come to remain inevitable formative educative influence exerted by various social groups on individuals for overall development and survival of the society and its members.

Recommendations:

In view of the fact that no society exists without political system, the members of that society need to be properly enlightened on the operation of the system through political socialization. Based on this, the following recommendations are made:

- The society should attach greater importance to social studies and political science education because of their tremendous

contributions to the socialization of its members into the political system.

- The acquisition of political orientations by the new members of the political system is made possible by political socialization. As such, the family, the school, the communication media, religious groups, peer groups should take active part in promoting and sustaining it.
- Political awareness, consciousness and enlightenment of the citizenry of the society or nation should be encouraged to overcome habits that are harmful to the society such as bribery and corruption, dishonesty and lack of respect for constituted authorities.
- Special attention should be given to the social studies and political science education. The inclusion of these mutually interactive subjects in all levels of the education system is critical and crucial to ensure that individuals participate actively in the political processes of their nation.
- The government of the nation should realize that political socialization is necessary for democracy to thrive. Therefore, it should focus on ensuring that people exercise democratic decision-making to sustain democratic values.
- The young people and women represent one of the most prominent sectors of free and democratic development. They should be *encouraged* to contribute greatly to national life while in schools and in national service of their country.
- By and large, political socialization through social studies and political science education should inspire people to learn to cultivate and adopt the norms, values, attitudes and behaviours that are sacrosanct to the survival and security of the nation and its political system. Aside this, anarchy, chaos and confusion would hold sway and drag the nation back to the dark age of history (Egbule, Olori and Ewiwilem, 2014). Thus, the social function of

both disciplines should be seen in making the citizens to become better informed, patriotic, progressive and knowledgeable about their state, their rights, privileges and obligations to build a dynamic and stable nation.

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