
**DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: PANACEA
FOR BUILDING A PEACEFUL SOCIETY FOR THE
TEACHING AND LEARNING OF SOCIAL STUDIES
IN THE NEW WORLD**

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Abstract

Democracy and good governance are consequences of peaceful coexistence. These terms had become popular in Social Studies discourse for a while now. However, in spite of its popularity, the concept still remains pervasive and render fuzzy and ambiguous questions on how well its applicability has help the Nigerian's society, what it entails and imply for building a peaceful society. Consequent upon the new world, as we all know, the entire human society including Nigeria welcomed a 'new world' in the wake of COVID-19 and hosts of insecurity among groups in the land. The situation catastrophically affected teaching as well as learning of Social Studies, including the curriculum, instructional strategy and resources, learners' characteristics and assessment, school climate, classroom arrangement, and even teachers' competence. Its attendance consequences not only posed global health challenges and fear on human society survival, but also threatened the democracy and governance needs of most nations, especially Nigeria whose democracy was already

bedeviled by lots of problems. This paper seeks to contribute explanations to democracy and good governance, building of a peaceful society, the teaching and learning of Social Studies given the fact that education now have a new culture. It also x-rayed the role of democracy and good governance in promoting peaceful society in the new world. The paper concluded with attempts at chatting a way forward on how to overcome these challenges of democracy and good governance to pave an enabling environment where the teaching and learning of Social Studies would strive in the new world.

Keywords: Democracy, Good governance, Building peaceful society, Teaching and learning Social Studies, The new world.

Introduction

The health of the educational system in many nations can be attributed to democracy and good governance. While the absence or non-practice of these crucial values has been cited as the reason for the downfall of the majority of regimes. This is accurate considering the level of insecurity currently felt by various groups in countries with failed democracies. As it transitioned from multiple authoritarian regimes to the practice of democracy, Nigeria paid a heavy price in terms of people and material resources. The cost of the nation's failure to uphold democratic and good governance principles is still being felt today.

It is crucial to highlight that the terms "democracy" and "good governance" refer to several ideas related to the political sphere that have significant effects on education. A good educational system is necessary for a country to have a robust democratic government. Democracy and sound government are constructed and maintained via education. Alternately, democracy and sound government are brought about through the practice of good education. Lack of high-quality education will cause a society's democracy to collapse, which would result in ineffective government that could cause anarchy in the community. The current level of unrest and insecurity in the

nation is a sign of how poorly consecutive democratically-elected governments have treated education. Social Studies for instance has a greater responsibility as an integrated study to instill on individuals' skills, abilities and competence needed for democracy and good governance. Hence, the National Council of Social Studies (National Council for the Social Studies, 1992), officially explained that Social Studies is integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence and help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions as the citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (Edinyang, Unimke, Ubi, Opoh & Iwok, 2017).

Everywhere, the healthy goal of Social Studies is to promote civic virtue, critical thinking, social knowledge, and integrated ideas that are beneficial to society and reduce conflict, violence, rebellion, corruption, thuggery, and other behaviours that jeopardize societal harmony. In essence, Social Studies foster in citizens values that are consistent with democratic principles, good government, and peaceful cohabitation. However, issues like the Senior Secondary Social Studies Curriculum's non-implementation continue to plague the subject's teaching. Anywhere that teaches Social Studies, there is a natural tendency to favour society as a whole. In Nigeria, those in positions of political authority are obligated to any genuine member of the state to recognize them and grant them full legal citizenship, protect their lives, liberties, and property from internal and external aggression, act in the general interest of all citizens, make necessary social and welfare services available, and establish peace, social justice, social order, and social security by passing laws that provides for these things. These they carry out with the aid of democracy and the admirable work of wise leadership fostered by a rigid commitment to Social Studies courses. Social Studies course makes major contributions in enabling individuals to live in harmony with the society using the competencies, knowledge, and experiences they have gained to relate as citizens (Polat & Guler, 2020).

Social Studies continue to be a problem-solving subject that, when initially established, was utilized to address issues such as racism and inefficient leadership in America and social instability

(corruption, indecent dressing, and drug usage) in Britain. While also addressing the issues associated with nationalism in Africa, including racial, religious, and economic issues (Edinyang, Unimke, Ubi, Opoh & Iwok, 2017). Given the ‘new world’ therefore, would the substance of Social Studies continue to be relevant to solving the problem with social distancing, insurgence, abduction, politics, economic and education that has bedeviled the nation’ modern tenets or accepted system of government (democracy) today? The is the puzzle that will be solved in this essay.

Conceptual Clarifications

Democracy as a notion had long been considered by Abraham Lincoln to be “government as a project initiated and carried out by and for the people. Other common definitions of the term include “democracy as limited governance” and “rule of the majority over the minority.” Democracy is a phrase used in politics in three different ways, regardless of whether it refers to different parts of the same phenomenon (National Open University Nigeria, 2016). In popular usage, democracy is a system of power belonging to the people unlike other forms of governance; here, the community retains ultimate power or sovereignty as opposed to other forms of administration where the final say in decisions is reserved for an individual, such as monarch or aristocrat with a small number of members. In a formal sense, the word “democracy” refers to a system of checks and balances, such as the representative government of Nigeria. Here, there are three distinct institutions: the legislative branch creates laws, the executive implements the law, and the judiciary resolves legal problems for people or groups who break the law. The main determinant of whether democracy is present or absent in this country is thought to be the division of powers. Meanwhile in the final sense it portrays democracy in terms of essential procedures in which decisions are expedited: for example, popular election, a plebiscite or referendum where the opinion of the highest number or majority is taken as the dominant opinion, and the smaller number or minority opinion are subjected (NOUN, 2016).

Democracy is defined by Mezieobi and Brown in Mezieobi,

(2017) as popular self-rule or a system of governance where the enfranchised populace is in charge. It is a form of government in which the elected officials act to address the concerns of the governed. Even though Nigeria spent more than five years preparing for democracy, the first and second efforts at it failed, and even though we now live in a democracy, the political leaders have not yet learned enough lessons to enable the nation to manage a healthy democratic system.

The term “good governance” first appeared in the political sphere as a way to measure efficacy in the 1970s and 1980s. It then gained popularity in the 1990s as a number of developing nations battled issues brought on by ineffective leadership. To put it simply, the phrase is used to assess how public officials conduct and manage public affairs in a way that will ensure the realization of human rights, protection of lives and property, and equal distribution of material resources to meet the needs of the masses in a transparent and accountable manner free from the abuse of privileges and powers, free from corruption, and with due consideration for the rule of law. It is a word that sets standards based on strong political systems, institutions, and economy. Since nations that adhere to liberal democratic values have strong economies, institutions, and political bodies are frequently regarded as the most successful, this term sets standards based on these factors (NOUN, 2016). According to Sheng (2022), good governance characters are those that agree with minimizing corruption, listening to the views of the common man, accepting the views of minorities with kin attention, paying particular attention to the weakest or most vulnerable members of society, follow the rule of law and adhering to the principles of transparency, accountability, consensus orientation, direct and indirect engagement, responsiveness, effectiveness, and efficiency. According to UNDOC, (2019), one of the nascent notions of this concept with relevance to attaining the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) is stated in goal sixteen, which are – “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”. It aims at promotion of peace, inclusive society, sustainable economic, social with political development, making access to justice easy, building exclusively effective institutions that’s responsive to accountability”. Because

of this, the importance of excellent governance and leadership cannot be overstated in any society. Leadership is an art that aims to shape the behaviour of groups of people in order to achieve predetermined goals and objectives. Only by using leadership, and an effective one at that, can any society, domestic or foreign, achieve its political, economic, and social goals and promote peaceful coexistence (Effiom & Ukam, 2019). Therefore, while talking about excellent administration, democracy, which offers a genuine atmosphere for the display of leadership, cannot be disregarded.

What are conflict and disagreement? Is it typical for democratic societies to experience conflict or disagreement? And what constructive function can conflict and disagreements play in democracies, are questions begging for answers. The practice of peaceful conflict resolution distinguishes democratic governance from all other kinds of government and serves as a behavioural support for the principles of democracy and good governance. Conflicts of interest are inevitable in every society where members come together to share material and symbolic resources. The enjoyment of individual and group diversity in favour of a planned method of settlement is thus a key characteristic of a state. Although there are many other definitions of conflict and disagreement, we must remember that, as was previously stated, conflicts and disagreements in society boil down to the idea that “all societies, both old and new, consist of people or groups that come together in spite of their differences in terms of their personalities, socialism, education, economic goals, politics, ideologies, way of life, and national issues.” Conflicts, therefore is defined as a perceived divergence of interest,” or disagreement in the distribution of resources while dispute is a mild form of conflict anchored only on holding of individual opinion regarding a disagreement, a difference, or agreed goal attainment (Polat & Guler, 2020). Hence, the way each society resolves conflict and disputes must properly be in perspective because these goes a long way in the establishing of either a democratic, authoritarian or a totalitarian society.

In the past, African societies settled disputes by taking them to the family heads, community elders, compound and age grade depending on the disputes. Now in democratic society, one of the

hallmarks of democracy is the explicit liberty every individual has to take arbitrary actions to judiciary institution or law court to settle. However, due to corruption in these institutions and delay justice which seem like denial of justice people resort a lot to individual arbitrary actions like violence to register their grievances. This is not permeable nice for a peaceful society. It is in the light of such that societies (like African societies), and the international bodies like American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Rotary international and others, had suggested alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as: “Negotiation, Mediation, Arbitration and other hybrid processes (private judging or rent a judge, neutral expert facts finding, mini-trial)” for the settlement of disputes in the society.

How Would Democracy and Good Governance Work to Secure a Peaceful Society in the New World

If we look at democracy in society for example, we will discover first that society is where people (individuals or group of people) give up rights to choose violence or unconventional ways of settling disagreements and underpin themselves to that agreed upon by society. While, democracy is the tool that ensure the establishment of the sense of equality, justice, respect for rights, love, responsibilities and freedom in the settlement of disputes. According to Polat and Güler, (2020), these senses form an environment for the functioning of democracy in a society while these democratic behaviours in well-functioning environments become habits via education (im ek, 2011). Invariably, education becomes an important factor to gained democracy and the explanation of democratic life style to students. Meanwhile, Social Studies had since incorporated these senses, including promoting of civic competence, the knowledge, intellectual processes and democratic disposition that make students to actively participate in public life into its curricula. Therefore, in the new world, Social Studies will continue to rely on democracy which is based on participatory government by the people, voting and people getting involved in their community electioneering process by joining a charity group or a political group or a community group (peo.gov.au) to achieve a peaceful society. United States Institution

for Peace (UNIP), (2022) posited that democracy is responsive and responsible governance, that emanate from adherent to rule of law, respect to human rights, civic right to participation in leadership process and peaceful exchange of power baton through electioneering procedure. All of which underpins a peace-loving society.

For Nigerian democracy to benefit the teaching and learning of Social Studies in the new world, there must be permanent features of good governance as identified by Nigerians from their respective representatives. As such, there must be the present of: a ruling group or groups who must exercise government power in the name, interest and authority of does they claim there are ruling, with functional power sharing among these groups or institutions in the society – legislature, executive and judiciary as the case may be. Those in authority must be chosen in a free and open system of election and the ruling group or groups must be autonomous in existence in different sphere of economic, political and social endeavours. Also, no one group must be in dominion or control of the entire economic, political, and social rights of the other people of the society. All ruling groups must treat with almost respect the fundamental human rights of those they are ruling, there must be openness in the conduction of the affairs of the society; and above all, the ruling group or groups must be willing to accept criticism and then pursue government to express the wishes of the entire people (NOUN, 2016). In other words, democracy and good governance must seek to be inclusive of everybody as a controller of social, polity and economy in ways that strengthen the faith, commitment and corporation to reality of nation-building. And to fight monopolization of local, state and federal might by some so-called god-fathers (Erunke, 2020). By implication, peaceful societies do emerge only from collective struggle.

Social Studies and the Development of a Peaceful Society in the New World

Where there is harmonious cohabitation in society, amazing things happen. According to the United Nations briefing, (2020), given the

existing educational disparities for many of the vulnerable nations, world history had left an irreparable mark through COVID-19, causing the worst disruption of the educational institutions. Even after the epidemic, this learning loss persisted and undid decades of advancement. COVID-19 has a significant impact on how people live today, emphasizing social seclusion or limits over physical interaction. Digital technology and blended learning have been suggested as alternatives to traditional educational methods of teaching and learning, particularly in the area of Social Studies. Ideal instructional strategies for teaching Social Studies in the new environment are suggestive of adaptable learning, active learning, gamification, debate, activities methods, transformative learning, online live classrooms, and so on.

However, “the modern Nigerian state is one that is committed to democracy, which is a system of government in which the principles of liberalism, economic progress, national unity, and social welfare can emerge and be sustained via education” (Prof. Sam Oyovbaire, in Uya, 2012). Consequent upon that premise, it worthy of note to agree on why the overriding goal of Social Studies in Nigeria is “to develop in the learner the disposition and confidence as an agent of peace who live in harmony with oneself, others and natural environment with ideas of human rights. Indigenous Social Studies focused on developing civic competence, learning the virtues of cooperation, hard work, perseverance, courage, kindness, self-control and self-discipline, truth, loyalty, patience, obedience, bravery, dedication to duty, diligence, recognition and pursuit of one’s rights; which are virtues of peace that could be applied in a democratic manner and could impact positively despite social divides. Through the teaching and learning of Social Studies, the following democratic and good governance principles could be implemented in creating a peaceful society: strict adherence to the rule of law (absolute supremacy of the law, equality before the law, and liberty of citizens before the law); complete separation of powers (judiciary independence, the right of individuals to be heard, and Constitutionalism); and certain other key markers of sustainable economic development like accountability. The tenets of life with health, happiness, contentment, and greater economic, social justice, freedom of

expression, and creative support for personal and cooperative growth at all levels are found in peace (Edinyang & Boniface in Edinyang & Effiom, (2019).

Obstacles to Democracy and Effective Governance

Despite the enormous potential that “democracy and good governance” holds for creating a society that is peaceful and conducive to the ongoing teaching and learning of Social Studies in the modern world, there are a number of reasons why these concepts are still in their infancy in the twenty-first century, made even more handicapped by the problems of the new world (social distancing). The idea of freedom granted under a representative democracy is still influenced by the mindset of the past regarding what leadership actually is. Democratic leaders still refer to their constituents as “subjects,” just like previous traditional leaders did. They always take on leadership as a chance to oppress those who work for them rather than for the good of the group they are leading. and these have more positive influence on contemporary principles of democracy. Other negative colonial antecedent that where alien to African political institutions inherited by our African leaders from their colonial masters that had surreptitiously become permanent political features estranged to our democracy; and endemic to good governance are the problem of godfatherism and inheritance government. Some political leaders regard the seat of power as their constitutional heritage; consequently, they find it impossible to transit power based on competency but only based on godfatherism and godson basic, or parties’ affinity. As has been noticed, these are the mentality of the Nigerian leaders that subverted Nigeria’s democracy and are to blame for the brutality, tyranny, thuggery, corruption, and authoritarian leadership style that had since 1999, hindered or interrupted the Nigerian state.

The issue of religious and communal pluralism, which is a problem in Nigeria and has an impact on our national integration, is another. Collective mainstreaming of development has been delayed by the lack of cooperation, the experience of discriminatory resource distribution for the benefit of all communities, and religious

group intolerance. Government activities include the provision of essential infrastructure, such as roads, trains, bridges, airports, seaports, telecommunication, postal, and telegraphic services (Edinyang & Effiom, 2019). However, these facilities, particularly those that could improve teaching and learning, such as steady power, are scarce or dispersed even in the nation's largest cities.

Additionally, there are social restrictions based on mass corruption and widespread poverty. Most of our politicians characterize a lack of ability to run a successful democracy as they are rooted in corruption. One democratic government after another claims to eradicate the widespread corruption that exists in both the public and private sectors of this nation, but to no avail. According to Akpochafo (2010), corruption has a variety of effects, from minor to major, including violence, election fraud, and the alienation of many voters from the democratic system. As a result, many people had lost faith in leadership, and lower-level public and private office holders are encouraged to engage in corruption at their own levels. A high amount of corruption has changed the nature of the state, leading to widespread poverty and illiteracy.

The Nigerian economy also poses a significant obstacle to democracy and effective government. It was nearly impossible to create an autonomous, balanced, modern, and nationally integrated social and economic institutions in Nigeria. Due to economic underdevelopment, the country has integrated into the capitalist state economy, with class and social stratification (NOUN, 2016). Nigerian folks are becoming more aware of behavioural asymmetry and class patterns among leaders to the common people. People who control the means of production and the government are considered the ruling class, while others who depend on them are forced to live as commoners and peasant life.

Getting Past the Teaching and Learning of Social Studies Challenge in the New World

It has become more apparent that the government's policy regarding education should be geared towards these directions in order to maintain Nigerian democracy and good governance: the rediscovery

of or focus on the Nigerian people; decentralization of economic and political powers by allowing large groups of people to be involved in the decision-making process; and ensuring accountability, for example, for certain actions or inactions of politicians like projects that must be completed by a certain date. Additionally, consideration should be given to Professor Attahiru Jega's recommendations, who served as the former chairperson of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) that, "to maintain a sustainable democracy and good administration under the Fourth Republic, the three branches of government, namely the Legislature, Judiciary, and the Executive, must be restructured to make them amenable to proposed political and socio-economic restructuring". Democracy cannot exist without a functioning state where the judiciary, the legislature, and the executive will have to fundamentally alter or reform how they operate and closely conform to the principles of real democracy (government by the people), which must be covered in all Social Studies courses.

Conclusion

In actuality, a peaceful society is one in which widespread violence does not exist. People are ready to take their disagreements to the proper governmental, legal, or societal institution for resolution. This is because they are willing to follow such rulings, they can no longer accept people or groups who believe that using violence to settle disputes between individuals or between groups is the proper and most effective course of action. These resolutions will therefore serve as the right guidelines for the teaching and learning of Social Studies in the new world. Since Social Studies is a core subject that incorporates into its curricula the abilities for critical thinking, empathy, self-control, communication, cooperation, perception of change and continuity, noticing stereotypes, prejudgments, legal and political literacy, innovative thinking, problem-analyzing and solving, decision-making, and social participation that are required in the modern world, despite the COVID-related adjudication for social distancing.

Suggestions

It is suggested that government policies in the new world should permit Social Studies students to freely participate in the development and execution of the curriculum as well as in the decision-making processes in the classroom that would impact peace. Emphasis of Government policies in the new world must focus must be on sustainable development achieved through efficient resource management. The teaching and learning of Social Studies in Nigeria should be improved by paying close attention to the institutions (judicial, economic, educational, health, finance, and so on) in order to adequately and effectively develop in the people capacity required for the application of characters needed for democracy and good governance, conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace-keeping, and security. Improvements should be made to the school's physical infrastructure, including the roads, water supply, welfare services, and the availability of electronic devices like laptops, computers, smartphones, and the internet, in order to motivate pupils.

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