
SOCIAL SERVICES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY
IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined thoughts on Social Services for Sustainable Democracy; the needed democracy and the one we are in; how re-orientation of the citizenry will breed continuous selfless social services; a transition from the bloom's taxonomy lower order of thinking skills to higher order of thinking skills. It leverages on current literature and secondary data in line with the 21st century happenings. It revealed that most Nigerians are not served true democracy; the stereotype threats preconceived of inequalities, and how to reimagine true service to humanity in the right direction using the iceberg model. The study showed Nigeria citizens need to work collaboratively to deal with not solely immediate desires however conjointly the long term problems that form the idea of recovery. The underlying assumption is that significant recovery is achieved via a succession of very little steps, every of that is manageable and doable in achieving sustainable democracy. It was suggested that embracing collaboration, true leadership and commitment will allow for a true social service

where everyone plays a role in national building irrespective of their differences. All hands must be on deck through selfless services, positive mindsets, and culture of achievement for a better Nigeria. Nigerian youths should not only be too young to run but too smart to run.

Keywords: Social Services, Sustainable Democracy, Divergent Thoughts, Multi-Cultural Education, Positive Mindsets

Introduction

Nigeria's 20 years of democracy since May 29, 1999, has been practically invisible in many Nigerian lives. A nation-state of great resources, population, heterogeneity but yet, with the majority living in the fear of uncertainty and are not passionate to spend their quota to national development in the light of dreading policies characterized by social class, caste systems and ethnic bias. In no meantime, if people could look and live beyond their boundaries, shells and see each other as Nigerians first before cultural, region, ethnic, power and thought differences, would only allow themselves render selfless social services in their best regards which would enhance and revitalize the democracy of our dream. It could be done when the alignment of divergent thoughts are geared toward one Nigeria, one nation. "No government can satisfy me if it does not address the food poverty of Nigerians, the health poverty of Nigerians, education poverty of Nigerians, the infrastructural poverty of Nigerians, the energy poverty of Nigerians". Gani Fawehinmi (cited in Anagwonye, 2009:184).

The practise of democracy in Nigeria over a decade ago has not yielded much needed good governance. This is because democracy is practised in such a way that responsible and competent people are scared away (Arowolo and Aluko, 2012). National Human Development Report (2018) has established-without equivocation that the humanitarian crisis in the North East region in Nigeria is far from over. More importantly, it is a humanitarian crisis that is complex, multi-faceted and indeed monumental. Not only have more than two million people been

displaced and tens of thousands killed in the last decade alone, but the sheer destruction of the basic economic and social infrastructure will take a long time to rebuild. The impact of the insurgency on all the basic Human Development indices is colossal. As detailed out in chapter three of the report, the experience of people, especially those in IDP camps and the measures of well-being, as captured in the various reports and community surveys; education, health, the environment, gender, water, hygiene and sanitation – among others, have all worsened.

The word democracy is a term that comes from Greek and it is made up of two other words; *demos* which means People and *kratein* meaning to govern, to rule. “Democracy” can then be literally translated by the following terms: Government of the People or Government of the Majority. Democracy, as a State form, is to be distinguished from monarchy, aristocracy and dictatorship. It is clear that democracy can bring an important contribution in making citizens feel that it is good to live in a State, to express themselves freely, to know that the economy is thriving and security guaranteed. In this context, it is becoming more and more important that even different States cooperate and make efforts to develop models that are common to their States or to the continent (Becker and Raveloson, 2008). It is in cognizance with the unforgettable phrase of President Abraham Lincoln, “democracy is the government of the people, by the people, and for the people”.

Raaflaub and Wallace (2007:22) argue that democracy is constituted through institutions, practices, mentalities and eventually, ideologies. Democracy serves as a basis for good governance and peaceful co-existence of people in society. Good governance includes the capacity to formulate and implement sound policies, and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions. Good governance has been closely linked to “the extent to which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to improving the public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens, competent to assure law and order and deliver public services, able to create an enabling policy environment for

productive activities; and equitable in its conduct” (Sharma, 2007). It is when it is duly followed in this regards that democracy will become sustainable. The challenge then is to make diverse cultural identities an integral part of the national one. Be that as it may, democracy has been accepted as a model of governance, particularly, in developing societies including Nigeria.

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance report (2019) had it that when democracy is threatened, citizens all over the world have united to protect it. In nearly every democracy, most people want democracy to work, even when they feel that it may not be working perfectly for them. The world is more democratic than it was in 1975, following a global democratic expansion in the last four decades. More than half of the countries in the world (62 per cent, or 97 countries) are now democratic (compared to only 26 per cent in 1975), and more than half (57 per cent) of the world’s population now lives in a democracy, compared to 36 per cent in 1975. The share of non-democracies has more than halved since 1975 (68 per cent of countries in 1975 versus 20 per cent in 2018). In North America and Europe in 2018, 100 and 93 per cent of countries are democracies, closely followed by Latin America (86 per cent of countries). Europe contains the largest share of the world’s democracies (39 countries or 40 per cent of the global total), followed by Africa (21 per cent and 20 democracies), and Latin America and the Caribbean (20 per cent and 19 democracies). In Asia, the total number of democracies is equal to the combined total of hybrid regimes and non-democracies, while in Africa and the Middle East democracies constitute less than half of countries (41 per cent and 17 per cent). Social services are a range of public services provided by the government, private, profit and non-profit organizations. The basic social services include housing and production land; clean water and sanitation; electricity; education; health care establishments; communal cultural houses; transportation road and legal advice and consultation. When social services are fully enforced in a democratic setting, it will to a reasonable degree reduce inequalities across income, class, gender, ethnicity and location. The challenge of extending effective provision to populations often marginalized

or excluded as a result of these inequalities lies at the heart of efforts to reduce poverty and reach the sustainable development goals targets. As argued throughout the report of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (2009), narrowly targeted interventions may make inroads into particular aspects of poverty among specific population groups. However, without broad-based coverage that aims to redress inequalities and generate solidarity around development goals, these gains may not be sustainable. Social services in areas such as health, education, care, water and sanitation can enhance individual well-being, raise productivity and contribute to the overall quality of life. Such services enable families to care for and sustain their members and reduce both the costs and time involved in work and other daily activities (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2009). Furtherance to this, adequate provision of social services by the government, non-governmental, inter-governmental organizations and private and external donors will allow citizens to identify fully with her country, take ownership of meaningful living and satisfactorily enjoy the dividend of democracy and will be readily available to carry out their fundamental duties and rights. To ensure inclusive representative mechanisms, Governments and political institutions, with the support of democracy assistance providers, should work to make representative mechanisms more inclusive. They should continue to invest in the inclusion of women and youth while expanding efforts to include other marginalized groups, such as indigenous communities and people with disabilities.

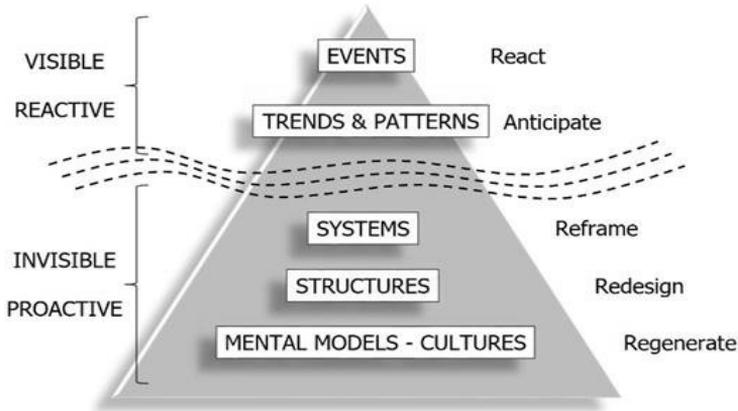
United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Reports on Social Development (2019) underscores the need to strengthen international cooperation for social development, with particular attention to universal and equitable access to education and health care, and to advance progress in the achievement of the objectives set forth at the World Summit for Social Development and in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report identifies existing gaps and challenges and outlines strategies to align international cooperation to support national policies and strategies to accelerate progress. The outcomes of the fifty-seventh session

of the Commission for Social Development are also highlighted in the report, which concludes with policy recommendations for consideration by the Assembly. Iloh and Bahir (2013) are of the view that Nigeria has a weak supported social welfare system for her citizens. It is against this background that this study provided and critically examined the roles of social services for sustainable democracy in Nigeria in the 21st century.

A Collective Responsibility for Sustainable Democracy

Democratization in Nigeria is pervaded by electoral violence, manipulation of election results and political participation constraints. These identified challenges have made it impossible to attain consolidated democracy that can, in turn, facilitate good governance (Arowolo & Aluko, 2012). Sustainable democracy is our collective responsibility. For John Dewey (cited in Micheletti, 2011), every person possesses infinite possibility, and with that capacity, there is also an intrinsic constant of personality that is unique to every individual. It is the exceptional, beautiful, unique, and eternal plan of inward identity that Dewey acknowledges and lays down as the hearth of a democratic society. The choice, proceeding from within, to 'become' the realized potential of who one truly is, and the chance to also do so, reach toward the zenith of ideals of humanity. Hence, Ober (2013) has contended as follows: if democracy is to be robustly sustained over time, public decisions must respect democratic values, while advancing citizens' interests. Democracy is a sham if meaningful decisions, leading to significant public outcomes, are not made by free citizens, secure in their dignity, acting as political equals.

Theoretical Framework



The Iceberg Model (Goodman, 2002)

The systems thinking iceberg model developed by Goodman (2002) is a model that provides a systemic view. The iceberg model is a systems thinking tool designed to help an individual or group discover the patterns of behaviour, supporting structures, and mental models that underlie a particular event. The Iceberg Model helps people and organizations to expand their perception of a state of affairs to check it at intervals the context of the complete system and not limit themselves to observing simply one activity or event. The Iceberg Model generally identifies four basic levels to situations. (i) Events, that represents the manifest elements and actions noticeable to us. (ii) The patterns of behaviour beneath this describe trends over time. System structure describes how the parts are interconnected to influence the patterns. Finally, mental models that support everything else within the system through a collection of beliefs, values, and assumptions shaping people's perception.

Implications of Social Services for Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria

Nigeria citizens need to work collaboratively to deal with not solely immediate desires however conjointly the long term problems that form the idea of recovery. The underlying assumption is that

significant recovery is achieved via a succession of very little steps, every of that is manageable and doable. We have a tendency to forever aim to require consequent very little step; we rely on another to survive an excellent nation and should tolerate one another for the prosperity of the state, a state that gears a desirable democracy and that fosters nationalism and patriotism. All is geared towards readying leaders of tomorrow.

While Nigeria has made some progress in socio-economic terms in recent years, its human capital development remains weak due to under-investment and the country ranked 152 of 157 countries in the World Bank's 2018 Human Capital Index. Furthermore, the country continues to face massive developmental challenges, which include the need to reduce the dependency on oil and diversify the economy, address insufficient infrastructure, and build strong and effective institutions, as well as governance issues and public financial management systems. Inequality in terms of income and opportunities has been growing rapidly and has adversely affected poverty reduction. The North-South divide has widened in recent years due to the Boko Haram insurgency and a lack of economic development in the northern part of the country. Large pockets of Nigeria's population still live in poverty, without adequate access to basic services, and could benefit from more inclusive development policies. The lack of job opportunities is at the core of the high poverty levels, of regional inequality, and of social and political unrest in the country (World Bank, 2019).

An Enduring System of Social Services for Sustainable Democracy

Multi-cultural education is one amongst others ignites sustainable social services for true democracy. This will encourage all hands been on deck in promoting sustainable development goals (SDGs). Nigeria as a country is characterized by many different languages such as Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Gbagi, Tiv, Idoma, Nupe, Egbira, Kanuri, Fulfude, Edo, Ijaw, Efik, Ibibio and many others (Ogundele, 2007). These diversify languages if harnessed well can lead to sustainable development in the nation. Akinjide (2012) examined that Awolowo sees the subjective mind as the seat of thinking and

reasoning while the objective mind is connected to the faculties of seeing, smelling, feeling, tasting and hearing. An illustration, if every individual can be multilingual, the 'we' spirit can be easily facilitated and in turn, promote nation building. This process will help in working together to build a stronger nation of unity within diversity (Amali and Jekayinfa, 2013) for a multicultural society where harmonious living is viable, the consciousness of everyone must be worked on.

Conclusion

For democracy to be sustained, the provision of social services must be ensured through the active participation of government, non-governmental agencies and the entire citizenry. All hands must be on deck for us as Nigerians to have a sustainable democracy that we hope for. We must see each other as 'one' irrespective of the cultural differences and affiliations of whatsoever. Individuals must develop a positive mindset, culture of achievement and we must together as citizens and government build enduring structures and systems that will promote the nitty-gritty of our dear country, and total acceptance of the responsibility for a better Nigeria to be ours.

Suggestions

The suggestions made to enhance the viability of this study are not limited to:

1. There must be effortless contribution irrespective of national differences through selfless services, positive mindsets, and culture of achievement for a better Nigeria.
2. In embracing collaboration, true leadership and commitment will allow for a true social service where everyone plays a role in national building irrespective of their differences.
3. Governments and political institutions, with the support of democracy assistance providers, should work to make representative mechanisms more inclusive. They should continue to invest in the inclusion of women and youth while

expanding efforts to include other marginalized groups, such as indigenous communities and people with disabilities

4. Nigerian youths should not only be too young to run but too smart to run.

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