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BUILDING INSTITUTIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURES FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract**

This paper examines building institutions and infrastructures for sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The paper being a theoretical analysis, it employed the secondary source of data collection by making use of available literatures. The paper identified factors militating against institutional growth and sustainable democracy such as lacks of capacity building, poor accounting system ethnic sentiments, poor remuneration and interferences from politicians are responsible for weak institutions in Nigeria. The paper concluded that institutions are the pivots where the development of the country revolves and when these institutions are strengthened, it will as well deepen democracy and galvanize equitable distribution of resources. It is therefore recommended that the government should ensure zero tolerance to corruption in all sectors of the economy.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Infrastructure, Sustainability, Political, Health.

## Introduction

Democracy has become a very important phenomenon in the world. Although it is necessary for the development of a country, some countries of the world are yet to introduce and practice. Nigeria, like other developing countries of the world is still struggling to develop and yet to embrace democratic values. It is noteworthy that it is one of the countries in Africa facing difficulties in achieving sustainable development. After years of independence, the scenario in the country remains disappointing. In Nigeria, democracy is totally misinterpreted and it is wrongly practiced.

The term democracy is said to have been invented by the ancient Greeks, and developed further by the Athenians around the sixth century BC in the Greek city-state Badmus, Mutiu and Aderemi, (2014) cited by Akudo (2017). According to Erunke (2012), democracy is a fluid concept that has received many definitions by scholars either in the classical political studies or in the contemporary world of scholarship. This means that scopes and terms of democracy were not well defined in the country. According to Almond, Powell, Strom and Dalton (2004), democracy is a political system in which citizens enjoy a number of basic civil and political rights and in which their most important political leaders are elected in free and fair elections and accountable under the rule of law. Dada, Udoaka, and Dada, (2013) saw democracy as a political method or type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political, legislative and administrative decisions.

According to him, it is a method by means of competitive struggle for the peoples' vote and this competition for votes is the distinguishing character of the democratic method. Ahmend (2014), democracy is "a system of elected representative government operated under the rule of law, where the most significant groups in the population participate in the political process and have access to effective representation in the practice of making governmental decisions, that is, of allocation of scarce resources". Held's (2006) posited democracy as "a political community in which there is some forms of political equality among the people, Badmus, Mutiu and Aderemi, (2014) in Akudo (2017) observed that this definition, in terms of political equality, is

problematic, given that most governments claim to be democratic and they were not practicing democracy at every level of their government. Viewing it from the point of emerging democracies, Plattner (2010) wrote that the advanced democracies may appear to be paragons of successful governance, but that is not generally how it looks from the inside, where dissatisfaction with politics is widespread. This manifests itself in contempt for politicians (especially the people have chosen representatives in the legislature), frequent outbreaks of scandal and corruption, and declining trust in political institutions.

Building institutions and infrastructures are part of social responsibility saddled with the government to providing vital social services such as education, health, promoting family values, economy, politics and promotion of moral values in the society. Building institutions are platforms where social interactions take place through the various activities of people. These institutions include family, education, health, economy, politics and religion. The outcomes of these social interactions determine the state of human society. These institutions are interdependent; change in one institution inevitably causes adjustments in other areas. However, changes in education by way of producing low quality graduate can affect the quality of service in the labour market. The attributes of social systems as outlined by Ottong, (2004) are commitment, agreement, cohesion, solidarity, consensus, reciprocity, cooperation, integration, stability and persistence. He further assumed that the structures (parts) of a system are interdependent, and that they work in harmony for the maintenance of the system. Every social system has a social arrangement and behavioural pattern with recognized intended (manifest) and unintended (latent) functions. The optimum performance of these institutions is dependent on the role power plays in creating and maintaining these social arrangements.

In the case of Nigeria, democracy has been in practice for over sixty years. It is a system of government that allows people's voice to determine who govern the affairs of the state as well as ensuring that the essential services are provided for the people. That is why the concept has been defined as the government of

the people, by the people and for the people. In Nigeria, since over 21 years after the military rule and the installation of democracy, the needed services that can strengthen and empower institutions to stimulate social development are lacking. Social problems such as unemployment, insecurity, poverty and corruption are becoming more amplified than the dividends of democracy. Arisi (2013) noted that good governance connotes essential pre-condition for sustainable development. He stressed further that corruption, poor control of public funds, lack of accountability, abuse of human rights and excessive military influence can bastardize democratic process and sustainable development. Abdu-Raheem (2017) identified the family, school, government, media, religious institutions and the society as agents of core-values Sustainable democracy is an aspect of democracy whose focus is to address issues of disparity, inequalities, discrimination, and oppression, marginalization of minority groups, insecurity, unemployment and poverty. Based on this background, this paper examines the building institutions and infrastructures for sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

### Theoretical Framework

Structural-functional theory is also called Functionalism theory, this sees society as a structure with interrelated or interconnected parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of the individuals in that society. Functionalism is a top down theory. Individuals are born into society and become the product of all the social influences around them as they are socialized by various institutions such as the family, education, media and religion. Hebert Spencer (1820–1903), saw similarities between society and the human body; he argued that just as the various organs of the body work together to keep the body functioning, the various parts of society work together to keep society functioning (Spencer 1898). The parts of society that Spencer referred to were the social institutions, or patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs, such as government, education, family, healthcare, religion, and the economy.

A structural functionalist was of the view that every group or society tends to fulfill four functional imperatives which include adaptation, goal attainment, pattern maintenance and integration.

**Adaptation of institution:** Every social system need to exercise some degree of control over its environment. The institutions are structured to continually provide basic needs or services for people. These needs could be in the form of provision of quality teachers, better remuneration, educational facilities in case of educational institution. For health institution: drugs or improvement of health related material resources (Trueman, 2015). Some of these services Include overall co-ordination, determination of policy (national norms and standards), Supporting national drug and food monitoring programmes, International liaison and cooperation and to promote the health of all the people by informing and educating consumers, industry and law enforcers. Within the purview of political institutions lies good governance through provision of basic amenities, sound policies and programmes for social development, protection of lives and property.

**Goal attainment:** Every social system set up goals and a way of realizing them. Educational institution in Nigeria is regulated by ministry of education. They function as state and federal ministries of education. Other educational boards operate under them. The ministry is responsible for the provision of policy direction as well as supervisory roles across different levels of education in Nigeria. Health institution is not an exception according to Trueman (2015). Here, ministry of health is responsible for setting up goals and allocation of resources in attaining them. The plan to eliminate polio transmission in Nigeria was part of the fulfillment of the goals of health institutions in Nigeria. In the same vein, there is National health insurance scheme to create opportunity for Nigerians to access health delivery services Trueman, (2015). Religious leaders' fight sinter religious conflicts by promoting religious tolerance, community development services through alms giving or relief materials to the needy. Through this institution, people's negative attitudes can be changed; peace and social order can be maintained.

**Pattern maintenance:** This variable helps in maintaining the motivation of individuals to perform their roles according to social expectations. Latency or pattern maintenance according to Charles, (2005) does not end in being able to perform the roles expected of people occupying certain statuses in the system. These roles could be performed just to satisfy the expected demands but with no moral basis to respect the right of others in the system, who also have roles to perform. Latency ensures that actors in all social system display appropriate morals and motives, and be able to control attitude that would lead to conflict or break down in the system.

**Integration:** Citizens of Nigeria who are confronted with poor socio-economic conditions due to communal crisis, militancy attack, terrorism, disaster, and outbreak of diseases can receive humanitarian services from the government and other development partners (Trueman, 2015). Other ways government can integrate the less privilege is through developing skill acquisition programmes that will be beneficial to the affected individuals. When this is done, it will help them to realize their potentials (Trueman, 2015).

### Contributions of various Institutions towards Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria

Institutions are the principal “instrument” whereby the essential tasks of social life are organized and executed when the structures that are put in place in the society are able to perform optimally, life and social progress will be handed. Since these structures are designed to provide social services for the well-being of mankind, the interplay between institutions and democracy is pertinent. The roles of institutions vary according to their types, which includes education, family, economy, religion and politics. Educational institution constitutes schools (formal or informal) and other educational regulatory bodies such as ministry of education and management boards established by law to provide essential services of developing individuals and equipping them with skills and knowledge.

Through education, the child is thoroughly socialized, Abdu-Raheem(2017) posited that preservation, dissemination and innovation of ideas through which graduates of different fields are produced in the nation Other functions of the educational institution are the improvement of the living standards of the people, development of individual personality, development of vocational skills, respect for one another and the law of the society and direct influence on other institutions such as family and church. The knowledge a child acquires from home is further sharpened in schools. Educational institution helps to inculcate norms, values, statuses and roles into people for their well-being. Norms as an aspect of culture is inculcated into the individuals in the society through education (schooling) to be able to differentiate what is right and wrong or know their rights and obligations.

Values here connoted behavioural patterns which are considered desirable and thought worthy of being pursued. Through education individuals are trained and ranked; this helps them to occupy certain positions in the society. This aspect of function determines an individual's role and status in the social strata. The economic institution is responsible for the provision of production and distribution of goods and services for the satisfaction of people's needs. How these goods and services are been exchanged and distributed determines the shape of the economy structure of the society. Both the large scales forces of the economy institutions such as the financial institutions and the activities of the people in such institutions have vital roles to play in the reduction of pervasive poverty in the society. This is achieved through formulation of financial policies that could boost socioeconomic conditions of people.

More so, health institution is another vital institution in the society that is saddled with the responsibilities of providing individuals with, social, emotional and physical needs. Health care system could be defined as the organization of people, institutions, and resources to deliver health care services to meet the health needs of target populations. There is a wide variety of health care systems around the world, with as many histories and organizational structures as there are nations. In some countries, health care

system planning is distributed among health agencies. The activities of health institution are regulated by some health agencies and government regulatory bodies such as Federal Ministry of Health, Donor partners, states and Local Government Areas.

Health reforms help in strengthening the role of health institutions in Nigeria. Health reforms commonly include changes in health financing and changes in health system organization and management. Regulation of quality of drugs that are produced, with other health practices is one of the functions of health sector in Nigeria. One of the health regulatory agencies; National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) was created in 1993 by Federal Government of Nigeria to regulate and control the manufacturing, importation, exportation, distribution and advertisement of drugs, cosmetics, chemicals, medical devices and package water.

Political institution is another social structure in the society, whose responsibility is to provide good governance through the allocation and sharing of scarce resources, taking good decisions based on the demand and the support from the environment. The political system operation is based on basic input, output mechanism which relates to the interactions between the environment and the results from the system. Almond and Powell in Coker, (1999) categorized the seven functions of political institutions under input and output mechanism. Input: political socialization and recruitment, interest aggregation and interest articulation while the output functions include: Pattern maintenance and adaptation, rulemaking, rule application and rule adjudication. For the above functions to be implemented, the arms of government such as the Legislative, Executive and the Judiciary have to handle the responsibilities assigned to them in line with the wills of the state.

### Problems Associated with Institutions and Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria

Educational sector in Nigeria has suffered a lot of setbacks in the past since independent in 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1960. Some of these setbacks cut across delay in payment of salaries of teachers, acute shortage of staff, lack of infrastructural facilities, and incessant

strike action by the teachers due to insensitivity of government to their plight and others. Eweremadu (2015) noted that corruption might be responsible for the bad roads, unstable electricity supply and the poor standard of public schools across the country. Noko (2016) observed that tertiary institutions have deteriorated to the extent that the place which ought to be an agent of purifying and shaping the minds of the next generation to become useful members of the society has now turned to the training ground for corrupt individuals.

Nwaokugba and Ezeugwu (2017) observed that a lot of havoc has been towards education industry by alerting that the physical environment of Nigeria institutions has deteriorated, the road leading to the premises are full of potholes, classrooms are without windows, doors furniture is inadequate and the available ones are bad on the same point Nwizu (2017) attested that the result of corruption on education is noted in the character of educational products manifesting in unemployable graduates, restive, youths, political thugs, graduate armed robbers and kidnappers. Osalusi and Oparinde (2018) posited that corruption in Nigeria education sector seems to be the most dangerous aspect of corruption in the country despite the fact that quality education is said to be the channels by which every country produces her future leaders, these will lead to acquisition of negative norms and value in the society. Osalusi and Oparinde (2018) identified plagiarism, falsification of research results, doctoring of academic records, examination malpractices and bribes offered the staff for a higher grade or bypass procedures. However, Abdul-Raheem (2018) listed honesty, patriotism, civility, obedience, self-reliance, self-discipline, kindness, respect for elders and rule of law as some of the positive values that can bring about promotion of the quality of citizens and the image of the country among the committee of nations.

According to Mattias and Limin, (2009) the scope of the health reforms implemented in developing countries varies substantially. It is useful, albeit rough and imprecise, to distinguish there forms into those affecting the supply side and those affecting the demand side of the health sector, that is, those involving the financing, management, and provision of services on the one hand and, those

involving the demand for and consumption of services on the other hand. The vast majority of reforms have focused on the supply side. Accessibility and affordability of health care services would include evaluation of the adequacy of the numbers of healthcare facilities and the proper distribution of these facilities to allow easy and immediate access to a medical facility for every patient who needs one at affordable cost. In health institution many procedures, tests, and therapies are used too often while others are not used often enough. In addition, few, if any, institutions or hospitals are free from medical errors, which can often have serious consequences on patients and even practitioners (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2010). Implementation of reforms also has effects on the healthcare service consumers.

Institutional structure is put in place in order to create a sustainable society. In affirmation, Ikerd, (2008) observed that the laws of nature must be respected by society and the laws of society must be respected by the economy. Nature's laws can be violated by society and society's laws can be violated by the economy, but not without suffering the eventual consequences. A sustainable economy must function for the overall good of society and society for the good of nature. Okowa (2016) aptly noted that a careful assessment of our attitudes towards the country, sober reflection about our actions towards the nation will certainly make it obvious that we think more about selves. Most times, the society hides under the ethnic division to carry out activities that will mainly benefit us as individuals, rather than the generality of Nigerians. Democracy is expected to be a government of majority rule or a representative system of government where the opinions and the needs of the various groups within a sovereign nation are taken into consideration. However, Ekeke (2012) Lamented that Nigeria has allowed itself to wallow in religious and sectarian violence, political leadership failure, economic crises, moral crises, corruption and security challenges. Ababa, Ugwu and Eme (2012) also asserted that inter and intra-political conflicts have become the order of the day. Corruption and embezzlement of public funds and altering of the rules and regulation of the country to suite the purpose of politicians in place of floodgate of the masses are currently occurring

while Alarape (2012) observed that the unabated of violence, insecurity and ethnic clashes are already threatening the century old aspirations of the founding fathers. Leaders and development agents have professional and ethical responsibility to observe, assess, interact and intervene with groups and their environment in a way that is based on theories and methods shown to be credible and in alignment with societal values Nnachi, (2014). When the expected roles of democracy are met, it will be viewed as the platform for cooperative, practical and transformative activity as an attempt to determine the nature of real democracy in a pluralistic society like Nigeria. Democracy also has the central role of guaranteeing the freedom and justice of its citizens. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure the rule of law is obeyed; dispensation of justice is devoid of delay or denial and security of lives and property. With these, the fundament all human right of the individuals will not be violated (freedom of speech, movement and worship). Cocodia, (2012) put it that “people inhabiting a territory cannot by themselves constitute a state. Until and unless the people are politically organized, there can be no state”. It is this organization of the society that allows for effective functioning of government, the existence of institutions, the creation and observance of laws and much more. Without such organization, the state exists as a chaotic entity and consequently becomes extinct or fails completely. Adetoro and Omiyefa (2013) posited that Nigeria government needs to provide for efficient economic, social and political cohesion as well as advancement in the country for improvement of individual and the society at large.

### Conclusion

The issue that concerns sustainable democracy Vis-à-vis good governance should not be treated with naivety but should be treated with seriousness. Institutions are the pivots where the development of the country revolves and when these institutions are strengthened, it will deepen democracy and galvanize equitable distribution of resources. These can only be achieved if government and other agencies can develop the skills of the people across the

sensitive sectors through building and policy frame work that will bring the desired change in the system.

### Suggestions

Based on the review of this paper, the following suggestions were made;

1. Teaching of value education at all facets of education for inculcation of desirable values in the students should be emphasized to promote good citizenship and uplift the image of the country.
2. Parents as agent of development of core-values should give their children moral and religious education to guide against immoral behavior in the society.
3. Government should embark on projects such as free education, free medical treatment, provision of infrastructural facilities like water and other facilities in schools and communities in general for quality living of the citizens
4. Embezzlement of public funds among politicians should be discouraged to build the gap between the rich and the poor.
5. Corruption in schools such as sex for scores, extortion of students by staff, examination malpractices, cultism, and drug abuse should be discouraged in Nigeria education sector to promote quality of education.
6. Provision of drugs, beds, specialists and other essential needs of the citizen for the promotion of sound healthy living should be given utmost priority.
7. National re-orientation and capacity building should be organized to inculcate the right type of national values into the citizens.
8. The government should ensure that there is anti-corruption crusade committee in education, health and other sectors
9. The government should promote public interest rather than personal interest that leads to corruption.

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