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SOCIAL STUDIES AS A TOOL FOR POLITICAL  
SOCIALIZATION IN CONSOLIDATING DEMOCRACY  
IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract**

Social Studies is an indispensable tool for the political socialization, growth and development of democracy. Political Socialization is the process through which people shape their philosophy about political activities. While Democracy is a system of government in which supreme power resides in the hands of the citizens in a country. The Political Socialization of the citizens of a nation has a lot to do with their political and educational development. This then means that good political socialization will lead to good democratic practice, democracy is an indication or a reflection of a developed society. Political socialization exhibit a significant role in consolidating democracy in a nation, however the challenges towards achieving political socialization through Social Studies for the consolidation of democracy becomes very high when one considers the inhibiting factors mitigating the proper teaching and learning of Social Studies. This position paper therefore recommends that the issue of political socialization should be taken seriously through Social Studies school programmes in order to produce future Nigerians that

will practice true democracy to checkmate the challenges and lapses in our electoral system that seems to threaten our fragile democracy.

Keywords: Tool, Political Socialization, Consolidating, Democracy.

### Introduction

Democracy is seen as the back bone of the political development in any nation, this is because it improves the quality of life of a society through refined politics and adequate representation of all interest group in a country. For people to participate and consolidate democratic systems in Nigeria there is an urgent need for appropriate political socialization of the young and upcoming adults in the quote “the leaders of tomorrow”. This political life of the individual is formed on the foundation of learning. According to (Owen,2009) political socialization calls for the exposure of an individual or a group in the society to the good values, skills and knowledge that will make them efficient participators in the political concerns of their society. Similarly, Mohinuddin (2017) posited that political socialization is a process through which people build their ideologies about politics and obtain political values throughout their lifetime. The family, school, age groups and the media are all agents of political socialization. The fact remains that the number one agent of socialization to the child is the family. However, the second and most important instrument of political socialization to the child is the school, where the child gets socialized about the political lifestyle of his/her country through such subjects like Social Studies and civic education. Nevertheless, as the child grows into adolescent and adulthood, other agents such as peer group, the print and audio visual media begin to influence the political value as well as attitude of the individual (Ngbede, 2005).

People are not given birth to with political orientation, but are expected to learn about politics and be socialized by the family, school and society. The political life of a person is formed through socialization, as the individual comes in contact with values and symbols of politics, he/she imbibes them and become politically included, socialized and motivated (Mohinuddin, 2017).

Political socialization is a method of impacting into an individual, the political systems and processes of his society, through classroom pedagogy and the individual personal disposition towards the political life of the society in which he lives (Owen, 2009). Just as Mohinuddin (2017) stressed that political socialization is a process through which individuals of all ages including adolescents gain political knowledge, behaviour and skills as they develop. It is a system of learning norms and values that are satisfactory to the political system of an organized society and it is transferred from one generation to the next generation. It is when the political socialization process of a country/society is functional that individuals can be initiated into the political life of such a system or society (Mohinuddin, 2017).

On the whole political socialization is a process, a political orientation, universal and continuous, it helps to enlighten and sensitize a people about the political systems, structures and processes for the efficient concretization of democracy. It grooms the young individuals to have and maintain a political culture and provides knowledge on political matters, as well as consolidates democracy.

Scholars such as (Hooghe,2004; Ingelhart & Welzel; 2005) re-considered the education of young citizens like primary and secondary school learners and have expanded their inquiry into a more balanced, in-depth research so that a wider picture on the need for political socialization have been revealed. According to them, young people have not been in the forefront of political participation like campaigning and voting the way they are involved in other activities, because of inadequate socialization of the political activities going on in their countries. Hooghe, (2004) and Ingelhart & Welzel, (2005), affirmed that the political socialization of young people is becoming more imperative because evidence on the ground explains that we may be experiencing the beginning of an era, where there will be an upsurge of young citizen's involvement in the general political affairs of the society. But this assertion of Hooghe, (2004) and Ingelhart & Welzel, (2005), nevertheless may not be the scenario in Nigeria. This is because the political socialization of young Nigerians has not been harnessed

for consolidating our democracy. This can be seen in the apathy and nonchalant behaviour of our youths towards political matters like voting during elections. This development calls for emergence of new democratic representation where citizens are expected to be knowledgeable about the true meaning of the word democracy and give their inputs to the political processes and politics in Nigeria, especially in the aspect of elections. To achieve this, educating the minds of young Nigerians is a strong force for consolidating our fragile democracy.

Political socialization is a lifelong event that should begin early in life; the formative year's in-between childhood and adult life are considered as essential during which the individual form the foundation of political values, behaviours and attitudes. When young citizens do not develop good political knowledge during these formative years, it becomes very easy for them to be influenced by undemocratic behaviours and attitudes (Alwin & Krosnick 1991; Flanagan & Sherod 1998; Sears & Levy 2003). Also social, political, cultural, historical and individual changes affect people differently, thereby causing generational variations in their patterns of political culture and attitudes. Thus the political knowledge acquired during childhood will be of immense benefit in adulthood when the individual can now take part in democratic processes.

Van Deth, Abendson and Vollmar (2011), asserted that kids who are in their first year of elementary school and have not known how to read, write nor acquire numerical skills can perceive political issues and problems. Consequently, Bartels and Jackman (2014) discovered that the period of highest sensitivity about political issues occurs at the adolescence stage with the apex period found to be in the interval of seven to seventeen years old. Hence, delay in political socialization is dangerous and will make citizens to miss out on acquiring good democratic knowledge, attitude and skills that can promote consolidation of democracy. Therefore the question which this paper seeks to answer is; how can Social Studies be used as a tool for political socialization in consolidating democracy in Nigeria?

### Social Studies as a Tool

The curriculum of Social Studies entails a great deal of political, cultural, citizenship and democratic sensitization contents (Ngbede, 2005), this curriculum includes a considerable amount of the three domains of education namely, cognitive, affective as well as the psychomotor as propounded by Bloom. These concepts in Social Studies can be sufficiently and appropriately utilized in delivering Social Studies programmes toward consolidating democracy in Nigeria. Atubi (2019) maintained that Social Studies can be the key to providing the needed political skills of young Nigerians to effectively learn the acts of participation in elections and democratic processes. This, in the long run, will lead to effective citizenship and democratic consolidation.

There is an urgent call for political socialization early in the life of Nigerians because of the present challenges facing our elections such as electoral violence and insecurity, electoral fraud and irregularities, vote buying and underage voting, militating against our electoral process and the “do or die” syndrome associated with Nigerian politics. This is so because 90% of these challenges involve the use of young people who are between 18 and 25 years, by the political gladiators to perpetuate their anti-democratic practices. These occurrences such as thuggery, ballot box snatching, violence and malpractices that are common scenes in Nigeria’s elections cannot in anyway help in consolidating Nigerian’s democracy of 20 years (Osakwe, 2019).

Dania (2010) maintained that in a country such as Nigeria where every aspect of the country’s economy is crumbling, there is a compelling need to reassess the educational and political sector in order to build up positive beliefs and values in our democratic system. This is needed in order to give birth to a new set of leadership that can restore hope to the nation. Dania emphasized that Social Studies is the instrument of change needed to achieve this laudable goal and objective. Social Studies content gives man a direction and helps to inculcate the value of obedience to the nation’s laws; democratic laws that can lead to consolidation of democracy are included in these laws. Dania (2013) also stressed that character formed through political socialization is a building

block of good citizenship and democracy, and that raising a citizenry of good character would lead to sustainable growth and consolidation of Nigeria's democracy. "Good character gained in school will form the twin towers of our democracy" (Dania, 2013: 24). This mean that Social Studies taught in school will lead to good character formation which can aid the consolidation of Nigeria's democracy.

Adedoyin (1994) demonstrated that the teaching of political values through Social Studies is necessary for obtaining an efficient and stable political system in Nigeria. Sustainable political and democratic values are guided by principles, rules, openness and a sense of purpose, these values can be provided with appropriate teaching together with the learning of Social Studies. One way of building political socialization of Social Studies students is by aiding their awareness about political issues in society. The role of the Social Studies teacher is the sensitization of the learners about the political life and environment in Nigeria. Since politics is a global practice, the Social Studies teacher should inculcate international democratic best practices in learners. This will help to sharpen and shape up the cognition and reasoning power of the learners, and in addition helping them to contribute and participate positively to the success of democracy and political governance at the appropriate time.

Focusing Social Studies instructions on national interest and values will also help in imparting the right political philosophy in the mind of young Nigerians towards national interest. Adedoyin (1994); Mkpa (2001) and Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2008) are all in one accord that Social Studies is the subject to beat when it comes to the inculcation of democratic values, national integration and unity towards politics and democracy. Social Studies is full of values that can be harness to develop coherent democratic principles and skills. However, the right methodology and technique must be adopted to get the desired result (Nwaubani, 2008).

### Political Socialization for Consolidating Democracy

There is no argument that political socialization is a powerful tool for consolidating democracy. Democracy means the power of a

people to rule, and consolidating democracy is an idea that many academics and researchers have investigated since the beginning of this dispensation 20 years ago when the hopes and dreams of Nigerians for a better life through the provision of basic amenities and infrastructures from the dividend of democracy was dashed (Mohammed, 2013). It became worrisome that 20 years down the line, there is still no vivid manifestations of good dividend of democracy because elections in Nigeria are undermined to the ill fare of the peoples wish. Therefore, there is a blaring call for consolidation; consolidation therefore means preventing a total collapse of democratic values (Linz &Stephan, 1996). Shedlers (1998) argued that democratic consolidation is a way of making democracy more profound and intense. Ademola (2011) in the same manner described democratic consolidation as a transitional process from autocratic and dictatorial government to true democracy that is meaningful to the administering of a strong and lasting democracy. Beethan, (1994) cited in Adeosun (2014) described democratic consolidation as an issue for nascent democracies who want to stabilize and elongate the lifespan of their democracies beyond just a few years to making them secured and resistant to oppressiveness and authoritarianism, in order to prevent eventual reversal to these forms of government.

Against this backdrop, this paper considers how political socialization can be applied to teach and bring up future Nigerians for consolidating democracy by deviating them from the present norms of “do or die” politics that seems to be subverting our collective will as a people. Hence Social Studies can and should be aggressively utilized to socialize upcoming Nigerians against the ills and dangers of electoral fraud and malpractices such as electoral irregularities, violence, vote- buying, underage voting, voters’ apathy and so on, and thereby consolidating Nigeria’s democracy.

### Challenges of Achieving Political Socialization through Social Studies for Consolidating Democracy

1. The Challenge of Conceptualizing Social Studies: the wish of the government to use Social Studies for national development through primary and upper basic schools is praiseworthy. But

Social Studies was introduced into the Nigerian school system with no definite understanding of what the concept of Social Studies means (Edinyang & Effiom, 2017). This lack of conceptualization has made it difficult to harness Social Studies for national development such as using the subject for political socialization. Also Ikwumelu (1988) and Ololobou (1989) in Edinyang & Effiom (2017) have also made reference to the fact that up till date, we are still in exploration for the definition of Social Studies instead of using it in solving societal problems such as political illiteracy, thus political socialization becomes difficult to achieve. Until the definition of Social Studies in the Nigerian context is understood by all especially those in the profession, we might not be able to actualize the dream of using the subject for political socialization.

2. **Behaviour of the Traditional Social Science Teachers:** This is another major challenge, the teaching approach of those trained in the other Social Sciences/humanities such as history, geography, government, economic and sociology. It has been observed that while teaching Social Studies, these people teach in favour of their particular discipline (single subject approach) (Edinyang & Effiom, 2017). This disposition will most likely affect the use of Social Studies for social issues such as political awareness, just as the inattentive and unserious way they teach Social Studies does not provide a fertile social ground for political socialization.
3. **Role of Government:** The role that government is playing in using Social Studies for national development and integration is pathetic; government plan on the accomplishment of the Social Studies curriculum was good, but ill-prepared for its efficient take off. For instance the irresponsiveness of government to the bad state of Social Studies education in Nigerian schools where poor quality and untrained persons are made to teach Social Studies is deplorable. This is because no matter how highly adequate the curriculum of Social Studies is designed and the available resources to teach the



subject, the effective implementation depends on making use of the professionally qualified teachers of Social Studies to teach the subject. Also, the Social Studies programmes of Nigerian Schools are underfunded and finally Social Studies experts are not called upon in the planning of Social Studies curriculum.

4. **Teachers Methodology:** Mezieobi (1990) & Edinyang and Effiom (2017), concisely made it very clear when they stated that the non- functioning of Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria is because of the unsuitable use of teaching techniques and methods. Teachers concentrate more on the cognitive domain neglecting affective and psychomotor domains. The interactive nature of the Social Studies require the use of inquiry, discovery and problem solving instructional methods that induces critical thinking and creativity, but this has been undermined, the confinement of learners to their normal classroom environment with no exposure to the school community and its resources as well as lack of self-improvement and resourcefulness of Social Studies teachers are all impeding factors against the use of Social Studies for political socialization and making it a far cry from reality.
5. **The School and Students:** The distinct position of the school in the child's development and using Social Studies for political education has been neglected. Similarly poor school leadership systems, absenteeism of Social Studies teachers from Social Studies classes and students unwillingness to learn are all factors fighting against the use of Social Studies for cultivating political culture in young Nigerians. Also inadequate funding of schools cannot help in actualizing and enhancing Social Studies programmes for political socialization. This point was made by Aghenta (1984:234) cited in (Edinyang & Effiom, 2017) when he said that "the money available is never carefully used ..... the money the government votes for running of schools ... the little that get there is normally wasted by those whose responsibility it is to manage the schools".

## Conclusion

Social Studies have been seen as a vehicle for political socialization of young Nigerians and consolidating democracy. It is a key for every individual who passes through the primary to secondary schools and can be utilize to open the door to good democratic and political culture through the learning of political values and attitudes. There is no argument that our democracy is fragile and need consolidation. The challenges in achieving political socialization through Social Studies need to be surmounted; this paper is a wakeup call for government and Social Studies experts to begin the process of proper socialization and involvement of our young ones to depart from the old and undemocratic ways/practices of electioneering so that our democracy can be consolidated.

## Suggestions

Based on the position of this paper on the need to adopt Social Studies as a tool for political socialization and consolidation of democracy, the following recommendations were made:

1. Social Studies should be fortified through curriculum development, teaching methodology and funding so that a great number of Nigerians can be politically and socialized reformed through the subject.
2. Teachers should be trained in methods and strategies that can use Social Studies education to teach democratic best practices.
3. Government should take urgent steps through the ministry of education, reallocate and employ Social Studies experts to be responsible for teaching Social Studies, in order for the aims of using the subject to inculcate the right political values and behaviours in learners to be achieved and for democracy to thrive in Nigeria.

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