# CONCEPT OF OMOLUABI IN PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS AND SUSTENANCE OF EFFECTIVE DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Democracy is a system of government that has gained so much acceptance than any other forms of government worldwide, Nigeria inclusive. This might be probably because of the general belief that it is people-oriented and brings great benefits to the people. Democracy has its own values, norms and ethnos that ought to be inculcated in the people for it to succeed since they are actively involved. Nevertheless, democracy in Nigeria has been facing challenges such as corruption, leaders' failure to deliver promises, among others, which has been affecting its effective delivery. This might be as a result of not inculcating the social values of the immediate environment in the people especially from childhood. Emphasizing the social value of the immediate environment which is encapsulated in what is known as omoluabi in Yoruba at the pre-primary and primary school level might be a good way of sustaining democracy for effective delivery. The concept of omoluabi places great value on the development and exhibition of good character, whereby it is used as a measuring standard for intellect and functionality. Thus, this paper discusses

how to sustain democracy through the inculcation of attributes of omoluabi to the pre-primary and primary pupils. The concept and attributes of omoluabi were considered. Conclusions were drawn towards emphasizing the fabrication of omoluabi at the pre-primary and primary classrooms to sustain democracy in Nigeria. It was suggested that conscious efforts should be made to inculcate in children social values that are culturally acceptable within the immediate environment which is omoluabi.

## Introduction

The system of governing nations of the world involves different practices which include democracy. Globally, democracy has gained so much acceptance than any other system of government. This was buttressed by Ijere (2016) who asserts that in the last half-century many countries have transited into democracy. It has also been reported that 123 out of 193 countries of the world recognized by the United Nations practice democratic system of government (www.freedomhouse.org). The general acceptability of democracy among the nations of the world might be because of the assumptions that it is people-centered and brings great benefits to people. Abraham Lincoln gives the most popularly known definition of democracy as a system of governing the people, by the people and for the people. People are active participants in a democratic system of government. In line with this, Becker and Raveloson (2008) describe democracy as the government that comes from the people; it is exercised by the people, and for the people's interests. It is described as one of the best systems of government because the leaders are accountable to the people (Hussaini & Hussaini nd). Despite the fact that democracy is widely described as the best form of government globally, it has been associated with some ill-practices in Nigeria. Different authors have mentioned some of these negative experiences to include bribery and corruption, the rigging of the election, the killing of opponents among others. Adagbabiri (2015)

identifies election malpractices, military coups, bad governance, majority tyranny over minority rights, political party indiscipline, abuse of power, constitutional breaches as part of the challenges that have overheated democracy in Nigeria. Egbefo (2015) also reports that some of the problems confronting democracy in Nigeria include, lack of basic public goods, the vast majority of the population is impoverished, and an epidemic of social violence has undermined security throughout the federation. Ethnic, religious, and regional polarization is becoming the other of the day. Omoregie and Idada (2017) add intra-party democracy, godfatherism, poverty, negation of the three cardinal elements of democracy, non-visible utilization of recovered looted funds by the federal government to the unending lists of the problems and challenges of democracy in Nigeria.

All these identified problems and many more have affected the delivery of dividends of democracy to the citizens. This had earlier been confirmed by Agagu (2004) when he expresses that democracy in Nigeria has not achieved much success in bestowing to the people their basic needs or even the requirement of participation in decision making. Neither has it been providing a peaceful atmosphere that can bring about development and the wellbeing of the people. This failure of democracy might not be as a result of lack of resources or expertise of the people involved as Lawal and Olukayode (2012) link the problem of democracy with a lack of democratic ethics, which is an ethical lapse in democracy. He went further to say that the accommodation of ethics of democracy enhances performance and facilities development. Thus when the ethics are missing in the mode of operation of democracy, failure is inevitable.

Democracy as a system of government rests upon a well-understood group of ethnic, values, attitudes, and practices (Civitas 1991, Lawal, and Olukayode, 2012). These may take different forms and expressions among different cultures and societies around the world. As Keane (2009) argues democracy is a geographic, not a global morality, Soussa (nd) submit in this view that culture and society needs to be considered when thinking about democracy in a specific context. Democracy has its values and attributes which premise on the culture of people involved because it is people-oriented. It connotes that the people that will

practice it need some character and values that will make them work for the good of all. This necessitate the need to consider values that are culturally rooted for the effective delivery of democracy. Every society has values that they place a high premium on. In Yoruba, these values are wrapped in what it refers to as omoluabi.

Children in their early years are the best to get the values of omoluabi inculcated to them. Sounoglou and Michalopoulou (2016) reiterate that the students can be a valuable training ground for democracy. Their educational preparation among other things could lay emphasis on the needs to evolve a set of values and ideals, which fosters a commitment to the common good of their communities, which encourages open and respectful debate and fosters accountability. Carr (1996) emphasize that in a democracy, individuals do not only express personal preferences; they also make public and collective choices related to the common good of their society. Achieving this might mean that necessary values and ideals for producing selfless people for the position of leadership in a democracy must be intentionally inculcated in children early through education.

Okiror (2011) confirms that democratic values must be passed down from one generation to another, sometimes through a non-deliberate process during the early stages of one's socialization. Social behavior, according to Sato-Linder (2017) is the most important part of development when children are small. This social behavior, for the sake of relevance and effectiveness, must be culture-based. This might become necessary because Mkwezalamba (2008) emphasis that the cultural aspect is extremely important in any democracy. Instilling social value that has a cultural aspect can be achieved right from the childhood. Childhood period is a developmental stage of life that gives room for building children into desired adults that will make a meaningful contribution to their immediate environment. Thus, this paper advocated for the deliberate fabrication of omoluabi of the pre-primary and primary school's children and pupils respectively as a way of sustaining democracy in Nigeria.

Concept of Democracy

Democracy is believed to be the most popular and the best form of government. Majority of the meaning given to democracy at one time or the other simply linked the form of government with the people. Citizens enjoy basic power and rights in deciding matters that concern them. It involves the use of voting to elect a representative into government offices. The citizens can use the weapon of voting to determine the fate of their leaders. Leaders can be voted in and out of the political office in a democracy. Almond (2004) describes democracy as a political system in which citizens enjoy several basic civil and political rights, and in which their most important leaders are elected in free and fair elections and accountable under the rule of law. In the same vein, Siegle, Weinstein, and Halperin (2005) see democracy as a means of the governance system in which leaders are selected through free and fair elections, with institutions that foster a shared distribution of power, and citizens have extensive opportunities to participate in political life. Adagbabiri (2015) describes the concept to be regarded to as a governmental system that involves the widest spectrum of participation, either through elections or through the administration of the accepted policies.

Power belongs to the people in a democratic system of government, it is essentially the rule of the people as a whole. This expression was fully described by the description of democracy given by the U.S. Department of State. According to this section democracy is a day-to-day practice where:

- human beings are regarded as equals;
- every person is respected;
- everyone's role is understood and appreciated;
- everybody has the opportunity to be heard and understood;
- everybody has the right to participate in decision-making on matters that affect their lives;
- everybody has the right to vote on issues and elect their leaders (Cincotta, 2007).

Okiror (2011) also asserts that citizen participation is paramount for the success of democracy. The above descriptions established the fact that people are at the center of democratic system, they are the decisive force in its smooth running. This means that its success and failure can be determined by the caliber of the people involved. Adequate preparation is required especially during the early years to equip children with values and attitudes necessary for meaningful administration.

## The Concept of Omoluabi

Every culture of the world places a high priority on the development of good values, attitudes, and character, although their area of emphasis may differ. It is believed that these values, attitude, and character equip the individual with what is needed to be functional and relevant in the immediate environment and the society at large. These values are wrapped in what the Yoruba refers to omoluabi. Yoruba culture focuses on the development of what is been called omoluabi

Omoluabi is a Yoruba word used to describe an individual that is well-cultured, morally upright and intelligently sound. The concept of omoluabi places great value on good character, whereby it is used as a measuring standard for intelligence, achievement, and beauty. Jamiu (2007) describes an omoluabi as an individual that could be referred to as the epitome of a 'thoroughbred'. Adeniji-Neill (2011) sees omoluabi as a person of honor who believes in hard work, respects the rights of others, and gives to the community in deeds and action. He further explains that an omoluabi is a person of personal integrity, one who is dedicated to the service of a just community and is dedicated to self-actualization. Thus omoluabi is a well-trained and well-skilled person that can render selfless service to the community.

Some attributes must be exhibited by an individual before he or she can be referred to as omoluabi. These attributes of omoluabi have been given by different authors. Awoniyi (1975) and Akinsola (2015) describe omoluabi to be a person of good character in all its ramifications. According to them, good character, in the Yoruba sense, includes respect for old age, loyalty to one's parents and local

traditions, honesty in all public and private dealings, devotion to duty, readiness to assist the needy and the infirm, sympathy, sociability, courage, an itching desire for work and many other desirable elements. Wande (1977) summarizes these attributes as oro siso (spoken words), iteriba (respect), inu rere (having good minds to others), otito  (truth), iwa (character), akinkanju (bravery), i]e (hard work) and opolo pipe (intelligence). Jamiu (2007) describes omoluabi  in line with attributes of honesty, decency, hard work, contentment with what is yours, integrity and selflessness. It can then be said that omoluabi  is the exhibition of culturally acceptable skills that will make an individual responsible to self, immediate community and the society at large. The essence of these attributes is to produce citizen that will be good ambassadors of their immediate family and the communities they represent. It is very glaring that it will take such skills as respect, honesty, commitment, and selflessness among others for an individual to behave in culturally acceptable manners, sustain democracy by making meaningful contributions to the society.

## Pre-primary and primary education and the development of Omoluabi

Early childhood education which is the umbrella name for pre-primary and lower primary education has been re-directed to focus on the holistic development of the child, every aspect of his/her life is been taken care of in the course of teaching, be it the physique, mentality and character development. This is because development does not take place in isolation but simultaneously. Generally, the purpose of education goes beyond the impartation of information and teaching of skills, inculcation of values also form an integral part of functional education. Burra (2007) sees the purpose of education as the one that strengthens character in the younger generation which is an answer to many of the problems that face people today. The absence of good character can rubbish whatever achievement one has accomplished either in physique and mentality because the character is the greatest of these (Dan, 2008). This character is what Yoruba called omoluabi

The early childhood period is a formative stage that presents a good opportunity to instill in a child the desired habit if a child is to display positive character. Early years are the appropriate time to inculcate those values that will help the child becomes a responsible member of the community. This is necessary because according to Nsamenang, (2011) tomorrow's adults are the products of childhood. Children are still malleable at this stage, they can be prepared to develop the skills needed to sustain democracy if values that will be useful to achieve this are stressed in their classrooms. Majebi (2017) submitted that whatever the change any society is aspiring for, it could be channeled through children. They are potential tools for transformation. Thus, if the society wants democracy to be sustained, the character and values that will equip the individual in achieving this must be instilled in them during the early years. Pantazis (2005) emphasized that democracy is not only hereditary, but it is a constant conquest learned and experienced. Beckley and Raveloson (2008) also believe that it is those young people who can help print their values in society. Thus the need arises to focus on preparing children with values and character that appreciated in the community.

Awoniyi (1978) and Fafunwa (1983) emphasize the place of character training in Yoruba culture, where attention is given to codes of manner and the concept of omoluabi (person of good character). The possible reason behind this is given by Ademakinwa (2015), who avers that the Yorùbaì people place a high premium on character-building to prevent their children from being referred to as 'abiiko' (a child that is born but not trained/ or properly brought up). The well brought up children tend growing up to become adults that will uphold what will be of great benefit to his or her environment.

However, it has been noted by Olubadewo (2007) that education globally is losing its cultural, moral and personal context meaning. This hurts the product of this education especially those occupying positions of authority. The same can be taken to be the present experience in Nigeria as a whole and Yoruba, in particular, considering the cold feet that have been developed towards the conscious teaching of omoluabi to the future generation as Yoloye (2009), Akinsola (2011) Akinwale (2013) and Oke (2016) had

proclaimed that the concept of 'omoluabi' is eroding gradually from our system. This might be what is threatening the sustainability of democracy.

No wonder Sweden has emphasized the development of fundamental democratic values in their preschools. These according to the report gotten by Sato-Linder (2017) these were done to give children a good start in life. The daily activities at their preschool are permeated by the five fundamental value words which include: respect, the joy of living, security, knowledge and social competence (Sweden Education Act, 2010). In the same vein, teachers in Norway are obligated to educate children within the frame of the values that prepare them for effective democratic life during the early years (Sigurdardottir and Einarsdottir 2016). CRC, United Nations, (1989) corroborates the efforts of these Countries by stating that education can be an investment for the future and provide opportunities for "joyful activities, respect, participation and fulfillment of ambitions" (GC14, para. 79). This means that equipping children especially during their early years with skills that will make them functional and effective members of their community is a fundamental right. The basis for a democratic everyday culture can indeed be formed in primary and primary schools.

## Omoluabi and Sustainability of Democracy

The active involvement of people in a democratic system of government cannot be overemphasized. The role of the people is central to the administration of democracy. In a democracy, according to Cincotta (2007), the opportunity for positive social and political change rests in citizens' hands. Beckley and Raveloson (2008) affirm that democracy requires a permanent participation of the citizens because contrary to autocratic State forms that require the subordination of submitted people, strong and responsible citizens. Thus, it is the form of government that is people-oriented. People play a significant role in determining who comes into power through the election and the system of administration in general.

If people are so needed for democracy to succeed, then it must be those that are equipped with values and attributes that can make them responsible and responsive in their immediate environment. Oluwole, 2003 believes that democracy is a theory that sets some basic principles according to which a good government, whatever its form, must be run. Lawal and Ogunro 2012 affirm that the growth and development of democracy depend largely on the practice of its ethics, ideals, and norms as they serve as the bedrock for democratic consolidation and sustainability.

Some of the values or principles of democracy were identified by different authors. Okiror (2011) identified tolerance, cooperation, and compromise as part of the values that democratic societies are committed to. Beckley and Raveloson (2008) also called justice, equality, solidarity, tolerance, pluralism, taking into account the minorities, non-violence, dialogue and negotiations, free community life as fundamental values of democracy. Oluwole (2003) refers to these values as principles which include justice, equity, freedom, liberty, accountability, openness, and transparency in government. These values are part of what forms the platform for democracy to succeed. This was confirmed by Beckley and Raveloson 2008 that declared that democratic governance, or 'good governance", is based on the enforcement of the fundamental values of democracy in the power exercise. Nevertheless, the values and principles identified might be more effective if they are culturally-rooted. Osabu-Kle (2008) recap that democracy must depend entirely upon the worldview of the people determined by their values, beliefs, orientations, attitudes, knowledgebase, history, traditions and customs which define them and explain how they think and act. The values in the immediate environment are wrapped in what is termed as omoluabi.

It has been established that democracy has values, morals, characters which determine its mode of operation. It can simply be said that the principle of morality occupies a central place in a democracy. It guarantees equity in governance if fully followed. Ntalaja, (2000) refers to democracy as a system that upholds high moral imperatives which accord the citizenry the right to participate in decision-making that adheres to their collective will and interest.

Lawal and Ogunro (2012) submit that it is conformity to the principle of democracy that will manifest in good governance, infrastructural development and consequently national development. It also implies according to Moss (2011) that democracy is a way of relating to self and others, an ethical, political and educational relationship that can and should pervade all aspects of everyday life. Thus means that democracy goes beyond governing people but also embraces a high sense of morality for effective delivery.

Kolawole (2004) believes democracy is not the absence of military rule nor it is necessarily the presence of civilian administrators, but a situation where political actors and institutions of the state are oiled in democratic values, norms, and ethos. Oiled in democratic values can connote the conscious effort of instilling in the participants the character of omoluabi. Mkwezalamba (2008) had suggested that Africa must do more to embrace the principles of democracy. This is necessary because according to him, a poor governance environment has been identified as one of the major problems in many parts of the African continent. Osabu-Kle (2008) suggested African democracy must allocate African values to Africans and not European or American values to Africans. This can be achieved through the emphasis of the concept of omoluabi at the pre-primary and primary school educational level. Ntibagirirwa (nd) linked the moral crisis the African countries are experiencing to the fact that Africans have shifted from their value system and moral values that go with it. Meanwhile, Islamia (2009) thinks that education can be used to effect positive change in society, he believes that social anomalies can be corrected via education. It thus means that if the development of omoluabi during early childhood can be given adequate consideration, it tends to gradually reduce these challenges confronting democracy and sustain it.

Democracy has three basic requirements, nonviolence, political participation and control, and political equality (Franceschet, 2009). These requirements can only be attainable if the people at the helm of affairs are those that are morally upright. The societal problems peculiar with the practice of democracy such as cheating, violence, selfishness, election malpractices and the host of others can be corrected by ensuring that the concept of omoluabi is considered in

the teaching of values to children in their early years. Achieving democratic values of public accountability, transparency, good governance good conscience, fiscal discipline, and due process emphasized by Egbefo (2015) might be an illusion if the individual involved is morally bankrupt. Except for the concept of omoluabi is emphasized and that early enough, sustaining democracy might be a mere wish.

Carr (1996) submitted that in a democracy, individuals do not only express personal preferences; they also make public and collective choices related to the common good of their society. In line with the submission of Carr, those that will occupy the position of authority in a democracy must possess what it takes to be selfless and upright which is omoluabi.

## Conclusions

Democracy is people-oriented. People are actively involved in the day-to-day activities of the government. This person can mismanage their involvement if not equipped with the necessary skills and attitudes that will make them function effectively. These skills can be more appropriate if they are rooted in the culture of the immediate environment. So the concept of omoluabiwhich covers the value and character which is expected of an average person from the immediate environment is believed to be more appropriate to equip children within their early years to produce adults that are selfless and upright to be able to sustain democracy. It can be concluded therefore that development of the concept of omoluabi in pre-primary and primary school children will produce adult that will sustain democracy

## Suggestions

This paper stands on the premise that the inculcation of the concept of omoluabi at the pre-primary and primary school level of education is a prerequisite for producing leaders that will sustain democracy. It is, therefore, suggested that

i.    Pre-primary and primary school children should be considered as a possible agent of change.

ii.     Social values should be taught in practical ways that will mold children's character and behavior towards the immediate environment and the society at large

iii.    Pre-primary and primary school teachers should be emphasizing the concept of omoluabi when teaching social skills

iv.     Conscious efforts should be made to inculcate in children social values that are culturally acceptable within the immediate environment which is omoluabi.

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