

**POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE: THE DEMOCRATIC PERCEPTION****Catherine Tuatongha****Department of Political Science****Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education, Sagbama, Bayelsa State, Nigeria****ABSTRACT**

*The study examined the impact of political science education in promoting good governance. 200 respondents participated in the study. The results were analysed using simple percentage. The study shows that majority of the subjects do not believe in legislative independence and other essentials of accountability and transparency in our democratic polity. Thus some key credentials are lacking and undercutting true democratization. Consequent upon this we have made some recommendations that can fast track the attainment of the needed democratic values and principles.*

**Keywords: Democracy, Political engagement, Accountability, Transparency.**

**INTRODUCTION**

In present day Africa the essence of political science education is undervalued hence our democratic experience is subsumed in several forms of underdevelopment violence, heavy fatalities and economic dislocation as fallouts (Boyo, 2012: 64). In other words, democratisation in Africa is yet to attract the much needed development of the people and even the leaders themselves. This is due partly to the lack of political science education of the masses and a greater percentage of the leaders.

The implication therefore, is an underlying litany of African's development problems (World Bank, 1989) resulting in a large scale "crisis of governance" (Ademolekun, 2005).

Perhaps, this may imply that the authorities vested with political power to manage the affairs of the nation lack the knowledge and breathe of understanding how to participate effectively in the political institutions as well as deal with the principles and conduct of government. Such personalities seem to be inept in the theory and practice of politics, the analysis of political systems and political behaviours. Corroborating this school of thought is the World Bank's (1989) assertion that "because counter veiling power has been lacking state officials in many African countries have served their own interest without fear of being called to account.

Implicitly therefore, both the governed and the leaders lack the intricacies of the relationships underlying political events and conditions and so the people have not vehemently, but in recent times as in Egypt and Libya and a few others demanded and insisted on accountability and transparency from their rulers. Even the legal system and the judiciary had not fared better on the prosecution of government officials who flaunt judicial orders while in the case of the rulers politics has become personalized and personified as major and huge family business and source of investment. To maintain this status quo some self seeking members of the political class engage in patronage, character assassination, hooliganism, violence and lately assassination of political opponents to maintain power. In order to cover-up their tracks such leaders control information, intimidate and disband or co-opt voluntary (World Bank 1989) in Adamolekun,(2005) and human right organizations, some clergymen and traditional rulers. Ultimately such an environment is counterproductive to the dynamics of a truly democratic setting and so cannot support a vibrant economy as there will be huge government spending and budget indiscipline. All these signify the lack of political science education among the leaders and the masses. Otherwise, the masses would insist on accountability and transparency from their leaders as well as credible free and fair elections and not get carried away by the few hundreds of naira that gets into their hands claiming that the money being distributed is their own and so they should collect it meanwhile the greater chunk of the money is pocketed by these politicians and their co-coordinators and cohorts. Some African nations like Nigeria seem to work towards a credible election. However it is still accompanied by misgivings. Such skepticisms may be avoided or reduced when the ruled and ruler ship are both exposed to training and retraining in the nitty-gritty of politics and democratic attitudes, values and principles.

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### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purpose of giving direction to this work the study adopted the constitutional democratic theory. It becomes imperative to explicate the elements and basic tenets of constitution in this discussion hence our application of this theory. According to Nwabueze in Mbachu (1994) constitutionalism is about the use of the constitution as the supreme and fundamental law to regulate and limit the powers of government. Democracy further embraces popular and equal participation of all in government and politics including its organization, management and conduct. Other very critical democratic principles according to Mbachu (1994) include a periodic free and fair elections to fill the positions of government; the presence of an independent and vibrant political opposition to those in power and some significant upward and downward social and economic mobility.

In any democratic setting, therefore, there are constitutional provisions that make the state to be self-accounting and so is previewed as the “sole guarantor of social peace” (Olowu, 2005) hence treated as a responsible moral agent. Also public officers can be held accountable for their actions or inactions as is found in the trails of former heads of government who perpetuate genocide or gross human rights abuse. Thus in his works, Olowu (2005) observed that political science experts like Cart, J. Fredrick had maintained that public officers be trained to strengthen their capacity to exercise self restraint and control in the discharge of their functions. This is where political science education becomes handy and an instrument or tool for the realization of good governance. This is based on the fact that the training process will expose such officers to the internal controls that would emphasize guidelines to enable them override party directives and some level of selfish interest that may be contrary to public interests.

### WHAT IS POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION

By political science education, we may refer to the process of training teachers to enable them teach students political science at the tertiary level of education or government at secondary schools. It can also mean the study of the science of activities which revolve round the decision-making process and running the affair of government or state. In other words it involves the study of the processes that embrace the concepts of power, authority, command and control of state affairs including the struggle of competing groups for power and authoritative allocation of values for a society. Political science education could also be conceived as the process of acquiring knowledge and the breath of understanding on the institutions of the legal government of a state.

Political science education from the point of view as citizenship education inculcates in the citizenry the knowledge and understanding of the structure of government, its principles, processes, political theories, democratic values, attitudes and norms that are essential for the development and sustenance of a democratic culture and stable polity. In other words, it is the study given with the intent of inculcating the knowledge of power and power relations among individuals and groups within the state and the international system. Again it is the analytic and systematic study of the acquisition of control and exercise of power by individuals, groups and organizations within the political system. To the civil servants political science education can expose them to the code of conduct or external controls that will enable them know that they are accountable to the public (Jabbara and Dwivedi, 1988 in Olowu, 2005).

On the part of the general public, education and specifically political science education is viewed by experts and political philosophers as a way to rejuvenate and strengthen the linkage between the political system and the citizens. More so the work of Kant, Dewey and Arendt in Biesta (2007), Mill (1973) and many others have stressed the centrality of education for democracy. Besides, the research of Beaumont et al (2006) and Longe and Meyer (2006) both concluded that educational initiatives with emphases on political engagement can add value to many dimensions of democratic actions. Among such actions but not limited to these, are understanding the relations among states and international organizations, their interdependence, co-operation, peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding. In the African scene, political science education apart from producing citizens who can help to promote and foster the growth of international co-operations, produce teachers that can inspire and inculcate in students the values, attitudes of Pan-Africanism, African nationalism and African brotherhood in these days of insecurity, internal and international violence.

In view of the above values or benefits of political science education a student of political science grounded in a bottom-up approach with emphasis on education for politics and about politics using greater interactive strategies especially an understanding of politics (O’ Toole et al., 2003; Hennes et al, 2002) as well as the principles and values of democratic governance, accountability and transparency of all the relevant structures will make an astute and responsible citizen for sustainable political action.

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This is our major reason for advocating for an improved level of civic education and knowledge through political science education to promote and foster political engagement. Power Inquiry (2006), Olowu (2005) and Mair and Van Biezen (2001) have decried the low level of civic education and further observed that many citizens are ignorant of the nature, capacity and relevance of the various modern political institutions and how they might utilize them to advantage. Olowu (2005) further explained that this is why most African states have been found to be weak and excessively centralized. Features that portray the centralized nature include the imbalance of power between the masses and the state; between legislature, judiciary and the executive branch; between states and their local government councils, field administrators; between the public and private sectors; between core ministries and ministerial departments and agencies.

**AN EVALUATION OF THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE**

Some researchers revealed that in most African countries the legislature are not better than mere rubber stamp agencies as a result of the single party nature that characterizes national governments making such bodies redundant (Resheed and Olowu,1993:20; Olowu,2005). These experts also observed that the ineffectiveness of the judiciary in African countries has led to the creation of tribunals and special courts that are known for hasty disposal of cases that are of special interest to the executive's quest for prolonged continuity in power. To achieve his permanent stay in office the executive uses all institutions and mechanism of state to oppress and intimidate any perceived opponent.

Economically, the legislature lacks freedom of financial resources from the executive and so goes cap in hand to the executive from time to time hence finds itself absolutely dependent on the executive of government. Thus subject it to abide by the dictates and caprices of the executive.

Another critical issue is the existence of "political apathy" (Scarrow, 1996; Mair and Van Biezon, 2001) among women and youths resulting in more masculine and aging memberships of political parties. While many young people do not vote or formally belong to political parties even though they remain interested in political issues but seek to achieve their goal through new modes of participation such as consumer politics (Pattie et al, 2004) in which they just get involved in rallies for the cash and material gift associated with such activities. Meanwhile research scholars have observed that educational intervention with emphasis on political engagement can boost several dimensions of democratic polity (Beaumont et al, 2006; Pettie et al, 2004).

The private sector seems to be at the beckon and call of the executive because government business has been found to be the biggest and "fattest cow" of all the businesses in black Africa thereby making democracy in Africa politically stunted and economically weak, fragile and unstable. Besides, the production sector is phased out in most African countries due to the obvious reasons of lack of enabling environment for the provision infrastructural facilities by government. Consequently, the national economies becomes too weak to generate the needed resources to support the broad range of institutional requirements for a democratic process (Olowu, 2005) which is why some political philosophers like Biesta (2007) and Baum (2003) have stressed the centrality of political education as a tool for strengthening democratic process. The right civic education through political science using seminars and workshops will equip the legislature and other government functionaries and become more knowledgeable about the basic principles, processes and values of democracy to apply existing mechanisms for the enforcement of accountability and promote transparency in government (Putman, 2001; Bourdeu and Passeron, 1990).

The investigation is aimed at finding the level of awareness of public servants in the norms, values and principles of a democratic process. The investigation was therefore guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the level of awareness of legislative independence?
- ii. How effectively do public servants utilize the external-executive based compliance in a democratic setting?

**METHODOLOGY**

The survey design was adopted in the study.

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### POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population for the study is public servants in some selected ministries and two tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A total of two hundred subjects participated in the study. They were selected using the simple random sampling technique.

### INSTRUMENTS

The questionnaire administered adopted the four- point Likert scale constructed and validated by two experts.

### RESULTS

Data was analyzed using the research questions posed in the study:

i. Opinions of public (administrative) officers in selected ministries and two tertiary institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, on legislative independence from the executive arm for critical administrative support to enhance their performance.

Table 1: Legislative independence from the executive arm of Government (N=200).

Facilities	Responses in support By direct provision by executive arm	percentage %
transportation	144	72
income	167	81
information	190	95
administrative support	160	80

Table 1 showed that 144 or 72% out of 200 administrative officers feel that the executive arm should directly make transport provision for the legislative arm to do their work. In the area of legislatures' monthly salaries and allowances 167 or 81% of the administrative officers agree that the law makers should depend directly on the executive. 190 or 95% of the administrative officers also feel that the executive arm should provide the necessary information services like library facilities, ICT, press and mass media matters for legislature to function.

Finally in the provision of administrative support like support staff and other administrative facilities such as library services 160 or 80% of the respondents expect the executive to make the provision.

2. Responses on external executive based compliance in a democratic setting:

Table 2 below shows opinion of public servants in the area of civil servants' administrative effectiveness as part of external mechanism to enhance accountability and transparency in a democratic process

Table 2: Executive based compliance Systems

Administrative Effectiveness	Response Yes	percentages %
Civil Servant be accountable to Minister/Commissioner only	180	90%
Executive Head of Ministry accountable to cabinet, parliament & electorate	120	60
Civil Servants to be anonymous & free of blame or praise	100	50%

Table 2 showed that 180 out of 200 or 90 percent of the respondents are of the opinion that civil servants should be accountable to the Minister or the Commissioner who is the head of the ministry. Also, 120 or 60 per cent of the respondents believe that the minister or commissioner should be accountable to the cabinet or parliament and the electorate for effective executive based compliance system in a true democracy.

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On the issue of civil servants' anonymity of public opinion is divided as 100 or 50 percent of the respondents feel that civil servants should remain anonymous and free of blame or praise for their action or inaction to be effective in ensuring a true democracy.

**DISCUSSION**

In the process of finding answer to the question on independence of the legislature from the executive arm of government in enhancing the democratic process the revelations indicate the following:

i. Most of the respondents do not understand that the legislature should be independent of the executive arm of government so as to be able to demand for accountability and transparency from the executive for true democracy to prevail. This is consistent with the findings of Power Inquiry (2006); Adamolekun (2005); Olowu (2005), who stressed the need to educate, train and retrain public officers (law makers and the executive) alike to deliver the dividends Of democracy. The crucial issue is the fact that most of public officers are drawn from the cream of the society who had at one time or the other worked as public servants and so if these individuals are grossly ignorant in the principles and norms of democratic process then the efforts at getting our political system right becomes an unfulfilled dream. The paradigm set therefore is to educate, train and retain government officials through political science education for a more responsible and responsive leadership.

Again the findings of this study are in line with the works of Longe and Meyer (2006) and Beaumont et al (2006) who in their separate results revealed that educational interventions with emphasis on democratic engagement can enhance and boost many dimensions of political participation.

ii. A good number of the respondents seem to be aware of the need to be accountable to the minister, who is the executive head under the executive based compliance system for accountability and transparency in a democratic process. It is very well known that the learner is intricately interlinked to his socio-cultural environment especially in the discharge of his functions. Hence in line with our findings the Nigerian Senate President, David Mark (2010) rightly observed in Adisa (2010) that legislative independence will entrench good government in our body polity through the essential functions of law making and oversight. He further opined that independence of the legislature remains imperative since it is the soul of any democracy so as to maintain and sustain the rights of the people whom they represent ( Mark, 2010).

**CONCLUSION**

This study shows that political science education for leaders and the led in a democratic dispensation is central to promoting the basic principles and values of true democracy. The paper has shown that some public servants out of whom the political class emanates are not particularly aware of or understand the principles and values that ensure, facilitate and promote democratic mission. Most public service officials do not think that the legislature must be independent of the executive arm of government in terms of the provision of financial and administrative support.

**RECOMMENDATION**

In teaching political science education a communicative action philosophy principle should be used. It should be student-centred emphasizing students' own knowledge and understanding of politics (O' Toole et al, 2003).

2 There should be interactive mass enlightenment, training and retraining of political office holders based on their own experiences.

- i. This should evolve with the ultimate aim of promoting democratic participation based on participants' own experience linked to their own participatory activities or inactivity.
- ii. Other areas of emphases should include democratic principles and values, attitudes of transparency, accountability in government through periodic and credible elections, good governance, popular participation in government, equality before the law, liberty and freedom of individuals and press, independent opposition and its non-suppression (Mbachu, 1994) and an independent press, legislature and judiciary.

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