

# Political Education: A Panacea for Control and Management of Election Violence for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Politics which is primarily a means of getting and using power in public life to influence decisions in a society or country is becoming more and more politically incorrect in Nigeria with the entrenchment of the culture of violence. Political violence manifests through bullying, fighting, gang activities, political thugs, killings of innocent by-standers vandalization and looting. This paper looked at the causes of political violence which is mostly attributed to lack of political education and democracy. It also examined prevention programmes that can help in the control and management of political violence. One of the prevention strategies is youth empowerment through knowledge to decide what is best for them and to act accordingly in fulfilling their own destinies which captures the true essence of sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Political Education, Violence and Sustainable development.

## 1. Introduction

Politics is primarily supposed to be a means of getting and using power in public life to influence decisions. Through the electioneering process people are persuaded to vote for a particular politician or political Party. For a man to make and implement policies that affect him, the stability of the environment in which he is reared is important. Currently, the Nigerian political environment is at cross roads. This is not unconnected with the issues relating to political violence. Consequently the country is experiencing difficulties in conducting free and fair election short of violence. The military coup of 1966 entrenched the culture of violence in Nigeria. This culture has many elements or components which include series of coups, state sponsored violence, religious crises, political assassination, activities of ethnic militants, communal clashes and the recent wave of incessant kidnapping (Popoola, 2005).

Most developed and developing nations of the world had long recognized a peaceful and stable environment as the most important factor for social economic development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For Instance, Gale (1994) defends the importance of political literacy in the United State of American, with its long democratic traditions by arguing that political literacy advocated the view that citizens must be so educated as to have an intellectual awareness of the inherently political nature of public life and their relationship with the state. In Nigeria the situation is different as not much has been done to create a conducive environment that is free from political violence that could facilitate changes and development that political education provides for public good. This paper therefore, seeks to look at issues of violence, political education and sustainable development.

## 2. Violence

Violence is the use of physical force to cause injury, damage or death. Horm (2003) defines violence as a behavior that is intended to hurt or kill. Violence may also mean exertion of physical force intended to injure and abuse. Violence is any act perpetrated against humanity and its laws to induce and inflict pain (whether) physical, mental, psychological and psychosocial, abuse physical or otherwise, degrade, dehumanize and belittle people and structure. Violence may not be physical but usually starts as an invisible line which gradually becomes boldly drawn by events for instance, fighting in elections starts with verbal insults which initially seem “too insignificant for the electorates to notice”. Violence could be classified into three types namely:

- I. Intra-personal violence
- II. Inter-personal violence
- III. Mass or social violence

Intra personal violence is a systematic self destruction undergone usually by people who abuse their bodies. It usually happens during initiation into cult and other closed societies (suicide falls into this category).

Inter personal violence is the most common in the political system. It may be an off shoot of the former. This may be so if a deviant person undergoing a systematic destruction of himself is not given medical and psychological help. He may transfer frustration, depression and aggression on other persons or party supporters. At this level, violence usually starts between two people and sides are taken on issues and this leads to proliferation of factions and if care is not taken full blown riot breaks out during or after elections.

Mass or social violence may be an off shoot of inter personal violence if not effectively managed as is the case of recent post election violence following the presidential election in Nigeria

### **3. Causes of Political/Education Violence**

It is difficult to pinpoint causes of ethnic violence. A general consensus however for political violence is the result of a society being unable to draw the line between good and bad choices and right or wrong moral decision (Ikoya, 2004; Rotimi 2005; Omoteso, 2010).

Other prime indicators for political violence according to (Eyam and Malosan, 2010; Omumu Tibi and Chenube, 2010, Fatoba, 2010);

- (i). Educational disparity
- (ii). Oppression of minority
- (iii) Negative value orientation
- (iv) Domestic instability
- (v) Early exposure to violence
- (vi) Poverty
- (vii) Peer pressure
- (viii) Lack of self esteem
- (ix) Negative cultural practices
- (x) Personality problems
- (xi) Negative role model and hero worshiping
- (xii) Cyber abuse/art
- (xiii) Misplaced transferred aggression
- (xiv) Conflicting social messages
- (xx) Ignorance

### **4. Political education**

Coleman (1968) had long viewed political education as a process by which individuals acquire attitudes and feelings towards their role including what one knows, feels and sense. The educational system is one of the units involved in inculcation and induction of attitudes and behavior towards politics which begins at birth although its imprint is most pronounced during impressionable formative years and continues well into adult hood.

Freire (1985) defined political Education as political indoctrination, which promotes human rights, participation and rule of law, accountability, responsible and transparent government. He went further to say that democracy, and political education plays vital role in advancing ensuring democratic process depending on the relationship between the state and society.

### **5. Sustainable development**

Sustainable development in the words of Tadoro (2002 pp67) is “the pattern of development that permits future generation to live at least as well as the current generation” while Repetto (1986) views sustainable development as a development goal in managing resources. He added that sustainable development is a development strategy which manages all assets, natural and human resources as well as financial and physical assets for increasing long term wealth and well being.

United Nation Development programme (1996) on Human Development report states that sustainable development goes beyond environmental issues; and that protecting possibilities for tomorrow also means not burdening future generation with internal and external debts and not bequeathing them an instable and an under democratic political system; such a scenario presupposes that there must be no poverty and deprivation. It require flexible and resilient social and economic system which are resistant to shocks and crisis that can safeguard the possibilities for the well-being of future generations and demands foresight and leadership from current policy makers since future generation do not have a vote or say on current decisions.

### **6. Control and Management of Election Violence through Political Education**

Parents and guardians should live lives that provide good attitudinal foundation for the young ones to copy especially in the area of love, security, acceptance and positive reinforcement. Parents should for instance encourage their children to speak up if they see or hear about something that is going on or that may put people in danger.

Related to this is the issue of checking the conduct of their children by making sure that they don't copy wrong models. For instance, children who are exposed to aggression would easily be found at the forefront of political/election violence.

The school administrators must be fast in responding to students' complaints, maintain discipline especially in the area of truancy, cultism and bullying as these behaviours if not properly checked can translate into violence.

Both parents and teachers should also check students' financial management, use of leisure, interaction and many other living habits to make sure they are doing the right things and are not exposed to violent

environment.

Counselling units should be established nationwide where youths with psychological behavioural problems can be treated. Summer (1991), opined that the violence and cruelty of conflicts associated with a range of psychological and behavioural problems include depression and anxiety, suicidal/alcohol abuse, as well as post-traumatic distress disorder.

Political assassinations in the Nigeria society must be checked and holding of political offices should not be seen as the shortest route to wealth (Oyewole, 2003).

Churches, mosques, political leaders, traditional leaders and the entire citizenry should combine effort to prevent election violence by talking to its members to be law abiding.

While dominant ethnic or political group may control the political processes such control should not be detrimental to the interest of the less privileged or minority groups as this is capable of generating conflict that can lead to violence.

Government responses during violent conflicts should be seen to be restricted to immediate actions to “restore order” and other conflict resolution such as mediation be sought to prevent the conflict re-occurring in same or other parts of the country there after.

### **7. Political education: the way forward**

Youth who form the largest demographic group and often show willingness to be involved in policy making should be given empowerment through knowledge. They should have knowledge on what it takes to build a stable democratic society through the electoral processes put in place, (Okwechime, 2007).

Political authorities should step up activities to encourage frank and open dialogue especially where the ethnic divide is particularly deep. Women should also be encouraged to seek elective offices in fair and transparent electoral processes with the young people participating.

Youth activism and promotion of social justice should be the key word to remind politicians why they are running and for whom they are fighting.

Youth programs across a broad spectrum of objectives should be pursued such that youths engage in civic processes, academic enrichment, and community based youth organization, youth development and empowerment. Youth activism when applied positively, will bring positive results and reduces political violence.

Democratic life as a learned behavior should be the root of political education in general and education for democracy in particular so that people would learn to nurture what they believe in and do.

Nigeria's political class must overcome their ignorance of thinking that one must kill to achieve one's political ambition. Government should check the proliferation of ethnic identities often engaged in power tussle among the rival ethnic groups.

Education should have as one of its objectives the inculcation of the right attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.

### **8. Conclusion**

This paper, shade light on political education as necessary to enhancing the electoral processes for a stable democratic system. The paper also identifies youth development communication, education of politicians among others as a means to enlighten electorate on the dangers inherent in violence and confusion and suggested ways for sustainable development.

### **9. Recommendation**

To sustain development in Nigerian the government should take necessary steps to prevent all forms of election violence and where they occur, the police and other law enforcement agents should try to manage the situation.

Political education should be given serious attention to enlighten the citizens on what it takes to conduct free and fair elections.

Educational system should include citizenship education in the school curricula at all levels of education to provide education that would respect the right of others.

Political parties should be given the responsibility of being accountable for any form of misconduct by its members during election

Parents, school, authorities, religious leaders, and community leaders should caution their members against violence.

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