Restructuring for Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria: The Role of Political Education and Information Communication Technology

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Abstract

The study examined the role of political education and Information Communication Technology (ICT) for sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The paper conceptualized political education and ICT for sustainable democracy. The paper adopted observation and secondary methods of data gathering. The paper argued that electoral violence and fraud that marred conducted elections in Nigeria was due to decades of military rule that militarized the psyche of most Nigerians, and lack of continuous political education to redirect the militarized mentality they do display in electoral process, to democratized mentality to sustain democracy in Nigeria. This is because the anti-democratic mentality of most Nigerians has created loopholes for politicians to manipulate the electoral process which portents a threat to democracy in Nigeria. The paper revealed that continuous political education through the use of ICT tools like social network sites will create political awareness that will enlighten Nigerians to deter them from electoral violence and fraud, and other related anti-democratic behaviour to bring about sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Therefore, the paper recommends among others, that the Nigerian government should liaise with advanced countries that have successfully built ICT in their democratic governance, to see areas where they can collaborate to ensure stable use of ICT facilities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Restructuring, Sustainable Democracy, Political Education, Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Introduction
It is no longer news that the Nigerian state was ruled for about thirty-one years of her fifty-nine years of independence (Amechi, 2018). However, Nigerian state is experiencing democratic governance without stop since 1999 to 2019 but the decades of the military rule have militarized the psyche of Nigerians to the extent that most Nigerians' behaviours in electoral process are questionable. Obiora (2017) reveals that most individuals lack the awareness to participate rightly in the political process in Nigeria. Therefore, the consequence of the decades of Nigerian military in politics as noted by Oni (2017) is debilitation of the growth of democratic cultures and values in Nigeria. Globally, in a democratic state, the citizens own and hold the sovereign power over the government, which they transfer to the elected government officials. True democratic governance rests on citizens' participation, most times through elections. Obiora (2017) noted that the consequence of democratic government without the people's sovereign power through elections is no dividend of a true democracy.

Democratic form of government has election as one of its attributes, particularly representative democracy. Elections are fundamental to the operation and survival of democracy because it determines the level of freedom exercised by the citizens in deciding who govern or represents them in government (Ajayi, 2015). Free, fair and credible elections lead to true democracy as asserted by Obiora (2017). One of the conditions to ensure free, fair and credible elections to enthrone true/legitimate democratic form of government is the continuous pursuit of an effective political education. This is because in any democratic society, democratic governance can only be sustained if the people do not show apathy to the democratic system.

Political education and Information Communication Technology (ICT) are like two sides of a coin, they are inseparable if

political education is needed to be very effective and wide spread to the electorate/vote in order to avert political apathy and other related electoral fraud. Therefore, political education will be more effective through the use of various ICT tools like social network sites: facebook, whatsapp, skype, instagram, instant messaging etc to deepen and sustain democracy in a state. Nigeria federal government recognizes the usefulness of ICT in section 22 of the 1999 constitution as amended, just as section 153 of the aforementioned constitution and section 154 of the Electoral Act of 2010 as amended mandated Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct democratic enlightenment to enhance its functions towards (authors emphasis) the reverse of the militarization of Nigerians psyche to the appreciation of democratic cultures and values for sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Unfortunately, despite all these recognitions, political education is being conducted few months to elections by political parties and Nigerian government. Political education ought to have been conducted continuously through various ICT tools as aforementioned to create political awareness and enlighten Nigerians of their electoral rights in all seasons. The failure of continuous democratic enlightenment has caused most Nigerians democratic ignorance, while enjoying the display of anti-democratic military mentality in electoral process. Someone may be highly educated but know not his or her electoral rights. The consequences of seasonal political education political education are selling and buying of votes, electoral violence, stuffing and snatching of ballot boxes, political apathy and other electoral fraud, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 (even 2019) elections conducted could be said to have consolidated democracy but that was never the case as they were marred by electoral violence (Obiora, 2017; Ogbe, Mgbonyebi and Ejovi, 2015).

In Nigeria, it has been observed among others things, that poor seasonal democratic enlightenment has caused many Nigerians

electoral illiteracy and political apathy which create opportunities for Nigerian politicians to indulge in electoral fraud before, during and post-election(s). This anti-democratic situation poses a threat to sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Information Communication Technology (ICT) possesses various avenues through which political education can be transmitted to Nigerians across all times/seasons. Therefore, the paper adopted observation and secondary methods of inquiry to examine the various ways ICT can aid political education to deepen and sustain democracy in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification
Democracy
Democracy is a form of governance. Ntalaja (2002) opines that democracy is a form of governance that supports and encourages moral and accord the people the right to participate in decision-making that concerns their collective will and interest. Giddens (1996), Asua and Udofia (2016) see democracy as a government that allows the citizens to participate in political decision-making as well as to elect their representatives to govern them for a specified period of time. Thus, the paper sees democracy as a form of government that involves the transfer of people's sovereign power via elections to the elected to form a government as well as to legitimise the exercise of governmental control of the formed government over the people.

Sustainable Democracy
Sustainable democracy is an act of protecting and promoting the electoral rights of the people, democratic culture and values in a society. It is the process of development of all aspects of democracy and healthy democratic atmosphere for the interest of present and future generations. Sustainable democracy implies thinking of the approach to resolve the root cause(s) of anti-democratic behaviour by collaborating Information Communication Technology (ICT) and

political education for the enlightenment of citizens on democratic culture and values to keep a healthy democratic practice in a society. Therefore, sustainable democracy is a systematic process of changing the orientation and attitude of citizens and institutions of governance through continuous political education that will impact positively on democracy in a society.

Election

Election is an avenue created for people to freely choose those that they wish to govern them in a place. Dunmoye (2012), Obasi and Erondu (2012) see election as the process of choosing a qualified person or persons to occupy certain office or offices by vote. Obikeze and Obi (2004) opine that through election; people of a country, union or organization choose and exercise some degree of control over their representatives. Also, Obi and Uzor (2017), posit that election is an orderly means of changing governments, which make the people determinants of who occupies offices especially in elections. Hence election is a procedure for choosing those that will occupy governmental office(s) and govern in accordance with the stated law of the land. It gives an opportunity to citizens to express their views on leading political questions, who they desire to govern and how they wish to be governed. Election is a medium to check the excesses of government and to test the acceptance or popularity of existing government.

Electoral Rights of the People (voters)

Electoral rights of the voters are those rights Nigerians are lawfully entitled to without fear of prosecution or any form of hindrance. Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)(n.d) identified the electoral rights of voters as follows;
  1. Right of every qualified person to register to vote
  2. Right to vote and be voted for if qualified

3. Right to recall an elected representative in a legislature house
4. Right to secrecy when voting
5. Right to attend rallies and campaigns of political parties and candidates
6. Right to information about election/political education
7. Right to defend their vote without engaging in violence.

Information Communication Technology (ICT)
ICT refers to technology, services and applications used in the process of communication. The ICT has made the world a global village due to internet service connectivity. Williams and Sawyer (2015) see ICT as a general term that describes any technology that helps to produce, manipulate, store, communicate and disseminate information. In his own contribution, Iwu (2009) opines that ICT is the use of computer-based information systems and communication systems to process, solve and transmit data. Ogaga (2018) sees the concept of ICT in generic terms as technologies that are used for collecting, storing, editing, passing of information in various forms. She further noted that ICT covers the range of computers telecommunication and networking technologies involved in the transfer and process of information. Therefore, ICT covers any product that can store, retrieve, manipulate, transmit or receive information electronically in a digital form.

Political Education and the Safety of Democratic Governance in Nigeria
In a democratic state, the electorate/voters are central to the emergence of legitimate rulers. The voters must know their rights and roles in the quest to make electoral process credible. In Nigeria, as it has been observed that apart from poverty and corruption, political apathy and poor knowledge of electoral process have created loopholes for politicians to manipulate the electoral process. This

trend of manipulations of electoral process could be attributed to the voters' poor knowledge of their electoral rights, which politicians capitalize on with impunity and buy votes from the people cheaply in their favour.

The successive elections conducted since 1999 to 2019 that were marred with electoral violence and fraud could not be said to have consolidated democracy because the situation portends a threat to sustainable democracy in Nigeria. Predominant issues of electoral violence and fraud ranging from ballot box snatching, stuffing/destruction, thuggery, destruction of lives and properties, falsification of election figures among others are threat to safety of democracy in Nigeria. Functional and sustainable democratic culture can only be deepened and strengthened by continuous political education through Information Technology Communication (ICT) that has the capacity to reach wide audience across the country.

Benefits of Political Education

Omare (1999), Obike (2003), Yusuf (2005) and Agidi (2014) identified the following as the benefits of political education:

- ➢ Political education trains the minds of people towards what is required for stable and enduring democracy.
- ➢ It could serve as an instrument to bring about desirable positive change in a country that values orientation.
- ➢ It also teaches attitudes and values in current affairs and the ways of democracy which include democratic ideas, skills and techniques required for democratic actions.
- ➢ It inculcates national moral values and develops a truly patriotic citizen whose consciousness will transcend its ethnic boundary, produce and educate citizens who knows their duties to their country.

Political education also has the following benefits as it relates to electoral process;

➢ The electorate (voter) will know the power of his vote
➢ It offers the electorate the advantage of making an informed choice
➢ Reduces the cases of rejected votes
➢ It enhances popular and quality participation in all electoral activities
➢ It reduces the level of material and monetary inducements from politicians
➢ Reduces the incidence of electoral violence, litigation, loss of man, money and materials.
➢ It makes the electorate to know their power of recall over non-performing elected representatives
➢ It brings about culture of self-confidence and responsible behaviour among the electorate
➢ Political education ensures an acceptable election by the citizens and the world.

Theoretical Framework
The study adopted technological determinism theory that was coined by Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) which says that "media technology shapes how we as individuals in a society think, feel, act and how our society operates as we move from one technological age to another" (Gege, 2016). The theory emphasizes that the messages people receive through the current technology that is available influence the way we learn, feel and think. Therefore, as apply in this study, the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in political education will not only facilitates the speed of message sent, it will also aid its continuous sending to redirect the attitudinal political apathy and other military mentality of Nigerians display in electoral process to democratized mentality to sustain democracy in Nigeria.

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ICT in political education will make Nigerians to think, feel and act positively in electoral process because continuous messages will not only educate Nigerians, but will also help them to see ill of political violence, refrain from it and take the right political postures about issues and policies.

Conceptualizing Political Education and Information Communication Technology (ICT) for Sustainable Democracy

Political education can be referred to as informative programme aimed at political socialization towards mobilizing the people for better understanding of democratic culture values, and its sustainability. Mato (2010) opines that political education is one of the core functions of political parties. Mato (2010) views political education from two perspectives; one as a means through which a political party educates its members on the weakness or strength of a programme or otherwise, and secondly, as a vehicle of seeking and winning power.

Moreso, Olaniyi (2017) argued that during election period, political education usually takes the form of voter education. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) (2005) explains voter education as a programme centered on the electoral rights and responsibilities of the people of voting age. Therefore, political education aims at enhancing the understanding of electoral principles and procedures that could lead to true democracy and its sustainability. Political education focuses on electoral aspects by educating the citizens on the imperative of their rights and responsibilities in elections, which devoid of electoral violence and fraud for safety of democracy in practice. This is because electoral violence and fraud are anti-democratic practices which can lead to military intervention in politics to rescue the situation in pretext as it was recorded in the first republic.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is a vehicle to political education for its mission to be accomplished in a democratic society. ICT is a medium of conveying informative messages to targeted audience via its various social network sites. Therefore, ICT and political education are inseparable for effective electoral enlightenment. The importance of ICT to political activities has shown itself in areas of voter card registration and Card Reader Machines among others. Orgadi (2009) asserts that if various agencies like political educators have proper information technology infrastructures in place for the purpose of gathering, sharing and disseminating information, and adequate surveillance equipment, the question of vague democratic sustainability will not be a challenge to democratic state(s). Olaniyi (2017) who sees political education as voter education and Iwu (2006), who interprets ICT as the use of computer-based information gadgets to solve, transmit and process data, clarify the fact that if ICT facilities are well installed and used in Nigeria, it will bring about sustainable democratic governance. This is because, it has various avenues that makes it possess wider coverage to enlighten people across the country to avoid electoral fraud and violence that threatens democracy in Nigeria. This is why, Jankowski (2000) notes that if ICT is allowed to contribute to educational political process, it will be seen as ordered and cumulative that is a combined effort towards deepening and sustaining democracy in a society. Periodic political education cannot aid, deepen and sustain democracy in Nigeria due to the threat of electoral fraud and violence. So, continuous political education through the use of ICT becomes imperative.

Possible Obstacles to Effective Use of ICT in Political Education in Nigeria
1. Inadequate ICT infrastructural facilities
2. Epileptic power supply

3. Lack of high low speed internet connectivity
4. Lack of inadequate trained main power with ICT skills
5. Hacking of sites
6. Lack of technical know-how for the maintenance of both hard and software components of ICT equipment
7. Voter access to ICT facilities technology
8. Voter ICT ability to operate ICT facilities

ICT and Political Education for Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria

Over the years, ICT has played a great role in different human endeavours; ranging from education, governance, financial transaction, medicine, aviation among others, which have alleviated man from various crude life style and brought about digital divide (Ojie, 2016), that is, from the era of manual to computer era. In Nigeria, people need political/voter education in order to participate rightly in electoral process because as noted by Obiora (2017), people do not participate rightly because they lack political awareness. In a way to proffer solution(s) to the Obiora observation, Oates (2003) assertion is remembered. Oates (2003) asserts that ICT has the potential to re-invigorate citizen's political participation and democratic process. He further noted that when civil society, electorate, important stakeholders and future voters are adequately prepared for the use of ICT in democratic process, it will deepen and sustain democracy in a society, like Nigeria.

ICT has various avenues (social network sites) through which political education can be disseminated, received and retrieved by present and future voters. Social network sites such as facebook, youtube, skype, myspace, instant messaging, instagram, voice over internet protocol, whatsapp and video-conferencing are avenues/applications of ICT that can aid political/voter education to sustain democracy in Nigeria. A social network site is a platform

whereby among others people share their ideas (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). For example, Gege (2016) notes that President Barack Obama's campaign relied heavily on social media and other new media to engage voters, recruit campaign volunteers, raise funds, mobilize voter and increase, participate among various voter population. Therefore, ICT can aid political education to sustain democracy in Nigeria by creating political awareness that would redirect the militarized psyche of Nigerians to value democracy and abide by its principles for its sustenance in Nigeria by avoiding electoral violence and fraud, and political apathy, as follows;

➢ **Creation of discussants forum for political deliberation(s):** Through ICT, a discussion forum can be created in which participating individuals, agencies/institutions such as National Orientation Agency, Independent National Electoral Commission, Federal/State Ministry of Information among others can invite discussants for political/voter education to enlighten Nigerians on democratic principles, culture and values in order to participate rightly in political/electoral process.

➢ **Preparedness of electorate for informed choice of political leader(s):** ICT will aid a wider spread and speed of political education enlightenment to those that could not participate rightly in electoral process due to their engagement in violence and fraud as a result of their manipulation by politicians. In the continuous enlightenment through ICT, electoral violence and fraud and other anti-democratic behaviours will be reduced, if not eradicated, because the people will be well informed to participate rightly in electoral process, which will give way for sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The continuous use of ICT to reach the electorate at home, offices or wherever they are will bring about culture of self-confidence and responsible behaviour among the electorate. Ignorance is a disease. Ogbe (2017) asserts that ignorance incapacitates someone to be

inactive in participation and active participation of citizens in government is an attribute of good governance.

➢ **Breeding of patriotic citizens:** Ethnicity is a bane to free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria, particularly presidential and governorship elections. Ethnic emphasis of North and South divide in Nigeria also reflect in the voting pattern, and an attempt by one divide to manipulate the electoral process to produce the president often leads to electoral violence and fraud as well as in the case of governorship election in some states like Delta State. Gwom, Mohammed and Danladi (2017) report that elections at all levels are characterized by ethnic sentiments due to politics of ethnicity. They further revealed that in Nigeria most times, people are not elected into political offices on the basis of merit but based on their ethnic groups, that is ethnic consideration. Therefore, the continuous use of ICT will inculcate national morals and democratic values thereby developing a truly patriotic citizen whose consciousness will transcend its ethnic boundary, produce an educated citizen who knows his duties to his country.

➢ **Through the use of ICT the incidents of vote rejection:** Due to wrong thumb-printing will be reduced if it is impossible to eradicate.This is because political parties and agencies in charge of dissemination of political education through the use of ICT, method of voting and other procedures can be displayed for the electorate to be well informed to avert wrong thumb-print which leads to vote cast rejection in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Nigeria is a democratic state that is characterized by electoral violence and fraud, and other related anti-democratic behaviours that threatens Nigeria's democracy. These anti-democratic behaviours display during elections in Nigeria is a result of decades of military rule which have affected the psyche of most Nigerians. Therefore, the paper concluded

that there is need for continuous political education through the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools like social network sites to create political awareness to redirect the militarized psyche of Nigerians to value democracy and abide by its principles for its sustenance in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following are recommended for successful operations of political education and information communication technology (ICT) collaboration for sustainable democracy in Nigeria;

- Constant and regular electricity to ensure functionality of ICT equipment put in place.
- Government should liaise with advanced countries that have successfully built ICT in their democratic governance to see areas where they can collaborate.
- There should be continuous training of the electorate especially those in the remote areas on effective use of ICT and its gadgets, to enable them receive political education and contribute meaningfully in sustaining democracy in Nigeria.

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