



## SOCIAL STUDIES AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: ITS ROLE IN ENTRENCHING RIGHT DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN STUDENTS

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper investigated social studies and citizenship education's role in entrenching right democratic values in students. Over time, there has been expressed dissatisfaction by the Edo people that the government officials and representatives do not reflect public choice. There are also situations where individuals show up for voter's registration and still fail to vote when the time comes. Nigeria has continuously been plagued by electoral malpractices and a whole lot of misconduct which gives the impression that social studies education has not made a remarkable impact. The paper examined the concept of social studies, civic and citizenship education, attitude towards voters' registration, attitude towards the rule of law, attitude towards voting, attitude towards the electoral process and good governance in Nigeria, and concluded that social studies curriculum content be broadened to address the issues of political education.*

**KEYWORDS:** Social studies, Citizenship education, Rule of law, Voting, Political education



## INTRODUCTION

Social Studies as a field of study focuses mainly on the study of man in his various environments. As a discipline, importance is attached to the molding of the character of its learners. It also gives a high premium to the development of its learners in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The contents and learning experiences of Social Studies are adequately fitted and equipped with the capacity to resolve human problems in totality as an integrated discipline. Social Studies is also concerned with instilling in individual youths the virtues and values of civic responsibility, character training, personality development, desirable values for social living, patriotism and leading a campaign against all forms of social vices and societal ills ravaging the country, such as electoral violence, arsons, ritual killings, arm robbery, kidnapping and hostage taking, among others. Civic and citizenship education which are vital aspects of Social Studies are essential in the inculcation and entrenchment of these knowledge, values and actions in citizenry.

Elections in the country are often very tense and characterized by some unholy and irresponsible behavior betraying the lack of knowledge on the part of the electorate. Loss of belief in the election body and dissatisfaction in events that mar the electoral processes e.g. snatching of ballot papers, malpractices, bribing, extortion, imposition of leaders as against the electorate choices are some of the things that makes the electorate have negative attitudes towards election processes. Hence this paper was presented under the following subheadings:

- The Concept of Social Studies
- Civic and Citizenship Education
- Attitude Towards Voters' Registration
- Attitude Towards the Rule of Law
- Attitude Towards Voting
- Attitude towards the Electoral Process and Good Governance in Nigeria
- Conclusion

### **The Concept of Social Studies**

Social Studies as a field of study focuses mainly on the study of man in his various environments. In line with this, Adaralegbe (1980) defines Social Studies as a subject which studies man in his environment, in relation to how the environment influences man and how man in turn influences the physical, social, political, economic, cultural, religious, psychological, scientific and technological environments (Iyamu & Onyeson, 1991). As a discipline, importance is attached to the molding of the character of its learners. It also gives a high premium to the development of its learners in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. This influenced Kisko to define Social Studies as a programme of study which a society uses to instill in students, knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions it considers important according to the relationship human beings have with each other, their world and themselves.

This definition of Kisko exposes and explores the validity of Social Studies as a school subject that can mold the character and behaviors of its learners in the direction the society in



question wants. Its contents and learning experiences feature in form of school programmes which are met to teach youths the required knowledge and skills needed to function effectively and efficiently in their civic duties, and more importantly, the required attitudes (values) and actions to ensure they are aware, understand and internalized democratic values and ethos, needed for the sustainability of the country's nascent democracy.

The contents and learning experiences of Social Studies are adequately fitted and equipped with the capacity to resolve human problems in totality as an integrated discipline. Thus, the discrete disciplines from experience are incapable of doing. It was based on this importance that Social Studies has been given a preeminent status with some other subjects like Mathematics, English Language, Science of Technology etc. in the school curriculum, and was made a core subject from the primary to the Junior Secondary school level. The objectives and the relevance of Social Studies in the school curriculum as it relates to good citizenship development include producing citizens that are patriotic, honest, obedient, dutiful and. loyal to the state; to teach and instill the right democratic values in its citizenry; develop a conscious and responsible citizens; produce citizens who are socio-civically competent; help learners to develop a sympathetic appreciation of the diversities and inter-dependence of all members of the local and wider communities; and to exposes its learners to a wide varieties of knowledge which enables them to develop their thinking ability, inquiry skills, decision making skills, reflective thinking, personal social skills; develops students' civility thereby making them civically conscious, responsible, honest, patriotic and disciplined; and to develop their social skills of how to relate with themselves, their neighbors and their world.

Social Studies is also concerned with instilling in individual youths the virtues and values of civic responsibility, character training, personality development, desirable values for social living, patriotism and leading a campaign against all forms of social vices and societal ills ravaging the country such as electoral violence, arsons, ritual killings, arm robbery, kidnapping and hostage taking, among others.

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) (2006) asserts that the dispositions that form democratic ethos are not inherited or passed down through the genetic mode; it is required that each generation of society learn civic facts, explore democratic ideas and values, and connect such concepts to the responsibility of citizenship. To them, such *disposition* must be fostered and internalized by word, study and by power of example. It is in this regard Social Studies as a school subject and a programme of society to mold the character of its citizens in the direction it deems favorable to its democratic governance and survival is imperative. Democracy is nurtured and sustained only when democratic values are rooted in the mind and actions of citizens.

### **Civic and Citizenship Education**

Civic and citizenship education which are vital aspects of Social Studies are essential in the inculcation and entrenchment of these knowledge, values and actions in citizenry. Iyamu (2005) said "looking at the school programme, every subject has a contribution to citizenship education but Social Studies has a primary responsibility to this essence. In fact, all its goals and objectives are geared towards promoting citizenship transmission/education." His view aligned with that of Osakwe (1986) who posited earlier that Social Studies is intricately interwoven with citizenship education. He stressed that Social Studies has so much to do with



the development of civic and citizenship knowledge, attitudes, values and skills. That the overriding purpose of education particularly Social Studies is citizenship education.

### **Attitude Towards Voters' Registration**

Elections in the country are often very tense and characterized by some unholy and irresponsible behavior betraying the poverty of knowledge on the part of the electorate. Apart from complaints of rigging, there has been violence, many voided ballots as a result of wrong marking, apathy, sales and buying of votes, among others. These and others threaten the integrity of the election, cast doubt on the outcome, make voters apathetic and hopeless in the belief that their votes do not and will not count. Other factors include; thuggery, rapid support for the wrong reasons, complacency and failure of law enforcement, tribe-based political choice, intolerance, corruption (stomach infrastructure), insecurity, youth negative participation, disorderliness, late arrival of election materials, improper marking of ballot papers, slow redress system and poor consequence management.

The former Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) chairman, Prof. Attahiru Jega, lamented the hurdle of conducting elections in Nigeria to the attitude of both the electorate and the political class. The INEC boss also said that although democracy has come to stay in Nigeria, the majority of Nigerians seem apathetic to elections, going by statistics available from voter turnout at various polls conducted during the period, he further stated that low level of awareness by citizens was a major reason for voter apathy. According to him, "one of the major reasons for apathy and resultant low participation in elections can be attributed to the low level of awareness on electoral matters by citizens. Elections are guided by rules and regulations, which stakeholders are expected to comply with. It is therefore necessary to promote positive attitudes and responses among the citizenry, encourage compliance with the regulations as well as discourage apathy, violence and all forms of malpractices through political education.

Loss of belief in the election body and dissatisfaction in events that mar the electoral processes, e.g. snatching of ballot papers, malpractices, bribing, extortion, imposition of leaders as against the electorate choices are some of the things that makes the electorate have negative attitudes towards election processes.

However, with political education, Nigerians are becoming increasingly interested in the country's electoral processes, as they now actively participate in elections whenever the need arises to choose their leaders. Observers believe that the development has somewhat changed the general public perception regarding the apathy of the voting public towards elections. They, however, attribute the change to factors such as the renewed determination of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Presidency and other relevant government agencies to ensure fairness and transparency in all electoral matters. Rev. Chuks Alozie, the Executive Vice Chairman, Christian Forum for Governance in Righteousness, a non-governmental organization, noted that voter turnout in elections had dramatically increased in recent times. "Today, in Nigeria, the electorate is encouraged because when elections are held the executive do not use any form of undue advantage to subvert the electoral process", then the election will be seen to be credible by Nigerians.

Sharing similar sentiments, Mr. Kayode Idowu, the Chief Press Secretary to INEC chairman also noted that the huge voter turnout in Osun and Ekiti governorship elections



attested to the fact that the voters' attitude to electoral processes had changed considerably. He recalled that the voters even felt secured amid heavy security presence at polling stations during the polls. "When voters feel protected, they will come out en-mass to cast their votes. Although INEC does not control the level of security deployment, it takes part in the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on election security. The percentage of turnout which we have had in the last two elections is unprecedented in the history of Nigerian elections. For example, in Ekiti, the percentage of voter turnout was 50.64 percent of the registered voters; in Osun, it was even higher. We had 1.4 million registered voters in Osun and the percentage of voter turnout was 54.2 percent; as a matter of fact, if we take the percentage on the basis of those who collected their cards, it was more than 76 percent", he said.

Corroborating Idowu's view point, the Most Rev. Gabriel Abegunrin, the President of Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) noted that INEC had restored the citizens' confidence in the electoral process. They, nonetheless, underscore the need to maintain neutrality in the coming elections while the security agencies should make pragmatic efforts to provide adequate security. "Such measures will increase participation of the electorate in all electoral processes, while restoring the voters' confidence in the outcome of elections", some observers say (The Vanguard).

### ***The Need for Nigerians to Participate in the Voters' Registration Exercise***

Agu, Okeke and Idike (2003) noted that voters' registration period is the time for every Nigerian to go and get the power to choose their leaders as the cornerstone of democracy. It is therefore paramount for Nigerians to understand, be reminded, educated and to appreciate the importance voters' registration plays in a democratic process. Voters' registration is the right of all eligible citizens to participate in the affairs of their government. It is the power to chase corruption away and decide who will pilot the affairs of the nation in the next four years. It is the first step for a good electioneering, to choose a leader and the identity card to appoint a leader. It is the most fundamental form of participation for voting in a free and fair election. It prevents mischievous electoral officials and politicians from manipulating figures and above all prevents rigging. This perhaps may be why the former ArchBishop of Province of the Niger Anglican Communion the Most Reverend Maxwell Anikenwa said in a radio Nigeria programme Eagle Square that election rigging starts during registration. Also, supporting this view, Nnamdi (2003) noted that ballot box snatchers can only be done through voters' registration. Voters' list makes it possible to separate two of the most important functions of the election authority; verifying voter eligibility and controlling the legitimacy of the balloting process. The list may also be used in voter education and may be provided to political parties and candidates to aid them in their campaigns and during election petitions. By confirming that voters have met all eligible requirements, the voters' list helps confer legitimacy on the electoral process. Conversely, the legitimacy of the process will immediately be called into question if there are problems with voters' registration, and particularly with the integrity of the voters' list. Voters' registration is therefore one of the most important tasks of election administration. This is why everyone who truly loves this country and desires the best for it should come out to register for voting.

Ojo (2009) supported the views noted above and added that it is also expected that INEC should prevent fraudulent and multiple registration so that at the end, the voters' registration will help in preventing individual voters from enrolling more than once under multiple identities, thereby, ensuring the integrity of the "one-man-one-vote" concept, and its





implication of democratic principles. This is why it is time for people to come out and ensure a good electoral process rather than to sit and analyze the election process and results, apportion blame when the outcome of the exercise appears not to meet up to the acceptable standards. The suspension of resumption day in both public and private primary and secondary schools indicates how serious the government wants the exercise to be successful. Therefore, every eligible Nigerian should see this voters' registration as part of their civic responsibility. Nonchalant attitudes towards it will have a damaging effect on the nation. We should bear in mind that once a comprehensive voters' registration is established, Nigeria can be said to be on the verge of a good democratic process and a successful election.

### **Attitude towards the Electoral Process and Good Governance in Nigeria**

Nigeria is a secular state with diverse social, cultural and ethnic disposition. The political process of the present fourth republic came to a reality on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999 after thirty years of military dictatorship. Since 1999 – 2011 the political landscape has fallen below par, from violence to greater violence. The magnitude of electoral violence has risen and the political elites have converted poverty ridden, unemployed Nigerian youths into ready-made instruments for perpetuating violence. Falade and Orungbemi (2010) argued that true democratic governance is absent in Nigeria and many parts of Africa. The political culture in Nigeria is characterized by intolerance, intimidation, thuggery, assassination, bitterness, apathy, indolence, money and ethnic politics. As a result of this, the ingredients of democracy have not been able to thrive after many years of political independence in Nigeria. The electoral process has been alternating power between ruling party and opposition parties. The usurpation of power of incumbency has relegated good governance to the background in Nigeria and this has deprived the electorates their franchise in the electoral market due to aggressive quest for political power among political actors. This study examined the concept of electoral process, good governance, the evolution of elections and challenges affecting electoral process and good governance as meted by some political class to jeopardize the political system. The genuine reform of our electoral institution and national re-orientation programme as recommended by Justice Uwais panel was applauded by Nigerians as a panacea to stabilize the dilemma of the electoral process and enhance good governance in Nigeria.

According to Elekwa (2008), the electoral process relates to the entire cycle ranging from the provision of voter education to the dissolution of the National Assembly. Akamere (2001) refers to it as all the activities and procedures involved in the election of representatives by the electorates. It refers to all the pre and post-election activities without which an election is meaningless. These include the registration of political parties, review of voters' register, delineation of constituencies, resolution of electoral disputes, return of elected representatives, swearing-in of elected representatives. In addition, the electoral process is the rule that guides the conduct of elections and important activities that make up an electoral process. Any conduct that threatens the electoral process is a subversion of the people's sovereignty (Akamere, 2001).

Similarly, INEC (2006) deposes different phases of the electoral process as follows: delimitation of electoral constituencies; registration of voters; notice of elections; nomination of candidates; election campaigns; elections, announcement of results and completing tribunal sittings; participation of other organizations; and resolution of electoral conflicts from the participation and other organizations or groups (INEC, 2006).



The electoral process is a complex process that encompasses the good intentions of election administration, particularly in emerging democracies where general elections are often marred by culturally hued electoral malpractices. These are meant to forestall undesirable outcomes. In Nigeria's case, the truth remains that the electoral process is immensely characterized by a culture of electoral malpractices. Ezeani (2004) described electoral malpractices as all illegalities committed by government officials responsible for the conduct of elections, political parties, groups or individuals with sinister intention to influence an election in favor of a candidate or candidates.

Intense electoral malpractices lead to electoral violence which in every polity must be considered undesirable. Reynolds (2005) describes an electoral system as the translation of the votes cast in a general election into seats won by parties and candidates. The key variables of the electoral formula (plurality/majority, proportional, mixed or other system), ballot structure (voter-votes for a candidate or party and voter makes a single choice or series of preferences) and district magnitude (how many representatives to legislature the district elects). Electoral process commences with the announcement of intention to conduct elections, till the elections have been won and invariably lost.

***Economic Vulnerabilities:*** The high rate of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty is a sign of underdevelopment. In Nigeria, a large section of the people lack access to opportunities and resources to actualize their potential. This situation breeds a class of economically marginalized people (mostly youths) who are used to perpetrate electoral violence. This group of people is enticed by the wealthy violent entrepreneurs who sponsor most of the violent political encounters. The electoral violence in Nigeria is mostly carried out by gangs whose members are recruited, financed, and sometimes, armed by state and party officials or their agents. These gangs are mostly illiterate, unemployed and poor young men, who are mobilized to attack their sponsors' rivals, intimidate members of the public, rig elections and protect their patrons from similar attacks (Aniekwe & Kushie, 2011).

***Confidence in Electoral Tribunal:*** The electoral justice system involves the prosecution of offenses and the resolution of petitions against election results. The belief by political actors that they cannot secure justice in an election tribunal reduces their inclination to seek legal redress to allegations of election fraud. The situation in Nigeria relates to Kenya's experience during 2007 election, where Raila Odinga out-rightly rejected the advice by the US that those alleging vote tampering may pursue legal remedies, maintaining that the election dispute was not a legal matter but a political conflict that required a political solution (East African Standard, Nairobi, 30 December, 2007). During Nigeria's 2011 elections, the leading opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, was reported by the national television as saying that he would not lodge a petition regarding the outcome of the election since his previous attempts at legally challenging election outcomes did not yield any meaningful result. In Nigeria, the judiciary, which is central to electoral dispute resolution, enjoys a considerable degree of credibility at the federal level due to some landmark judgments it has given in the past.

***No Internal Party Democracy:*** Political parties are a major building block of democracy, but the inability of many political parties in Nigeria to operate in a democratic manner introduces tension and violence in the electoral process. In Nigeria, political godfathers control the parties at local and national levels (Omobowale & Olanrewaju, 2007). These godfathers select the delegates who elect party leaders and candidates through control of the delegates; they decide



who gets the party's nomination and leadership positions. The activities of these godfathers create so much dissatisfaction in the political process because they disregard formal procedures for party nomination of candidates. Ibrahim (2007) identified the tactics used by these political godfathers to eliminate popular candidates from party primaries: declaration of a candidate as "consensus candidate" and the insistence that those entitled to vote must support the candidate that other aspirants must withdraw; the use of zoning to exclude unwanted candidates by moving the party zone for a particular position to an area where the excluded candidate is not local. the use of violence by thugs or security personnel to harass and intimidate candidates and supporters of candidates who oppose the godfathers; the use of money to bribe officials and induce voters to support particular candidates; and application of results by declaration, an aspirant wins a nomination, but polling officials disregard the results and declare the loser the winner.

### **Attitude Towards Voting**

In democracy, a government is chosen by voting in an election: election is a way for an electorate to elect, i.e. choose from among several candidates for rule. In a representative democracy, voting is the method by which the electorate appoints its representatives in its government. In a direct democracy, voting is the method by which the electorates directly make decisions, turn bills into laws etc. A vote is a formal expression of an individual's choice for a certain candidate or a political party in an election. Voting usually takes place at a polling station; it is voluntary in some countries such as Nigeria and compulsory in others such as Australia.

Voting requires little initiative and cooperation with others. It is the most visible and widespread form of citizen involvement. This notwithstanding, electoral turnout is declining in most democracies (Blais, 2000; Gray & Caul, 2000). Moreover, voters' turnout varies considerably both overtime and across countries and individuals (Lassen, 2005). This variation is not random and electoral participation seems to be highly unequal and biased in favor of more privileged citizens – those with higher incomes, greater wealth and better education, and against less disadvantaged citizens (Liphart, 1997).

The political stability and development of any political system is a function of the awareness and positive involvement of the citizens in civic and political matters. This is the reason why Appadorai (2004) posited that democracy demands from the common man a certain level of ability and character; rational conduct and active participation in the government. In Nigeria, political activities and transition programmes have been marked with turbulence, uncertainties and violence. Right from the First Republic, Nigerian politics has been characterized by greed, love of power, violence, assassination, thuggery and election rigging. Violence has become synonymous with Nigeria's political culture such that virtually all elections held so far in the country are violent-ridden (Ojo, 2014).

Although the just concluded presidential election held on Saturday, April 11, 2015 has been appraised by many as successful, some cases of malpractices and violence recorded across the country threaten to dim light on the democratic progress. During the election, there were reported cases of underage voting, distribution of money at polling centers, manipulation of voters' register, diversion of electoral materials, ballot box snatching, unlawful possession of firearms and other electoral offenses. This political scenario engendered lukewarm political attitude and participation among some citizens. In a political system, the citizens can be





involved in the political process and decision making by joining political parties, voting during elections, participating in electoral campaigns, community affairs and other political activities. The level and pattern of political participation of the citizens determine, to some extent, the success of the political system. In Nigeria, politics is seen by a number of people as a dirty game which must be avoided. This is as a result of the undemocratic tendencies, deception, violence and uncertainties that characterize the political system.

Consequently, political participation, particularly in the electoral process, is a fundamental requirement of representative democracy. This is the reason why Appadorai (2004) argued that where, on account of an atmosphere of fear and coercion, people do not feel free to discuss or vote, democracy cannot be said to exist, even though the other political rights are enjoyed by the people. Tiruneh (2004) identified some of the requirements of democratic rule as: at least two party system to give room for freedom of choice; periodic election that is based on universal adult suffrage; free and fair election to allow the political party that has the support of the majority to control the machinery of government and civil liberties such as freedom of association, religion, speech and freedom from arbitrary arrest.

Representative democracy rests on the assumptions that the citizens possess and demonstrate some civic capacities. These civic capacities involve three qualities: intelligence, self-control and conscience. The citizens must be able to understand the interest of the community, to subordinate his own will to the general will and must feel his responsibility to the community and be prepared to serve it by voting (Appadorai, 2004). On the contrary, indolence, indifference and political apathy have hindered the entrenchment and sustenance of representative democracy in Nigeria.

### **Attitude Towards the Rule of Law**

The rule of law is the legal principle that law should govern a nation as opposed to being governed by arbitrary decisions of individual government officials. It primarily refers to the influence and authority of law within society, particularly as a constraint upon behavior, including behavior of government officials. The phrase can be traced back to 16th century England and it was popularized in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by British jurist A. V. Dicey. The concept was familiar to ancient philosophers such as Aristotle, who wrote “law should govern”. Rule of law implies that every citizen is subject to the law including law makers themselves. In this sense, it stands in contrast to an autocracy, collective leadership, dictatorship or oligarchy, where the rulers are held above the law. Lack of the rule of law can be found in both democracies and dictatorships. For example, because of neglect or ignorance of the law, the rule of law is more apt to decay if a government has insufficient corrective mechanisms for restoring it.

The Oxford English dictionary has defined “rule of law” as “the authority and influence of law in society especially when viewed as a constraint on individual and institutional behavior; hence the principle whereby all members of a society including those in government are considered equally subject to publicly disclosed legal codes and process”. Rule of law implies that every citizen is subject to the law. It stands in contrast to the idea that the ruler is above the law, for example by divine right. Despite wide use by politicians, judges and academics, the rule of law has been described as “an exceedingly elusive notion”. Among modern legal theorists, one finds that at least two principal conceptions of the rule of law can be identified; a formalist definition and a substantive definition; one encounters a third



“functional” conception. Formalist definitions of rule of law do not make a judgment about the “justness” of law itself but define specific procedural attributes that a legal framework must have in order to be in compliance with the rule of law. Substantive conceptions of the rule of law go beyond this and include certain substantive rights that are said to be based on or derived from the rule of law. Most legal theorists believe that the rule of law has purely formal characteristics, meaning that the law must be publicly declared with prospective application and possess the characteristics of generality, equality and certainty, but there are no requirements with regard to the content of the law. The rule of law has been considered as one of the key dimensions that determine the quality and good governance of a country.

Research, like the world-wide governance indicator, defines the rule of law as the extent to which agents have confidence and abide by the rule of society and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, the police and the courts, as well as, the likelihood of crime and violence. In common parlance, the rule of law is the condition in which every member of the society including its leaders accept the authority of law. This is to say that the law of the state is supreme and binding on all persons in the land irrespective of status, position, rank, religion, political party, ethnicity or affiliation. However, the question that every rational mind or patriotic Nigerian should ask is, do we obey laws in Nigeria or is it that relevant laws are lacking in Nigeria?

Nigeria is a country of about one hundred and six million people and it has a relevant institution. Section 1 of the 1999 constitution as amended says this constitution is supreme and its provisions shall have binding force on all authority and persons throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Apart from the constitution, Nigeria has acts like the Electoral Act, and the Freedom of Information Act, among others. All these are aimed at engendering a democratic nation where respect for the rule of law, human rights, independent media, civil societies and independent judiciary forms the integral parts of our democratic institutions. An independent judiciary has long been recognized as the foundation upon which a true democracy rests because it allows judges to make impartial decisions without fear of dire consequences. This is important because public trust in the judiciary depends upon societal confidence in the impartiality of individual decisions. Similarly, as part of the plan to bequeath strong democratic institutions to Nigerians, Section 39, sub-section (1) and (2) of the 1999 Constitution as amended reads: “Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference” “Without prejudice to the generality of sub section (1) of this section, every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions”. Also, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, guarantees the right for freedom to express without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers. Nonetheless, since the return of democracy in 1999, weak democratic institutions have been observed at different fora.

On his part, Chief Justice Sir Adetokunbo Ademola told the African Conference on the Rule of Law, in Lagos in 1961, that “the rule of law is not a Western idea, nor is it linked up with any economic or social system. As soon as you accept that man is governed by law and not by whims of man; it is the rule of law. It is based on principles; it is not an abstract notion. The various Nigerian Kingdoms adhered strictly to the dictates of traditional values and public order.” Saliu (2014) also noted that the following principles can be identified as the basis for the rule of law in a modern democracy: laws are made democratically and effectively exercised freely without any form of hindrance; that the independence of each arm of government under



the doctrine of the separation of powers is preserved, respected and utilized as the major guiding principle of public policy; there is not only the independence of, but also the existence of an impartial judiciary; social justice governs state- society relations arbitrariness or excessive use of power is restrained by law; and equality before the law can be translated to mean non- discrimination and guarantee of the dignity and worth of the human person.

Nigeria's constitution is founded on the rule of law, the primary meaning of which is that everything must be done according to law. It also means that government should be conducted within the framework of recognized rules and principles which restrict discretionary powers. The quest for the entrenchment of the rule of law in Nigeria predates independence; however, the practice of the principle is an integral part of the wider struggles against the arbitrariness of the Nigerian state under the military and civilian regimes the country has passed through since her independence in 1960. It was against the background of nearly thirty years of military rule that the current democratization process in Nigeria was brought to life in 1999. Central to questions on the lips of Nigerians today is: to what extent have the sixteen years of the return to civilian rule with its successful transition from one civilian regime to another given birth to the era of observance of the rule of law which translates into good governance?

A closer examination of the actions and inactions of the government since 1999 shows that the rule of law has been relegated to a mere declaration in conformity with the ideological smokescreen of the government. For example, one illustration of the Achilles heel in the act of strangulating the rule of law is the failure in recognizing and respecting the constitutional roles of the three main institutions of State: namely, the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. The political fracas between the Lagos State government and the Federal Government over the failure of the latter to remit funds allocation for local government councils in Lagos following the State Governor's creation of some additional council is a case in point of bizarre-executive lawlessness on the part of the executive arm of government in Nigeria.

Also supporting the above view, Ekene (2015) added that despite the judgment of the Supreme Court on the matter, the Federal Government turned deaf ears on the ruling of the highest court of the land that Lagos State should be remitted all the statutory allocations due to local government councils in the state. Indeed, it was the late Yar'Adua regime in 2007 that enforced the Supreme Court ruling and ordered the immediate release of the funds to Lagos State amounting to 10.8 billion naira. According to the Constitution, the primary function of maintaining law and order rests with government. It is the primary reason why formal states exist in the first place. To be able to carry out this fundamental duty, the government must not just command respect and trust but also must have effective mechanisms for maintaining law and order.

## CONCLUSION

The paper has revealed that political education concepts in the Social Studies curriculum can influence students' attitude towards the electoral process as they will be guided by the rules and regulations of the electoral processes. From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that relevant laws are not lacking in the country, but it is our attitude towards them that matters. Therefore, every Nigerian must subject himself or herself to authority because, without the rule of law



which can prevent anarchy in a democratic setting like ours, doing otherwise, as witnessed in the past, may be a dangerous alternative to our democratic aspirations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It was recommended that Social Studies curriculum content be broadened to address the issues of political education; additional political concepts in Social Studies as it will help to sensitize the students politically and encourage their attitude towards voters' registration; and the inclusion of more political education concepts which will help to improve and eliminate apathy in students when they will be of voting age.

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