

CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION IN A COVID-19 PRONE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Chukwujekwu Onyinye A. N* & Okeke Chukwujekwu A**

Abstract

The world as we know it has continued to change in moments of epidemics and more with pandemics. The rise and spread of this dreaded deadly novel disease is at again. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought great damages caused in an unprecedented scale to different sectors of the world and particularly in Nigeria especially within the educational sector. The COVID-19 pandemic has generated changes in the teaching and learning process with regard to political science education thereby influencing the smooth interaction and association between teachers and students. Using the method of critical analysis, the researcher discovers that it is imperative that the students are drilled in the understanding of Nigerian politics in relation to COVID-19 and that the only strategy for the survival and continuity of Political science education is a paradigm shift from traditional systems of learning to online learning using digital platforms.

Keywords: Political science Education, Education, COVID-19, Society

Introduction

Governments around the world have responded very differently to the pandemic (COVID-19) because of the political ideologies of their leaders and structures of their political systems in place. Political science education has an important role to play in providing information and research on how to tackle COVID-19, analysis of different governmental responses, governmental policies, the activities and politics of the government and the impact of those policies and activities on their citizens.

Politics can be defined as the set of activities that are associated with decision making in groups or other forms of power relations between individuals while political science education is the study of politics while Political Science Education is concerned with the study and analysis of the theories, institutions and processes of political systems and their functions within the complex societies. Various fields of political science help one to discover hitherto unknown principles underlying political phenomena (COVID-19) and make a rich contribution to the realm of knowledge.

The introduction or outbreak of Corona Virus in December 2019 was firstly detected in Wuhan, China and since then, spread around the world. COVID-19 is an illness caused by a novel corona virus called severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS- CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV) which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases and uncontrollable death cases. The disease spreads from person to person through infected air droplets that are projected during sneezing or coughing. It can also be transmitted

when humans have contacts with hands and surfaces that contain the virus and touch their eyes, nose, or mouth with the contaminated hands. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted politics, both international and domestic by affecting their governing and political systems of leadership.

Nigeria since her political independence in 1960 has been battling with series of development and socioeconomic challenges. Security is an essential component in the life of any society that desire to develop. We live in a nation in which the government has no value for human lives but only after their selfish gains and desires. Politics is applied in every strata of government in a way that will be favourable to them alone. Corruption is the cankerworm that has eaten up the integrity and responsibility of our leaders to its citizens. Nigeria was once or is still regarded as the “giant of Africa”, yet the country has passed and is still passing through series of political instability and insecurity since independence and up to date. Again, the emergence of COVID-19 has caused drastic effects on Nigerian education system and has disrupted learning of Political education system across the country.

Therefore, it is undeniably evident that the introduction of e-teaching and e-learning will tremendously contribute to the advancement of the education sector and education will only survive if e-teaching and e-learning will be introduced to the curriculum of the education system.

Background Knowledge on COVID-19

COVID-19 is a pandemic caused by a discovered virus called Corona virus. This was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 31 December 2019 who was informed of cases of pneumonia, an unknown cause in Wuhan City, China. The novel corona virus was initially named 2019-nCoV and officially as severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARSCoV-2). As of February 26, COVID- 19 has been recognized in 34 countries, with a total of 80,239 laboratory-confirmed cases and 2,700 deaths (WHO 2020). The disease spreads from person to person through infected air droplets that are projected during sneezing or coughing. It can also be transmitted when humans have contacts with hands and surfaces that contain the virus and touch their eyes, nose, or mouth with the contaminated hands. (AL-Samarrai, Gangwar & Gala 2020; United Nation, 2020). Majority of patients experienced fever and dry cough, while some also had shortness of breath, fatigue, and other atypical symptoms, such as muscle pain, confusion, headache, sore throat, diarrhoea and vomiting. Currently, the approach to COVID-19 is to control the source of infection; use infection prevention and control.

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in Nigeria by the Federal Ministry of Health on 27th February. This was the case of an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria and returned from Milan, Italy to Lagos, Nigeria. Since then, the number of confirmed cases of infection kept rising both on Nigeria and around the globe. It led to the closure of schools which caused serious drawbacks for learners and deprives them of their right to education and postures

them to future risk. The emergence of this pandemic in Nigeria has brought setback and high level of educational instability. Covid-19 has brought unexpected challenges to educational institutions.

Consequently, there is need to provide an antidote (which is e-teaching and e-learning) for the continuity of political science education since the pandemic is still prevailing in other countries and has tendencies of returning back. Again, there is a controversial issue concerning the falsification of Corona Virus victims, bankrupt of Nigerian economy, lofty level of embezzlement of fund in regards to Covid-19. Therefore, these are basis for further discussions.

Understanding the Concept Political Science Education

Political science is the study of government, politics, institutions and the behaviour of participants in the political world. Political science education helps to prepare students them on the ranges of civics, social studies and government courses. Political science education examines the structures of governments and their historical evolution over time as well as the question of how governmental authority is established and maintained in different areas and different societies. The discipline also acquaints students with the methods of teaching political science in tertiary institution or secondary schools. It concerns with the study and critical analysis of political theories, political institutions, political organizations and the activities of the state. It examines political dynamics, adjustment of the individual of the state, international laws, international relations, the concept of power and power relationship among members of a given society. Political Science education is a concept that is useful for the moulding and development of good, effective and efficient citizenry. It helps the citizens to know their rights, duties and obligations to their government for political harmony, stability and peace.

Political Science Education has a vital role to play in attaining sustainable development. This is for a simple reason that, the knowledge of political science enriches one's mind and widens his intellectual horizon. If the ultimate philosophy of human life is to enrich knowledge, political science education makes a major contribution o the storehouse of knowledge.

Political Instability and Insecurity

Political instability and insecurity are common occurrences in Nigeria which always affect the unity and peaceful co-existence of a country as a nation. Lack of political stability in their leadership causes insecurity. When the governance fails to protect lives and properties (Political instability), insecurity becomes the case. Therefore, Political instability arises from the prevailing incidences of perceived social injustice and discrimination among citizens and the inability of the government to address the challenges of the masses. According to Oxford Advanced Learners dictionary (2015) Political instability is defined as a political situation in

which things are likely to change or fall suddenly in a society. In clear terms, political instability entails among others communal violence, rural or religious insurgency, urban riots, *coup d'état*, electoral crises, religious/ethnic crises, ethnic militant uprisings, kidnapping, corruption and the on-going Boko Haram, civil war, killings as well as elites' disagreement over the distribution of power resources are forms of political instability and insecurity in Nigeria. It is also an unconditional change of government either regular or irregular change of government. It is a situation whereby country goes through political turmoil. Political instability arises as a result of the inability of government of the day and society as a whole to adequately address the grievances of the population or a particular section of the population. The issue of political instability is a common phenomenon that continues to dominate the political terrain in Nigeria (Adeyeri, 2013).

Political insecurity can be described as those activities of individuals persons or group of individual persons which are undermining the development of the country (Jimoh and Ojalabi, 2006). The political insecurities Nigeria is facing ranges from civil war, military intervention in politics, political assassination, insurgencies, terrorism, ethno-religious conflicts, Niger Delta militancy, The Boko Haram, clashes of the Herdsmen and farmers, kidnapping, electoral and post election violence (Alfa, 2012). Kalu Ajuzie & Chukwu (2018) argued that insecurity challenges facing development in Nigeria is as a result of poverty, mass youth unemployment, engender political insecurity in the political system of Nigeria. Similarly, Adejumobi (2001) opined that "Lack of commitment to the virtues of honesty, equality, social justice, accountability, trust, peaceful coexistence among co-ethnics and respect for human rights" has contributed to political insecurity in Nigeria.

Although Nigeria is regarded as the "giant of Africa", yet the country has passed and is still passing several restless stages of conflict and violence. The process of gaining entrance into the corridor of political power is replete with violence and conflicts, resulting from rivalry and suspicious among the various ethnic groups in the country that have culminated in political instability and insecurity across the entire country. This resultant effect of it, is the weak institutions of the state and incessant struggle for political power. Nigeria, as a heterogeneous society in terms of ethnic, religious and cultural but conflict inclined (Agagu, 2004). Since the independence of Nigeria, the country has been confronted with various crises and violence that have been affecting the foundation of Nigeria's unity and corporate existence. Even though Nigeria is a country that is blessed with abundant human and natural resources her citizens are within the vicious cycle of poverty and bad leadership. Series of political instability had been occurring in the country since independence and up to date and the challenges of it have been a major cause of insecurity in the country.

COVID-19 and Politics

Since the emergence of the pandemic, it has continued to rage and mobility and morality rates continue to climb globally. Its waves have made impacts in politics, affecting the governing and political systems of many countries and Nigeria was not an exception. Politics is the

activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. The word politics was derived from *Politika* meaning literally “affairs of the cities”. It can also be defined as what concerns the state. David Easton (1981) defined politics as the authoritative allocation of values. By this, he meant that politics encompasses the various processes through the government responses to their activities, duties and responsibility to the people. It is essentially the social activity associated with making decisions in groups, or other forms of power relations between individuals, such as the distribution of resources or status. It can also be defined as the actions and activities concerned with achieving and using power in a country.

Nigerian politics is a dangerous game in which our leaders play, looking for the slightest opportunity to loot and embezzle money to their own advantage. The urgent emergence of the pandemic gave them an opportunity to carry out their capricious and deadly fraud. It was evident that during this time, the government incessantly borrowed money from Nigerian bank, foreign banks all in the name to curb the pandemic. Secondly, in quest to cover-up for their atrocities, they falsified figures, shows fake evidence of corona virus victims which was not as much as they said it was in the country. Our hospitals are not well developed to fully fight this pandemic to the core. Again the people were used for politics in the sense that so many people contributed to the pandemic, yet the Nigerian government borrowed millions of Naira from Foreign countries leaving the country in debt and do not care about the fate of the country. A fear of the unknown and a deluge of information in the internet which creates fertile ground for fake news Nigerians were vulnerable because of weak communications between the government and the governed. This bought panic and turmoil in the country. Moreover, the threat of fake news began much greater with time. The Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) was the agency responsible for the control of pandemics like COVID-19. The question will be “is COVID-19 politics in Nigeria” “who is responsible for the falsification of the result for COVID-19”. Some say that it was the social activists using social media platforms and fringe websites to proliferate misinformation about COVID-19.

Conspiracy theories in Covid-19

As COVID-19 was spreading around the world, so did conspiracy theories. A conspiracy theory is an explanation for an event or situation that invokes a conspiracy by sinister and powerful groups, often political in motivation, when other explanations are more probable. Conspiracy theories resist falsification and are reinforced by circular reasoning. Examples are theories about the explanations for events based on power holders’, malevolent arrangements (Goertzel,1994), the virus according to media reports (Gogarty & Hagle,2020; Schulman & Siman-Tov, 2020). Some of these theories centre are on the origin of the virus while others focus on the local or national reaction to the pandemic (Gogarty & Hagle, 2020). Past research shows that the increase of conspiracy theories during a pandemic is not a new phenomenon. Conspiracy theories reject standard explanation for events and describe them as a secret plot perpetrated by influential people or organizations. These theories increase during social crises or health emergencies due to uncertainties, contradictions and

psychological distress associated with the event. Believing in conspiracy theories is known to undermine prosocial behaviour and trust in authorities. Both are keys to the successful fight against this pandemic but the support of conspiracy theories is likely to endanger the success of efforts to fight the pandemic. When the COVID-19 quickly spread globally, leaving mass disruption and death in its wake, people were left with many questions and few answers. Conspiracy theories emerged to fill the gaps. There are different theories about the origin of COVID-19 and speculation about the motives behind COVID-19 vaccines in Nigeria.

Conspiracy theories are built on the notion that a powerful group is acting in secret, thus building on (and potentially also creating) suspicion toward the powerful such as the government.

Challenges of teaching Political Science

Firstly, lack of required, skilled and experienced political science professionals capable of providing standards in political science education in its both classical and contemporary context (Robert,2007).

Secondly, Lack of a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning of political science education. Most of the institutions of learning in Nigeria where political science education is taught face this problem. Conducive environment for both lecturers and students is a platform for better academic promotion (Muh'd;2008).

Thirdly, poor funding of political science education programs which leads to poor application of methods of teaching and learning the subject, poor instructional materials, poor research attitudes, lack of good academic commitment and devotion to students, less attention on the practical aspects of teaching and learning the course such as media programs (Adendoff;2008).

Fourthly, laxity in encouraging modern political science teaching techniques such as interactive classes, effective human resources methods, forum of debates, conferences and internet models.

The fifth important challenge of political science education in Nigeria is that, most of the educational institutions where it is being taught have poor teaching condition.

Lastly, there is lack of implementation of online teaching and learning to political science education, lack of computers, e-gadgets, lack of knowledge on online platforms to facilitate its teaching and lack of professional tutors, experts and practitioners that can handle these technologies.

Introduction of E-learning to Political science Education

E-learning has been introduced to empower learners to get basic schooling skills. Also, they can obtain a degree certificate without actually attending school or university. For tutors, it is a great source of earning, wherein they can teach from anywhere in their preferred time. Electronic teaching and learning is defined as a student-centred method of learning that offers

a great deal of flexibility in terms of time and location. It has been the only method that is fit to rescue the best global crisis from hard times of global pandemic. Online teaching enables modification of our procedures and processes based on the needs of the students. The fact of *anywhere-anytime* feature of online education has a great advantage in times of crisis-like situations such as COVID-19. It offers access to updated contents of political science and offers quick delivery of lessons.

The audio-visual helps in remembering knowledge for a longer time. It saves time, money and reduced transportation. E-teaching and learning, gives access to study materials unlimited times and at anytime and anywhere. It promotes active and independent learning. Online learning accommodates everyone's need i.e. it is suited for everyone no matter your age. It can also be taken unlimited number of times.

Conclusion

The emergence of COVID-19 in Nigeria gave room to its politicization. Therefore, Online learning of Political Science Education should be included in the primary school, secondary schools and tertiary institution curriculums. This writing is an attempt to expose some fundamental issues and problems identified in our present schools' curriculums. This establishes a justification the introduction of and teaching political science education as an online course in our education system. I strongly believe that it is imperative that the students are drilled in the understanding of Nigerian politics in relation to COVID-19 and that the only strategy for the survival and continuity of Political science education is a paradigm shift from traditional systems of learning to online learning using digital platforms and with this there should be political stability and security in the country.

***Chukwujekwu Onyinye A. N.**

Department of Political Science
School of Languages
Federal College of Education (Techn), Umuze
Onyicjeck@gmail.com 08038318676

****Okeke Chukwujekwu A.**

Department of Educational Mgt & Planning
Faculty of Education
Federal College of Education (Techn).Ebonyi State Univesity, Abakiliki
revdtonycj@gmail.com, 08038873034

References

- AL-Samarrai, Gangwar & Gala (2020) Political Education in Nigeria: matters arising. J. Hum. Ecol.,97-101. Kamala- Raj 2006.
- Adeyeri,(2013) Introduction of political science to Nigeria curriculum. Nigeria, Leadership Newspaper, 17 March 2011
- David Easton (1981) The political education in the south eastern state of Nigeria: problems and prospects, paper presented at the convention of the unity schools old students association: (USOSA) held at Damic hotel Enugu.
- Gogarty & Hagle (2020) Conspiracy theories Nigeria Tribune. No.15,107. 5th January. pg 31
- Jimoh and Ojalabi (2006) political Education at cross-roads.Yale: University Press.
- Kalu Ajuzie & Chukwu (2018) Political science, teaching as a profession, in E.N Okpara philosophy in Education and Developement. A book of reading vol.8,pp.204-212 Enugu. University trust publisher
- United Nation (2020) Getting the education system out of the doldrums.Nigeria:Feb.14
- Ojalabi E.(2006).). Nigeria: closing the political education. Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com/stories/20128190383>
- Oxford Advanced Learners dictionary (2015) What can political science contribute to educational theory? In Park, J. (ED), Selected readings in politics of education. London: Macmillian Publishers
- Robert N.(2007) Problems of Nigeria political education retrieved from <http://Nigerian newspaper.com/educational system.htm>.