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**DILEMMA OF NIGERIA DEMOCRACY:  
THE INTERVENTION OF SOCIAL STUDIES**

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**Abstract**

*This paper addressed the dilemma of Nigerian democracy and the intervening role of the Social Studies; it envisaged that the concept of democracy, its attributes and the challenges in Nigeria. It further posited the concept of the Social Studies and how its content and proposed objectives can intervene to address the dilemma of Nigerian democracy. Social Studies as an educational discipline with the requisite knowledge and skills to inculcate values and norms in the citizenry is an ideal discipline to address the dilemma of democracy in Nigeria. The content of the Social Studies avails learners to understand the democratic stride of the country, the prospective efforts of the citizenry and the constraining factors of democracy; the Social Studies is aware and teaches skills to study and understand the political terrain of any society. Through the Social Studies, one can determine the state of Nigeria democracy, pinpoint the constraining errors and proffer recommendations to realizing democracy in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Democracy, Dilemma, Nigeria, Social Studies.

## **Introduction**

Nigeria is an African country that had acculturated most tenets of life of their erstwhile colonizers; she had acquired their language (English) as her official language and a host of others. One of the prominent phenomena that Nigeria adopted is Western Democracy; Nigeria is a conglomeration of different kingdoms that had their distinct democracies. Today, these kingdoms and democracies have been swallowed by the adopted Western Democracy; the traditional system of establishing leaders has been sent to extinction. We have been to encompass an election process which over the years have been marred malpractice and corruption and insecurity; apparently, no election year that Nigeria do not record cases of malpractice, corruption and insecurity of the lives and properties of Nigerians.

Nigeria was declared independent on the 1st day of October, 1960 and since then she has practicing the democracy that was bequeathed to them by the erstwhile colonizers; despite her over six decade practice, she is still at crossroads ascertaining the benefits of democracy. It is a glaring truth that Nigeria as a country is not a beneficiary of the said democracy because the dividends of democracy are not present; it is defined that democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people but in reality, is this the case with Nigeria? For some scholars, democracy posits the need for fundamental human rights, elections of leaders, medium to sustain development and others; they do not question the process of the said democracy, whether its endpoint is a reality of its proposed goal. According to Adelekan and Ashibi (2020), a major issue about democracy in Nigeria is that as long as elections are being conducted and ostensible winners and losers are emerging, particularly at the Presidential level, and power is being handed over from one regime to another, then democracy is on course; they also noted that this explanation of democracy has some impediments which includes corruption, rigging, vote-buying, judiciary abracadabra, lack of observance of rule of law, honesty. Noteworthy, democracy cannot be said to be present in the present day Nigeria.

Kukah (2012) in Adelekan and Ashibi (2020) x-rayed democracy in Nigeria and unveiled the deceptive state of Nigeria's democracy; he narrated that evidence suggests that countries in transition remain quite prone to backsliding and failure, he contends that this is why it must not be taken for granted in Nigeria that democracy is secure.

Democracy no doubt in Nigeria is a sham; the few elite are catching cruise from the masses. Democracy has been weaponized to keep the masses in abject poverty and extreme grave standard of living; it is evident that despite the pacing rate of corruption, insecurity, injustice, inequality, poverty, tribalism and a host of others, some Nigerians are still at the forefront canvassing for the return of the failed leaders. These Nigerians will be at the media space acknowledging the presence of democracy in Nigeria; it is an unfortunate scenario, but what can we do? Apparently, Nigeria is practicing liberal democracy where we have representatives at the legislative chambers that can make laws and be a check to the accountability of the executive. It is now important to ask: are these representatives truly our representatives? The recent struggle for National Assembly leadership speaks volume that they are there for their selfish interests; it is evident that our own liberal democracy contradicts that of Western countries, this made Tar (2010) to assert that the platitudes about liberal democracy are problematic in Africa and Middle East where the political culture and the nature of social and economic process are quite different compared to the Western democracies, from where the concepts of liberal democracy originated.

Nigeria is still at crossroads considering what democracy connotes and its reality in the country; Tar (2010) cited Joseph (1997) when he stated that it is difficult to acknowledge democracy in Africa, Nigeria inclusive; he said that the political and economic cultures of many African countries are still underdeveloped and unstable. That they lack the necessary conditions of instituting liberal democracy such as a strong and independent middle class, a competitive party system, constitutionalism and rule of law, a neutral bureaucracy and strong market economies. It is undeniable

truth that our institutions designed to sustain democracy have now become the bane to democracy itself; INEC, Police, Court etc. are now accomplices of the present day affront to Nigeria democracy. This no doubt has created a division in the quest to proclaim a stand on whether democracy lives in Nigeria or not; many have been swallowed by the illusion that democracy lives in Nigeria because they are beneficiaries of the system while some others have been victimized and made to face grave consequences at the detriment of the legal status as citizens of Nigeria; thus, the dilemma of democracy in Nigeria. However, the Social Studies as an education discipline exists to address pitfalls of democracy in Nigeria; it is clear note that Nigeria has democracy but its presence is not been felt and Social Studies as an educational discipline with the requisite knowledge to address and resolve issues and problems respectively is apt to intervene in this time of need. Thus, this paper will address the term democracy, its attributes, challenges in Nigeria and the intervention of the Social Studies.

### **Concept of Democracy**

Democracy is a virtue of sustainable living for a people who adhere to its terms and attributes; the term democracy according to Nwogu (2015) is said to have originated from Athens in the 5th century BC. Acknowledging the work of Lindell and Scott (1999), Nwogu (2015) it is ideal to note that democracy originated from the Greek word “demokratia” which means the rule of the people; he explained further that democracy was coined in the 5th century BC from “demos” meaning people and “kratos” meaning power or rule. Democracy is no doubt an ancient term that has been used to pilot the affairs of societies, countries and institutions; Adelekan and Ashibi (2020) asserted that democracy is a system of government through which the people choose their leaders and hold their leaders accountable for their policies and their conduct in office. The people decide who will represent them in parliament, and who will head the government at the national and local levels. They do so by choosing between competing parties in regular, free and fair elections. It is also designed to allow all citizen irrespective of their

social status, religion, ethnic or gender status to have a voice in decision making, thereby promoting good governance and enhance the socio-economic development of the country.

Similarly, Javie and Milford (2006) sees democracy as an opportunity for people to control their leaders and to them without recourse to a revolution; additionally, Barak (2006) explained democracy as a system that avails that freedom of political expression, freedom of speech and freedom of the press are essential rights that aid eligible citizens to be adequately informed and able to vote according to their interests. Noteworthy, some scholars have argued that democracy alone cannot provide political freedom unless the institutions of civil society are present; Robert (2021) democracy is a form of government that empowers the people to exercise political control, limits the power of the head of state, provides for the separation of powers between governmental entities and ensures the protection of natural rights and civil liberties.

Noteworthy, Okogu and Umudjere (2014) states the following as the tendencies of electoral democratic practices in Nigeria: Democracy by Proxy, Rigging as Opposition Blame Game, Electoral Democracy of Elite Contradiction, A Culture of Democratic Judicial Abracadabra, A Culture of the Losers Tongue-in-Cheek Talk, Election as Democracy's Equivalent of Warfare and the Phenomenon of Vote Buying. Moreover, Tar (2010) in the bid to address the virtue of democracy cited Joseph (1997: 367-8) who offers the following critique of what he calls the glorification of liberal democracy as virtual democracy as applied to African countries:

**Hollow symbolism:** While liberal democracy is symbolically based on citizen rule, “the making of key decisions, especially in the area of economic reform policies, is insulated from popular involvement”.

**Hegemonic class rule:** Liberal democracy does not necessary dislodge the dominant ruling class; in fact, it empowers the wealthy: “hegemonic economic forces in society, as well as those in control of the state apparatus, must be secure in the protection of their interests and able to minimize threats to them by formerly excluded or dominant groups for a smooth transition from authoritarian rule to occur”.

**Entrenchment of capitalism:** liberal democracy does not allow for the adoption of alternative political and economic models: “central to this variant of democracy is the creation of opportunities for the further development of a capitalist or market economy. While capitalism can exist without democracy, there are no contemporary democracies that are not capitalist or that do not create the institutional framework for the expansion of capitalism”.

**External pressure and domination:** the current efflorescence of liberal democracy is made possible by western pressures in the post-Cold War period. “External forces are critical to the establishment of democracy in areas formerly under authoritarian rule. But such pressures are not pitched on any rational motif other than the entrenchment of western interest”.

**Entrenchment of status quo:** “Most decisive in democratic transitions are the choices made by those enjoying governmental and social power when faced with challenges to their dominance. Such individuals and groups often realize that democratization can be manipulated to legitimize their continuation in power”.

**Policy and institutional encumbrance:** “While the core institutions and practices of contemporary democracy rest on the premise of a free play of ideas and interests, certain substantive policy outcomes are ruled out, and others are assured. Participation may be broad, but policy choices are narrow”.

Nonetheless, democracy is a system of government based on the acquisition of authority from the people, the institutionalization of the rule of law, the emphasis on the legitimacy of rulers, the availability of choices and cherished values including freedom, transparency and accountability (Adelekan & Ashibi, 2020).

### **Attributes of Democracy**

Democracy as a social concept has some attributes that may varies from countries to countries; Lenhardt (2021) acknowledging the works of Bogaard (2009) and Diamond (2002) explained that defining the characteristics of democracy have long been debated,

and this debate has become further stimulated by unprecedented growth in the number of regimes that are neither clearly democratic nor conventionally authoritarian. Democracy may be present in some countries when there is freedom of assembly, association, speech, religion; freedom from the deprivation of privileges, rights and benefits as well as the availability of franchise and rights to life, property and liberty. It can also contain the presence of elected representatives or leaders, an independent judicial system, patriotic opposition and the virtues of patience, tolerance, cooperation and compromise. Edem (2022) posited the attributes of democracy to include: existing constitution, popular participation in politics, legitimacy, periodic elections, separation of power, checks and balance, existence of political parties, equality before the law, fundamental human rights, press freedom, rule by majority and the absence of dictatorship and oppression.

Similarly, ADCO Law (2022) outlined the attributes of democracy to include: People's will and interest, Constitutional application, Context of representation, General elections, Presence of political party or parties, Division and separation of power and Delegated responsibility. They further cited the International Conference of Fists, Bangkok in 1965 that resolved that a democratic country must have the following attributes: supremacy of law, equality before the law, constitutional guarantee of human rights, impartial tribunal and civic education. UNDP (2007) posited the following as attributes of democracy: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision.

However, democracy in any society or country is said to be viable when there is respect for basic human rights, elected representatives, a democratic voting system, civil liberty, independent judiciary, perceived citizens' participation, consent of the people, acknowledgment of rule of law, a political system paired with political tolerance and democratic governance.

### **Challenges of Democracy in Nigeria**

Democracy in Nigeria like other Africa countries as well as other countries of the world is faced with constraining factors that have hindered the successful attainment of the provisions of democracy. Nigeria had her independence on the 1st day of October, 1960 and since then she has been practicing democracy; apparently, no one can be bold enough to justify the dividend of democracy in the country because the cries of pains are increasing daily. Crime which has evolved in different forms is at its pacing rate, insecurity has drastically increased, injustice and inequality are nor norms; this now bring us to what are the challenges facing democracy.

### **Concept of Social Studies**

Social Studies is an educational discipline that is synonymous to addressing and resolving issues and problems respectively revolving around man and his ever-changing environment. Social Studies according to scholars has different perceived definitions; Osakwe and Itedjere (2005) explained that the earliest definition of Social Studies emerged in 1916 by the National Education Commission; the Commission defined Social studies as a subject matter that relates directly to the organization and development of human society and to man as a member of social groups. They also see Social Studies as the integrated study of the Social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence.

Okogu and Umudjere (2014) defined the Social Studies as the critical study of man's interaction with his environment, how man influences environment and in turn influenced by his environment. They further explained that Social studies as a discipline disseminate valuable knowledge, skills and necessary ideas and concepts suitable for analyzing and addressing man's problems and issues. To engage and encourage the actualization of the goals of education, the Social Studies has equipped itself with citizenship education, civic education and peace education. Subsequently, Akinlaye (2003) posited the Social Studies as an Educational discipline that creates an awareness and understanding in our ever-evolving social and political environment. Buttressing, Okogu and Umudjere (2015)



defined Social Studies as a discipline that teaches morals, disseminate information, inculcate knowledge and skills as well imbibe right attitudes in the students that can enable them re-shape negative attitude towards political participation in the country.

The Social Studies has also unveiled some set objectives to aid the its successful dissemination.

### **The Dilemma of Democracy: Intervention of Social Studies**

The Nigerian state is a testifying factor that there are diverse perceptions to the viability of democracy in Nigeria; some see democracy flourishing while others see the downturn of democracy. The mainstream media and social media have reported increasing cases of corruption amongst government officials, pacing rate of poverty, conflicting cases of ethnicity in politics, explicit scenes of social injustice and inequality that have now posed as constraining factors to the viability of democracy in Nigeria. Despite these outputs by the mainstream and social media, some flock of Nigerians still perceive and posit that democracy is flourishing and further attests that poverty is declining and other factors geared towards underdevelopment are diminishing. This no doubts bring us to crossroad, the dilemma of the viability of democracy in Nigeria; notwithstanding, in the bid to understand the Nigeria democratic situation and take a stand with the realization of democracy in Nigeria, the intervention of the Social Studies is appropriate.

Social Studies as an educational discipline with the requisite knowledge and skills to inculcate values and norms in the citizenry is an ideal discipline to address the dilemma of democracy in Nigeria. Social Studies in the bid to address issues and resolve problems of man and his environment has set objectives; these objectives are proposed to be endpoint of every teaching period of the Social Studies. Nwalado and Obro (2010) acknowledged Social Studies as a discipline in Nigeria aims at achieving national integration, national consciousness, and national development through the positive values that learners are exposed to; this no doubt emphasize the intervention of the Social Studies through its teaching of citizenship

and civic education to understand the viability of democracy. The content of Social Studies avails learners to understand the democratic stride of the country, the prospective efforts of the citizenry and the constraining factors of democracy; the Social Studies is aware and teaches skills to study and understand the political terrain of any society. Through the Social Studies, one can determine the state of Nigeria democracy, pinpoint the constraining errors and proffer recommendations to realizing democracy in Nigeria.

Convincingly, Nwalade and Obro (2010) reported that the federal government proposes that Social Studies should be a means of achieving creativity, self-reliance, and independence of mind, nationalistic outlook and freedom from mental colonization; this is no doubt embedded in the teachings of the Social Studies. As earlier stated, democracy is faced with lots of challenges as posited by authors; the Social Studies teaches the students to be rational thinkers that can make valid and reasoned decisions that can positively grow and develop the society; in this vein, the Social Studies can help intervene in the dilemma of Nigeria democracy because it will avail the citizenry the skills of rational thinking and informed judgment/decisions about Nigeria democracy.

The idea of democracy and its accrued benefits are rights and privileges of the individual citizen but the dilemma of democracy in Nigeria demands to ask if truly the individual citizen is aware of his or her rights and privileges; it is expected that any citizen who is conscious of his or her rights can be bold enough to ascertain the viability of democracy, be able to speak truth to power, condemn acts of corruption, tribalism, nepotism and cronyism in governance. The Social Studies is a discipline that teaches the citizenry to be conscious of their rights and privileges and thus be able to defend their reverend status as citizens; this is in line with the works of Ukegbu, Mezieobi, Ajileye, Abdulrahman and Anyaocha (2009) who asserted that the role of Social Studies in citizenship training for national development cannot be underestimated; they noted that citizenship can be seen as a position or status of being a citizen with all the rights associated to it. This implies that the Social Studies

can help engage the individual citizen to be conscious of his or her rights which are principled in the attributes of democracy and when his or her rights are trampled upon and privileges denied, it becomes clear that democracy is not viable and thus makes a stand. This therefore bring forth the Social Studies intervening role that will help exterminate the dilemma state of Nigeria democracy, thereby providing promising recommendations that will make democracy viable in the country.

Furthermore, the Social Studies is obliged as an is an educational discipline to achieve its set objective that equips students to develop critical thinking, problems solving, and decision making skills for the survival and progress of the country; apparently, this objective will afford the students to critically think about the state of Nigeria democracy, resolve observe problems constraining the viability of Nigeria democracy, x-ray the potentials of sustaining available developmental strides of democracy as well make positive decisions for the survival of democracy in our country, Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

This paper explored the dilemma of Nigerian democracy with the intervention of the Social Studies; it was envisaged that Nigeria as an African country that had adopted western democracy is faced with the constraints of acknowledging democracy. The paper which availed the attributes of democracy also noted the challenges of democracy which has gravely aided Nigerians to be at the crossroads of the reality of democracy in the country; but the intervention of the Social Studies which unveils to address and resolve man's issues and problems respectively have fostered its content to awaken the consciousness, broaden the narrow minded and elicit the prospective stand of Nigerians towards democracy. The dissemination of the rich content of Social Studies on citizenship and civic education to Nigerian students avails as an appropriate intervention to address the dilemma of Nigeria Democracy.

## **Recommendations**

The paper suggested that Social Studies be taught in all levels of education in Nigeria. Government should engage measures to eradicate bottlenecks foiling the effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum. Democratic Policy formulators should adopt the Social Studies as a valid asset. Then, quarterly seminars should be organized to keep the Social Studies teachers on track in the Social Studies.

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