

The Problems of Political Science Research in Nigeria and its Implications on the Political Development of the Nigerian State

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Abstract: This research study unfolds the impediments against Political Science research in Nigeria vis-à-vis the implications on the political development of the Nigerian State. Although, the paper discusses the conformity of Political Science as a field of study to scientific analysis, the study further indicate the orientation of political science research as an activity that is not fully integrated or utilized as inputs for solving social problems in Nigeria due to the gap that exist between universities/research institutes and the society. The implication of the above, in addition to other identified problems was stated to have negatively impacted on effective political leadership, stable political system and economic development in Nigeria.

Key words: Political science, implications, conformity, effect

INTRODUCTION

The scientific focus of the field of political science could be said to have been majorly propelled by the events of the Second World War, which places emphasis on scientific analysis in the social sciences^[1]. That is, on the behavioural pattern of individuals in the society cum political setting rather than on institutional description. Thus, the need for political science as one of the fields in the social sciences to be scientific. As a result, emphasis and efforts were geared towards making the field to conform with scientific processes of data gathering, classification, hypothesization and verification of hypothesis through quantitative methods through which inferences could be made. To achieve this purpose, scholars such as Robert Darl, Walter Sharp, David Easton, Fred Riggs etc, felt there was the need for a radical departure from the focus on the study of institutions to that of the individuals. This led to the behavioural approach to the study of politics with the focus largely on quantitative analysis through the use of questionnaire or interview schedule as means of data collection. That is, emphasis moved from the qualitative descriptive method to the quantitative method.

However, it is important to emphasize that modern research is both qualitative and quantitative. This is because while the qualitative technique provides the theoretical base and the update of available literatures in the focus of study, the quantitative method serve as the means for either reevaluation through unbiased process to

confirm the findings of others or for breaking new grounds that possesses generalization through the adherence to scientific processes.

It is also important to emphasize that political science as an aspect of social sciences focuses on man in relation to the acquisition and manifestation of power. Hence, the level of objectivity in the field is restricted based on the dynamic nature of man in which the researcher could find it difficult placing himself outside the interest of study or in which data collected from fieldwork could prove to be inconsistent^[2]. This however does not make political science not to be scientific. It only shows that some research in the field may prove to be more effective as a qualitative study rather than using the quantitative method^[3,4]. For instance, a study that focuses on the political instability of the First Republic or on the impact of colonialism on Nigeria' political development may be said to be more effective as a qualitative research rather than as a quantitative one.

As stated earlier, political science could be said to be scientific because of the field conformity to scientific methodology which is systematized and logical through data gathering, classification through acceptable theoretical framework, hypothesization or propositions, verification and generalization. This is coupled with the persistent research efforts by scholars in the field, which is geared towards curtailing the shortcomings inherent in the field as a social science.

Constermatively, genuine research efforts at enhancing knowledge in the field has been majorly attributed to the contributions of western scholars

such as: Gabriel Almond, David Easton, Herbert Simon, Fred Riggs, Robert Dahl, Hans Morgenthau, Karl Deutsch, to mention a few. Although third world scholars such as Claude Ake, Samir Amin, John Cohen, Walter Rodney, Gunder Frank, Dudley Seers' etc. has positively contributed towards the field using the political economy approach. Their contributions could be said to be mostly reactionary to the purports of the western scholars.

In addition, the positive Skewness of genuine research activities to western scholars, coupled with minimal research effort geared towards thickening the Nigerian political system serve as the main propelling factor on the part of the researcher to unfold the problems associated with political science research in Nigeria and its implication on the political development of the Nigerian State. To effectively achieve this purpose, the study is sectionalized into the following: theoretical framework, the problems of political science research in Nigeria, the implications of the problems on political development, the way forward and conclusion.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Development is a multi-faceted concept. An aspect of development is political development. According to^[5], political development can be understood from two basic attributes of the political system: political structure and political culture. That is, political development could be said to exist in a State if there are positive changes in the system. This positive transformational development as regards the political culture is what Almond and Powell referred to as cultural secularization. Cultural secularization is the process where the system or the State is transformed from its traditional, diffused and ascriptive values to the stage where men become increasingly rational, analytical and empirical in their political actions.

The above is a vivid indication that for political development to be enhanced through political culture there is need for political theory to be marched with practice or empiricism. This no doubt, will bring about a situation where political socialization and political behaviour both on the part of those in government and the governed would be a function of political science research which is geared towards improving the system.

As regards political structure, the positive transformational development in the political structure is what^[5] referred to as structural differentiation or role differentiation.

By structural differentiation or role differentiation the scholars refers not only to the development of new types of roles and the transformation of older ones, but also to

changes which may take place in the relationship between roles, between structures or between subsystems. This concept however could be viewed from two perspectives:

- The specialization of political roles, structures and subsystems
- The autonomy or subordination of these roles, structures or subsystem. This shows that a political system which is structurally specific, could be said to be developed and therefore effective than one which is structurally diffused or fused.

Although this theory, just like most western theory has been criticized for been compatible with western values and geared towards foisting western capitalist values and institutions on non-western institutions^[6], there is no doubt that the theory could be said to be useful in analyzing some of the problems associated with the lack of political development of the Nigerian State. For instance, there is no doubt that because of the persistent political instability in the Nigerian political system due to coups and counter coups^[7], the Nigerian political institutions/structures even in the midst of constitutional democracy tend to manifest trait of fused political structures as a result of the adaptive fused values of long years of military dictatorship which has been internalized by the Nigerian people. This factor in itself, constitute a major behavioural gap between theory and practice. This is because, democracy and democratic dividends could best be appreciated in an atmosphere where the people's behaviour conforms with democratic principles. The problems of political science Research in Nigeria.

As stated above, there is a big gap that exist between theory and practice in the Nigerian political system which has not only hampered political development in the Nigerian State, but which has also negatively impacted on political science research in Nigeria. These problems could be identified as:

The orientation of researchers: The focus here is on the orientation or the motive of academic research by researchers. As a matter of fact, most academic research by researchers of which political science research is often viewed as an academic exercise for self-upliftment through promotion rather than for the upliftment of the field or the system.

The existence of a wide gap between universities/ research institutions and the wider society: In the Nigerian State, a wide gap could be said to exist between universities or other research institutions and the wider

society in the sense that political science research are not considered as beneficial to the system. Hence, the non-adoption of political science research by the society as inputs for solving societal problems as regards governance. As a matter of fact, there is often the over-dependence and adoption of the transformational experience or practice of the western political system to the Nigerian State without due consideration given to its ecology.

Long years of military dictatorship: The long years of military dictatorship or political instability of the Nigerian State no doubt has negatively impacted on the low research culture in advancing political science research. As a matter of fact, the influence of western theoretical framework as the basis for political analysis with focus on such attributes as universalism, specific structures, achievement of roles through open participation etc proved to be incompatible with the Nigerian political system especially during military governance. Thus, most political science researchers were de-motivated in conducting research, which are western oriented for solving Nigeria's political system except for self-upliftment which became traditional.

Poor access to information: Because of the redtivism involve in doing government business in Nigeria, coupled with the secretive nature of governance, especially during military regimes which have not been transformed in the present dispensation, there is no doubt that it is very difficult to get access to vital information needed for research, especially when such a research has to do with government, as governmental information are always classified as secret^[3]. This no doubt constitute a major impediment on political science research in Nigeria because of the indispensable role of data collection in analyzing data.

Economic problem: The poor nature of the Nigerian is also one of the major impediments to political science research in Nigeria. As a matter of fact, most political scientists now eyes political appointments as a means for status enhancement rather than concentrating on teaching and research. Finance Problem: The poor funding of Nigerian Universities and other research institutes in addition to poor disposable income by researchers when compared to bankers or oil company workers, no doubt has affected the quantity and quality of research in our universities and research institutes. Implications on the Political Development of the Nigeria State.

The implications of poor attitude of political science research in a State such as Nigeria no doubt are far reaching. These are:

Poor political leadership: This implication has to do with the fact that poor political science research on the part of the Nigerian State no doubt has restricted the policy alternatives that ought to have been provided for effective governance. This is majorly because most political scientists prefers to be conformist of the system rather than been viewed as opposing the system so that they can benefit from the system in form of political appointment.

Unstable political system: The implication of ineffective governance arising from lack of opposition in terms of policy decisions tend to negatively impact on the system through instability. This is a major characteristic of the Nigerian State as the opposition that had existed was principally on the basis of ethnical issues rather than on policy.

Poor national economy: Since politics basically focuses on the authoritative allocation of State resources, there is no doubt that poor political leadership and unstable political system which emanated from poor research culture would negatively impact on the national economy. This is a vivid scenario of what is obtainable in the Nigerian State, in that poor political leadership and unstable political system has immensely hampered economic growth and development.

Poor standard of political science education: There is no doubt that students of political science tend to benefit from political science research conducted by their lecturers, as it tend to serve as input for teaching and updating both students and colleagues with new conceptual and methodological analysis. There is also no doubt that there are restricted access to research materials in the Nigerian universities on such branch of political science such as political theory, comparative politics, political philosophy to mention a few. The resultant effect is that most students of political science are not well grounded in political theories and models needed for scientifically analyzing political events.

The way forward

- Proper funding of research by government and corporate organizations or political parties, as a means of enhancing the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria.

- The prompt passage of the freedom of access to information bill through which democratic governance could be properly rooted in Nigeria by checking governmental abuses through awareness and encouraging research through access to information.
- A political science research award to be instituted by universities, the National Universities Commission or the political parties in Nigeria with specific focus on research that have immensely contributed to the improvement of the political system.
- Proper funding of universities to further encourage conferences, symposia and seminars on topical political issues in the country.

CONCLUSION

In order for effective research culture to be enhanced in Nigeria, there is need for both the government and the people to appreciate the worth of research as a tool for solving social problems. Thus, political science research no doubt could serve as a tool for enhancing the political development of the Nigeria State by restructuring the political culture of the people to be in conformity with democratic principles and by also restructuring the political structures/institutions of the political system to be compatible with democratic

principles. This restructuring no doubt must take cognizance of the unique environment of Nigeria's politics.

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