

Political Education and Community Development in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Arguably, political education is lacking in Nigeria (people do not get proper orientation from Government, the newspapers only set agenda for the citizens to be battling, most of which are not always correct), and that is why coordinated efforts by the masses towards development is largely unattainable as the people are disconnected from what the Government is doing. Consequently, the focus of this study is specifically to appraise the extent to which the Nigerian Political system nurtures politically active citizens that are products of effective political education and serve as facilitators for the development of the Nigerian society. The research combines the presuppositions and assumptions of agenda setting theory of the mass media with that of communication theory of politics in its theoretical framework, reviewed a number of existing literatures on the subject matter, and adopted survey research design within the framework of a case study method with questionnaire as its instrument of data collection. The study reveals that political education is still rudimentary, inadequate and mostly an one-way channel that is neither adequate to prepare respondents for political activities nor effective enough to serve feedback purposes. The research concluded that political education plays a very important and significant role in the development of any community. A role that shapes the political landscape of such a community as the extent of participation and the consequent level of development ensured through this means are all a factor of and

dependent on the type, nature and quality of political education received by the people.

Key words: Political education; Political culture; Political participation; Community development

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INTRODUCTION

As Nwankwo (2012) observed, one of the basic problems confronting Nigeria's political system today is lack of effective participation of the people in matters affecting them. Participation is a factor of multiple variables comprising involvement in decision-making process, implementation of made decisions, sharing in the benefits of made and implemented decisions and monitoring the entire process (Nwankwo, 2003). Compared with the past, particularly the immediate post-independent Nigeria, there appears today to be a sudden withdrawal of the people from political life (Nwankwo, 2012). Indeed, there is today a culture of every man to himself, which pervades the entire society including those who occupy public positions thereby hindering the necessary development.

Corroborating this stand, Vincent (2011) observes that most Nigerians are often misinformed or completely uninformed about the workings, actions and policies of government. He goes further to assert that some of the people who participate in elections and other programmes do not clearly understand the issues involved; some vote wrongly because they were told to do so or because they were disinterested in the electioneering process while others stay away from the entire electioneering process completely.

Another problem is that of a general feeling of despondency on the part of many Nigerians. A general feeling of alienation permeates the entire political terrain of Nigeria. Nwankwo (2012) asserts that apathy and powerlessness are key factors that can best be used to describe citizens' political life in Nigeria. It is this apathy of the people that stood in the way of massive citizens' consciousness while powerlessness is indicated by the fact that most Nigerians do not seem to have any means of participating in politics other than during elections which on many occasions are fraught with challenges. As such, there is the belief that there's little or no control over what elected officials do as representatives of the people in between elections to the extent that many have lost confidence in politics and associated activities and therefore spent incalculable efforts in fruitless sectional, ethnic and religious quarrels (Obasanjo, 1999).

Explaining the concept of powerlessness, Nwankwo (2012) noted that it has multiple negative ramifications: the breakdown of trust in indifference and even hostility to government and its activities. Others include high level corruption, basing of political activity on greed, selfishness and domination, lawlessness, jungle justice, etc, rather than the awareness of the inherent requirement of peace and mutual coexistence. All these are issues of concern endangering developmental processes.

In order to resolve this challenge, there is a need to go beyond the use of mere political propaganda through occasional jingles, media broadcast, caravan shows, lessons and verbal arguments. Though important in any polity, political propaganda must not be made to replace real political education, which in addition to lessons and verbal arguments must also be action and model-based. They cannot also be achieved by a sudden jump. On the contrary, it is a slow, systematic and continuous process of orientation and re-orientation in premise and goal. It progresses to whole hearted acceptance and internalization of a new set of values affecting the individuals as well as the social groups, day in day out and in practically every sphere of activity. Here the family, the school, Churches/ Mosques and other relevant institutions have roles to play.

Several studies have focused on the effect of leadership on the development of every human society (see Iyoha, 1999; Wunsch, 2004; Oviasuyi et al., 2010; Emmanuel, 2012; Oni, 2014). This is because of the belief that the task of development rest mainly on those at the helms of affairs who are saddled with the responsibility of piloting the affairs of a society, ensuring the well-being of its citizens, providing and maintaining the necessary infrastructures, maintaining peace, order and stability, as well as ensuring equity in the distribution of resources and fair treatment and justice for the oppressed. More so, the role of the citizens as well as the impact of their actions on societal development has been discussed extensively (Yusuf, 2005). The interface between both parties is where the missing link exists.

Consequently, the focus of this study is specifically to appraise the extent to which the Nigerian Political system nurtures politically active citizens that are "questioning in nature", confident to ask "why", seek the facts, probe and challenge; openness in public affairs, able to access information adequately and correctly, participate in public debate and decision-making and have respect for diversity of age, ability, gender, race, status, ethnic and religious differentiation as well as divergent opinions. These are outcomes of effective political education and are sine qua non to the development of any society

1. CONCEPTUALIZING POLITICAL EDUCATION

An appropriate approach to examine the concept of political education is to attempt a cross-examination of its different definitions as expounded by different authors. This is because no meaningful appraisal can be made of the impact of political education without a well-grounded understanding of the meaning of the concept itself. Galston (2001), while investigating the impact of citizen knowledge on the exercise of citizenship and informal civic education as a component of political socialization, asserts that political knowledge is a key determinant of instrumental rationality; more knowledgeable voters display much higher levels of ideological consistency; civic knowledge promotes support for democratic values and promotes political participation.

Several attempts have been made by different scholars to advance a definition for political education in order to ensure an understanding of the concept. Political education is a process of liberating the psychological and mental attitudinal behaviour of the citizens of a nation by sensitizing and concretizing them in order to have increasing awareness that would enable them to fully, actively and productively participate in the developmental process of their community.

Osakwe and Itejere (1993) refer to Political education as a system for the acquisition and internalization of the values, sentiment and norms of society in which they live and actually get involved to ensure that the common good of the citizens is catered for including resisting anti-social and unguided youthful exuberance. Osakwe (1993) sees Political education as a means of conveying to the learners, the body of knowledge, set of values and behavioural orientation that are considered vital and necessary for the sustenance and wellbeing of the people. In other words, political education is a set of practices and activities aimed at making young people and adults better equipped to participate actively in democratic life by assuming and exercising their rights and responsibilities in society.

For Iyamu (1999), political education is a conscious effort to inculcate in a people, a set of values and attitude

contingent on the need and problems of the society. Omare (1999), states that the manifestation of Political education can be seen in the behavioural traits such as critical thinking, activism, inquiry, goals and value of a good political system. Hamad et al. (2001) define political education as the process in which political attitudes and behaviours are germinated and formed which however is not limited to party politics such as voting, and electioneering campaign. Since good citizens are made, not born, civic knowledge is the bedrock of political participation (Galston, 2001).

Accordingly, Dave (2006) avers that political education is aimed at developing young people into responsible citizens, who understand their rights and responsibilities and can play an active part in society. By implication therefore, political education requires a citizen to be well informed, gather facts, reject ethnocentrism, religious jingoism and encourage national consciousness. What this suggests is that political education will develop in individual skills, attitudes and values that will enable them to show concern for the wellbeing and dignity of others, respecting the worth of others and approaching civil decision in a rational manner.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that political education performs the function of engendering political awareness within a society through the preparation of the people for the socio-political world in which they live so that they will become useful to themselves and contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of their society. In practical terms, it aims at getting the people to take part in their government, to assume their responsibilities of contributing to the development of the society, to make them aware of their rights, to provide them with the encouragement to defend their rights without fear and thus struggle against the impositions and domination of a few privileged, to harness and tap the latent forces in the people, to make them politics as an essential aspect of the entire social fabric and to make them less vulnerable to undue influences in the political process.

An insight into previous researches on the medium of acquiring political education indicates that there is no consensus of opinion on methodology of acquisition. While some authors are of the opinion that it is acquired from childhood, others opined that it is acquired through the formal institutions of learning, yet some others cede this all important task to other societal mechanisms like mass media and governmental agencies. However, a critical examination of these methods reveals that these agents are interrelated and interdependent.

For the purpose of this study, political education involves learning how to take part in public life at any level, from the very local to global. It means enabling people to take part in local community activities and have a voice; know who their representatives are in the community, public services and government; access

and analyse information about policies, issues, interests and points of view; understand formal and informal political processes and structures; develop confidence, skills and techniques to influence the political process; enable people to bring about social and political change; raise issues themselves as well as respond to decision-making opportunities; challenge decisions; and engage the political process themselves as elected representatives without fear of intimidation, harassment and unfair treatment.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research combines the presuppositions and assumptions of agenda setting theory of the mass media with that of communication theory of politics as its theoretical framework.

Emphasizing the mass media as an agent of educating the people, McCombs and Reynolds (2002) opine that agenda-setting theory describes the “ability to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda which the mass media possesses. Essentially, the theory opines that the importance attached to a news item by the listening/reading audience is determined by the frequency and prominence of coverage given to the news issue by the media. Lippmann (1922) argues that the mass media is the link between events in the world and the images of these events in the citizens’ minds. This assertion was aptly captured by Bernard Cohen (1963, p.13) who opines that:

...the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about... The world will look different to different people depending on the map that is drawn for them by writers, editors, and publishers of the paper they read.

Communications theory is an approach to social and political analysis, which emphasises the communications process, and asserts that the most crucial aspect of any political system is how information is received and processed (Isaac, 1985, p.289). Communication, that is, the ability to transmit messages and to react to them makes organisations (Deutsch, 1963, p.77), any thorough analysis of political organisations and systems must at least include consideration of the role of communication. More specifically, Ulmer (1962, p.397) sees communication as vital in implementing man’s control of his environment. This view from Ulmer remains the key point and the main contribution of the communications approach to the study of politics. Just like in the systems approach, it is through communication that inputs are received and acted upon, and outputs are generated by a system; in short, the effectiveness of a system—how effective it handles the demands of its environment—can be measured in terms of its ability to accurately analyse messages from the environment and effectively transmit messages that express reactions.

As Isaac (1985, p.290) noted, it is through communication that a political system relates to and cope with its environment. Without communications, there cannot be politics. The communications approach to the study of politics assumes that the behaviour and survival of political systems can best be analysed in terms of communication. The main assumptions of the theory can broadly be grouped into two:

- i. Ideas relating to the operative structures through which the political process is carried out.
- ii. Ideas explaining the flow and processing of information movement within the political system.

For Karl Deutsch (1963), the most important feature of a political system therefore, is its capacity to keep up with a changing environment through innovation. Both the concepts of “learning” and “lead” do not presuppose a static environment. Thus, a static system has no chance of surviving. While too many models of politics have emphasised the concept of “power”, which Deutsch equates with not having to learn or change, communications theory, on the other hand, emphasise learning and change.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In advanced democratic environments such as Britain, Sweden, France and the United States of America, the mass media have since been deployed to educate voters. In this sense, McQuail (2005, p.523) acknowledges that “in (such) democracies, the media... usually find their *raison d’être* in their service to their audience, to whom they provide information...” and education. In doing this, Curran (2005, p.129) adds that the media assist voters to make an informed choice at election time. The media achieve this in the form of news stories, write-up by columnists, commentaries, features and interpretative stories by journalists. Added to these is political advertising or space and time allotted candidates to showcase their potentials. Therefore, leading television presidential debates that are not bias are critical, if not deciding factor during elections. In 1960, the Democratic Party candidate J. F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon of the Republican, as well as the 1992 Bill Clinton and George Bush debates all in America, were handy examples. In Nigeria the contest between MKO Abiola and Bashir Tofa in 1993 needs to be mentioned. The National Concord newspaper as cited in Jibo (1997) gives a clinical report of the significance of the event.

For the mass media as channels of purposeful communication about development to be impacable, McNair (2003, p.24) avers that the political messages which cover verbal or nonverbal statements as well as visual presentations including all those aspects that develop a “political identity” or “image” should be deliberate. Denton and Woodward (1998, p.11) added that “the crucial factor that makes communication ‘political’ is

not the source of a message, but its content and purpose.” This is because political communication, in substance, revolves around the intentions of its senders to influence the political environment.

While advocating the need for the information role mass media play in enlightening the society, Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1998, p.10) emphasised that:

There has always been a need for political communication if for no other reason than to inform citizens about the services available and the manner in which they may be used. In a democracy, public information is crucial if citizens are to make intelligent judgments about the policies and activities of their political parties. Through information it is hoped that the people will have the necessary background to participate fully in the activities and programmes of the party system. (Wilcox, Ault, & Agee, 1998, p.10)

Thus, Denver (2007, p.125) maintains that communicating with masses in the hope of influencing their political behaviour is not new. It is as old as competitive politics itself. Denver (2007) continues that “For as long as there has been contested elections... those standing for election and their supporters have endeavoured ... to persuade the relevant electorate to vote for them.” They also enlighten voters on the election process which is an essential ingredient for a successful election as well as updating them regularly on political issues after acquiring political power. This is particularly crucial in view of the fact that the level of political awareness is very low in developing societies including Nigeria.

Lack of political awareness is greatly associated with the predominance of illiterates that constitute the electorate. Consequently, the uninformed electorate tends to ignore character or issues such as infrastructure, unemployment, corruption, insecurity, and living conditions. Their voting decisions are rather based on trivial considerations like party loyalty, social ties, ethnic and religious affiliations among others. This has inclined Jibo (1996, p.127) to the view that “...in Tiv land, the party followers used to say that *A lu kon kpa se votu*. That is, they were prepared to vote for even a tree if it was their party’s candidate”. Politicians, thus exploit voters’ lack of knowledge to perpetrate and consolidate the existing culture to their gain. This must have prompted Idiong (2010, p.254) to admit that “in Nigeria, there has been noticeable tendency on the part of the news media to overplay the personality rather than the issue.”

The media interest in political awareness is, therefore, obvious and pervasive. Government agencies like the National Orientation Agency (NOA), Civil Societies and electoral bodies like the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in Nigeria exploit the mass media as a tool for mass education and mobilization. These bodies among others involved mass media in enlightening citizens about the political system. With this development, Obot (2009, p.56) reiterates that audience members got to

know about aspirants and candidates for various elective positions as well as the manifestoes of political parties. Key factors taken into cognisance here, according to Ukwu (2007, p.165) are: Who chooses those who rule? How are the choices made and why? It remains a cause of concern therefore that after elections are concluded; such channels are hardly harnessed and effectively utilized to create a platform for education and knowledge acquisition by the electorates about the existing political activities and the entire process of politics in the system.

4. THE NEXUS BETWEEN POLITICAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Political awareness, which results from political education, is considered as a necessity to life in any human community where people live in a state of intellectual stagnation and do not seem to be interested in political participation and/or political decision making. Rather than focusing on political education, which is one of the main sources of political awareness, the bulk of the attention of the youths is oriented to secondary issues, interpreted in terms of difficult economic conditions, which diverts their attention away from this priority, the result of which is in difference to political activities, self-imposed disenfranchisement, lack of political will and in the long run, political apathy (Barwari, 2006).

The degree of awareness of individuals in any community affects its development. Man is both the means and purpose for development, the more the individual in the community is aware of his abilities and potentials, the more contribution is manifested in the field of development. Awareness has a regulatory framework that influences educational institutions as having a leading role in development, aiming at the creation of national development on a holistic level (Moussawi, 1990). Awareness is needed for any democratic political construction that respects human rights and fundamental liberties to be put in place. Hence, the study of the impact of teaching principles of political education as affecting the degree of political awareness of the people in a community and training them to take up leadership positions is an important prerequisite for the success of the development plans (Mohammad, 1999).

Ferguson (1984) strongly advocates that there is a relationship between the individual and the society in which s/he lives. She writes, "self and society are inseparable. *Eventually, anyone concerned with the transformation of the individual must engage in social action.*" (Ferguson, 1984, p.191) Ferguson discusses the historical basis for an emphasis on individual growth and transformation. She presents the doctrine of the sixties, "we must change society through changing ourselves," as part of a larger legacy of American individualism

(see Bellah et al., 1985). Ferguson goes further to assert that "Personal transformation, in effect, is an enactment of the dream of a society." (Ferguson, 1984, p.124) Stephen Brookfield (1991, p.13) also acknowledges this relationship in his work on critical thinking, "The histories of the labour movement and of civil rights activism. He graphically demonstrated the connection between individual improvement and social change.

The works of Ferguson and Brookfield are based on a belief in the citizen's self-governing capacity, the principle upon which democracy is premised. Since Aristotle, advocates of participatory democracy have argued that participation contributes to the intellectual and moral growth of citizens (Mill, 1991; Dahl, 1989; Mansbridge, 1980) and by extension, the society. Recent efforts to rebuild participation at the neighbourhood level have drawn on these earlier works, arguing that face-to-face participation is essential to making democracy meaningful at a daily level (Berry et al., 1993; Boyte, 1980; Moore-Lappe & Dubois, 1995). These advocates of civic renewal argue that participation extends beyond voting to "a set of attitudes and behaviours that makes common decision-making possible." (Moore-Lappe & Dubois, 1995)

Emphasising the notion that citizenship is an art that can be learned and cultivated, they describe a role for community organizations to serve as a school for acquiring political knowledge, whereby the organizations teach social and civic skills (Putnam, 2000; Moore-Lappé & Dubois, 1995). From the time of Dewey, education for citizenship has been understood as critical to social change (Dewey, 1996). While much of the earlier works on democratic pedagogy focused on children, later theories spawning social movements looked to adult education as a potential catalyst for engendering development in the society.

The relevant literature on individual transformation is rooted in popular education theory first expounded on by Paulo Freire in his revolutionary work, pedagogy of the oppressed. According to Freire, social change will come about as individuals realize their oppression, and transform their world as they transform themselves (Freire, 1982). Likewise, Myles Horton, who founded the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, claimed that individual development is central to democratic change and social development (Horton, 1998).

5. A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

This study employs the survey research design within the framework of a case study method. The entire people resident in Ibadan North local government area of Oyo State constitutes the population for this study. The research adopted Ibadan north local government area as a case study because of the qualities it possesses, being one of the centrally located and one of the largest

local governments within the state inhabiting people of diverse culture, background and knowledge as well as the local government within which the seat of government for the State is situated making it most suitable for the assessment.

According to the 2006 population census data, the local government area contains 306,763 inhabitants which in turns constitutes 5.49% of the entire population of the state and 0.22% of the entire country. Of this population, there is the literature class, the semi-literate as well as the non-literate classes covering different works of life. The sample for this work is selected using stratified sampling technique. This implies that the population is categorized into segments (before random selection) in order to ensure adequate and appropriate representation.

To this end, samples are drawn from the literature and the semi-literate population in order to ensure a balanced atmosphere. For the literate population, there is a focus

on students and workers within the local government out of which one hundred and fifty (150) respondents were randomly selected while an equal number is selected from among the semi-literate population which is constituted by market women, meat-sellers, artisans and the likes. This makes a total of three hundred (300) respondents (i.e. one in every 1,000 persons in the local government) sampled for the purpose of this study.

The survey instrument employed in the study is the questionnaire. 300 copies of the questionnaire comprising of structured questions (both close and open-ended) on the subject-matter were administered to the respondents. In analysing the data gathered in this study, some nonparametric inferential statistics which include a mixture of different descriptive statistics were employed. Essentially, data collected from the questionnaire was analysed in simple percentages and frequency correlates in order to establish the relationship between political education and community development.

Table 1
Showing the Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

| | Variables | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative % |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| 1 | Age (N=300) | | | |
| | 18- 25 | 72 | 24% | 24% |
| | 26- 35 | 135 | 45% | 69% |
| | 36- 45 | 51 | 17% | 86% |
| | 46 and above | 42 | 14% | 100% |
| | | 300 | 100% | |
| 2 | Sex (N=300) | | | |
| | Male | 159 | 53% | 53% |
| | Female | 141 | 47% | 100% |
| | | 300 | 100% | |
| 3 | Occupational group (N=300) | | | |
| | Student | 78 | 26% | 26% |
| | Working class | 72 | 24% | 50% |
| | Artisan | 84 | 28% | 78% |
| | Trader | 66 | 22% | 100% |
| | | 300 | 100% | |
| 4 | Level of education (N=300) | | | |
| | None | 6 | 2% | 2% |
| | Primary only | 18 | 6% | 8% |
| | Secondary only | 84 | 28% | 36% |
| | Undergraduate student | 54 | 18% | 54% |
| | Higher institution graduate | 126 | 42% | 96% |
| | Post graduate student | 12 | 4% | 100% |
| | | 300 | 100% | |

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

6. AN ASSESSMENT OF POLITICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA; A CASE STUDY OF IBADAN NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OYO STATE

This section is an empirical analysis of the relationship between political education, political participation and community development in Nigeria using a selected local government as a case study as shown in the tables below.

Table 2
Source of Political Education of Respondents

| | Radio | Television | Newspaper | Word of mouth | Social media | Internet | Posters, Handbills | Others | No source |
|----------------------|-------|------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|----------|--------------------|--------|-----------|
| Best | 123 | 27 | 30 | 30 | 48 | - | 15 | 24 | 3 |
| 2 nd best | 60 | 78 | 57 | 48 | 9 | 12 | 3 | 24 | 9 |
| 3 rd best | 21 | 60 | 63 | 42 | 12 | 18 | - | 24 | 60* |
| Total | 204* | 165 | 150 | 120 | 69 | 30 | 18 | 72 | 72 |

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

First, it should be noted that respondents were not given options for this question; rather, their responses were used to produce the table above. From the table however, it can be seen that information from the radio served as not only the overall main source of political education for respondents but also the most mentioned source amongst the lot. It is also surprising to discover that information through “word of mouth” appears very important on the list coming as 4th position overall after newspaper. It is however disheartening to see that political parties whose

primary duty it is to educate the people about political matters were not mentioned by any respondent while no agency of government was mentioned at all.

This research also sought to know from the respondents, the adequacy of political education acquired in preparing them for active participation in politics and the result indicated that it is grossly inadequate as it is mostly a one-way medium of learning and not the interactive type where clarification can be sought, questions asked, observations made or their reactions felt.

Table 3
Respondents’ Perception of Political Education

| | Students | Workers | Artisans | Traders | Total |
|------------|----------|---------|----------|---------|-------|
| Adequate | 30 | 18 | 30 | 21 | 99* |
| Inadequate | 48 | 54 | 54 | 45 | 201* |
| Total | 78 | 72 | 84 | 66 | 300 |

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

A whopping 67% of respondents opined that the political education available for acquisition is not adequate enough to prepare them for political activities.

There was also the need to investigate the relationship

between political education and participation of the people using a self-assessment scale of “well informed”, “somewhat informed” and “uninformed”. Responses were cross-tabulated and the table below was generated:

Table 4
Comparing Political Education With Participation

| | Well informed | Somewhat informed | Not informed | Actual participation |
|----------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Students | 30 | 33 | 9 | 39 |
| Workers | 30 | 24 | 11 | 36 |
| Artisans | 24 | 33 | 35 | 60 |
| Traders | 9 | 33 | 29 | 24 |
| Total | 93 | 123 | 84 | 159* |

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

This table revealed that 53% of total respondents reported participation. This figure also constitutes 73.6% of all respondents who rated themselves as “informed” and by extension politically educated. However, the fact that only 31% of respondents rated themselves as well informed and 41% believes they are “informed to some extent” has a lot of effects on actual participated as shown on the table. With 28% uninformed respondents and 47% in apathetical category, a lot still needs to be done regarding political education/orientation.

Subsequently, respondents were openly asked to indicate their level of understanding of community development practices and the extent of their individual involvement in community development practices. Their responses were cross tabulated with the initial categorization on the level of orientation. Result indicated that more that 50% of respondents did not understand what the task of community development really entails.

Table 5
Relationship Between Political Education and Community Development Actions

| | Understand civic duties | | | Knowledge of community development initiatives | | | Participate in community development activities | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-----------|--|---------------|-----------|---|---------------|-----------|-----|----|-----|
| | High score | Average score | Low score | High score | Average score | Low score | High score | Average score | Low score | | | |
| Well informed | 75 | 12 | 6 | 93 | 77 | 13 | 93 | 90* | 1* | 2 | 93 | |
| Somewhat informed | 67 | 20 | 36 | 123 | 30 | 12 | 81 | 123 | 48* | 20* | 55 | 123 |
| Not informed | 5 | 11 | 68 | 84 | 3 | 6 | 75 | 84 | - | 15 | 69 | 84 |
| Total | 300 | | | 300 | | | 300 | | | | | |

Note. * indicate actual participation in Political activities.
_ indicate lack of understanding of community development initiatives
Source: Field Survey, 2015.

7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One of the issues of concern in this research was to examine the level of political culture of the people and it was discovered as shown in Table 2 above that the level of political awareness/education was not only considerably poor but also grossly inadequate. It was further revealed that information from the radio serves as not only the overall main source of political education for respondents but also the most mentioned source amongst the lot. It was also found out that information through “word of mouth” appears very important on the list. However, political education available for acquisition was found to be grossly inadequate as it is mostly a one-way medium of learning and not the interactive type that is neither adequate to prepare respondents for political activities nor effective enough to serve the feedback purpose espoused by David Easton in his input-output model of systems analysis.

Another attempt was made in Table 3 to appraise the extent of political participation of the people within the area. Combining the relationship between level of political education and extent of participation with involvement in community development practices, there was the discovery that political education has a direct positive relationship with political participation but the present status of the respondents has been largely unable to foster community development practices in them as they are not

adequately equipped to be actively involved in community development activities. This finding is corroborated by that of Mohammad (1999) who opines that the study of political awareness is needed for any democratic political construction that respects human rights and fundamental liberties. Hence, the study of the impact of teaching principles of political education as affecting the degree of political awareness of the people in a community and training them to take up leadership positions is an important prerequisite for the success of any development plan.

In Table 4, this research sought to examine the extent to which people’s participation has engendered community development within the area and it was discovered that community development initiatives as well as outcomes are still at the rudimentary stage due to the level of political education available to respondents within the sampled area. This assertion was based on the finding that most respondents do not understand what the task of community development really entails as some do not know more than their civic responsibilities as citizens and thus do little or nothing in addition while many do not even know their civic responsibilities at all.

Lastly, there was an attempt in Table 5 to test the perceived effect of the political activities within the community on people’s way of life. On this, it was discovered that majority of people believed that they are

affected by what the government does but most of them are of the opinion that the government is affecting them negatively.

CONCLUSION

Consequent upon the findings in this research and within the purview of its statement of problem, it can be concluded that political education plays a very important role in the development of any community. This role is not only important but also very significant and goes a long way in shaping the political landscape of such a community. This is because the perception of the people about their government, the extent of their participation and the consequent level of development ensured through this means are all factors of and dependent on the type, nature and quality of political education received by the people.

This is why it is pertinent for a political system to have a mechanism for orientating its members, liberating their psychological and mental attitudinal behaviour politically by sensitizing and conscientizing them in order to have increasing awareness that would enable them to fully, actively and productively participate in the developmental process of their community. When this is done, an atmosphere of unity, peace and prosperity in which no one is oppressed, where sound leadership and followership is assured, where there is freedom from the multi-dimensional socio-political ills of corruption, indiscipline and savage-like existence resulting in the development of man, around whom community development is built, is guaranteed.

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