

# Political education in Nigeria: the mobilisation theory thesis perspective

## Abstract

Political education is a desideratum for enhanced political skills, knowledge and participation in democracy. Thus, this study argued that political education programmes significantly relate with political participation. It mobilizes the cognitive capacity and efficacy of individuals to process complex political event or information and engage actively in political activities. Also, the study demonstrated that electoral violence and other factors such as cultural practices, family background, institutional and low level of political knowledge militates against political participation. The citizens for want of security, consequent upon electoral violence, develop aptly toward political participation. Therefore, to maximize the benefits of political education programmes and ensure sustainable democracy in Nigeria, the government and other political education agencies should develop a pragmatic political education framework. To arrive at this conclusion, the study employed cognitive mobilization theory as its theoretical framework of analysis. Through the use of secondary sources, relevant data relating to the objectives of the paper were generated and analyzed. Consequently, the study stresses the need to institutionalize and intensify political education programmes at all levels so as to enhance political skills, knowledge and participation of the citizens. Imperatively, a reduction in the rate of electoral violence can as well be achieved through effective political education and strict implementation of electoral laws. Hence, for political education programmes to effectively mobilize the skills and knowledge of the citizens for active participation in political, there is an urgent need for adoption of grassroots-based communication approach by political education agencies in disseminating political knowledge.

**Keywords:** mobilization theory, democracy, political education, political literacy, independent national electoral commission, political participation

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## Introduction

The role of Civil Society Organizations in development has been reinforced in recent times by the emphasis on participatory development and democracy. In this regard, they are seen as the gate-keepers of our polity. In Nigeria's grand design for good governance, the populace assign to them enormous responsibility to take development and democracy down to the people. Unfortunately, this is not backed up with adequate infrastructure, knowledge of democracy, development and resources. Their role is also circumscribed by an over-centralized state and persistent top down approaches to development. While the state does not fully understand which types of engagement with Civil Societies would work on the one hand, Civil Societies on the other do not fully perceive the importance of a partnership with the state. Their proposed involvement in voter education and mobilization of the electorate during elections provide another opportunity to experiment with Civil Societies' participation in governance. This initiative was specifically designed to support the entrenchment of participatory democracy and drive it to a sustainable level in Nigeria with Civil societies mobilizing and sensitizing the electorate to increase voter registration and ensure a free and fair election in 2015.

As part of its contributions towards ensuring successful elections in 2015, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) inaugurated a committee on voter education and mobilization. The committee under the chairmanship of former president of the association, Mr. Joseph Daudu (SAN), was to sensitize Nigerians on how to exercise their rights to elect the leaders of their choice. The NBA President, Mr. Augustine

Alegh (SAN), who performed the ceremony in Abuja, stated that the role of the committee was crucial at this point in time as Nigerians approach the general elections. He said: This is because there are several defects in our electoral system occasioned by ignorance on the part of both the political class as well as the electorate. The NBA Voter Education and Mobilization Committee, therefore, is charged with the task of sensitizing the public on how to exercise their franchise with a view to ensuring that not only do their votes count, but that elected officials are held accountable to the citizens. The abiding logic of democracy is that a government that assumes power based on its overwhelming electoral support ultimately has the interest in the overall wellbeing of its citizens. Consequently, for there to be a major turnaround in our electoral system, the citizens must be enlightened and educated adequately. It is in line with this mandate and this administration's solemn promise as contained in my inaugural address on August 29, 2014 where I stated thus: 'The NBA, using its network of 109 branches and over 2,000 bar leaders would engage in voter education and voter mobilization for the 2015 general elections on a strictly non-partisan basis. Simply put, this means that only lawyers, who do not belong to any political party and who are totally committed to the noble ideals of our great association would be allowed to participate in this exercise. All lawyers participating would be required to make statutory declarations of non-political affiliation which would, if found to be false, lead to disciplinary measures against such a lawyer.'<sup>1</sup>

The fact that Nigeria is planning another election after fifteen years of democratic transition is a sign that democratic principles have been

widely accepted in spite of the myriad of problems confronting the process. As the state shows growing commitment to its stability, the time is ripe for civil society to prepare itself and the citizenry to demand for power sharing in a truly participatory democracy. The first step is to educate itself and the public about democratic principles and create an environment in which more people are contributing to development by registering to vote and are voting to prepare the ground for greater citizen's voice in decision making, increased pursuit of equity and equality.

This study, therefore, examined the relevance of political education using the mobilization theory with a view to finding out the impact of political education on political participation of the citizens. Moreover, the study identified the factors militating against political participation in Nigeria. It also explored the communication and mobilization approaches adopted by political education agencies in disseminating political knowledge with a view to evaluating their effectiveness and make appropriate suggestion for enhanced contribution of political education programmes to political participation. To achieve these objectives, contextualizing political education follows the introductory remarks. The theoretical framework of analysis which was anchored on mobilization theory was used to analyze the importance of the political education. The third section addresses the significances of political education in a polity. Instances were drawn from both developed and developing nations. The final section offers recommendations and concludes the paper.

### The concept of political education

Political education, which is one of the oldest topics in political theory, is once more on the radar screen of contemporary Political Science. Compared to the previous generations, scholars today are more likely to agree that well designed institutions are not enough, and that a well ordered polity requires citizens with the appropriate knowledge, skills and traits of character.<sup>2</sup> Since Plato and Aristotle first raised the issue of political and civic education, it has been clear that political education is relative to regime type. Democracy requires democratic citizens, whose specific knowledge, competences, and character would not as well suit to non democratic politics. Popkin & Dimock,<sup>3</sup> in their analyses of low information rationality theory, demonstrated that citizens with low level of information cannot follow public discussion of issues and are less inclined to participate in the political process.

An opposition party, Progressive Action Congress (PAC) before the 2015 elections called on politicians and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to give priority attention to voter education, in order to improve Nigeria's electoral process. Speaking during an interview in Abuja, the Party's National Chairman, Charles Nwodo, said that the negligence of the importance of voter education had been responsible for violence and a bulk of void votes during past elections. According to him, "It is unfortunate that Nigeria operates fire brigade approach in some of our undertakings, especially as regards to voter education," the PAC chairman said, blaming INEC for not embarking on voter education exercises until elections were about to start.

The concept of political education, however, has been subjected to different interpretations by scholars. In traditional socialization studies, the term political education was used synonymously with political literacy to mean the goal of political education. In a similar perspective, Denver & Hands,<sup>4</sup> have conceived political literacy or

education as the knowledge and understanding of political issues, which enable people to perform their roles as citizens effectively. Westholm et al.<sup>5</sup> describe political education as the basic concept and facts that constitute a necessary condition for comprehending the contents of public debate. Krosnick simply viewed political literacy as political expertise, while Zaller,<sup>6</sup> called it political awareness, which is the extent to which an individual pays attention to politics and understands what he or she has encountered. Moreover, Carol & Celia, have conceived political education as the potential for informed participation in political activities. Annette,<sup>7</sup> in describing political education, employed the concept of education for democracy which he argues is education that is based on the study of politics for the purpose of encouraging civic participation, as well as the development of virtues, and political knowledge through the provision of opportunity for service learning or active learning in the community.

Educating potential voters, is however not INEC's responsibility alone; political parties, civil societies, religious and traditional institutions, as well as the National Orientation Agency should also collaborate with the electoral body in this regard. The government should be willing to fund such organizations in the voter education campaign, from the grassroots level upwards. As Nwodo said, the process of complaints where one's name is omitted, the dangers of violence and rigging, how to protect their votes and how to make votes count generally will be avoided. All information related to the elections should be made known in advance for the betterment of the exercise.<sup>1</sup>

Boggs<sup>8</sup> has argued that adult education agencies are uniquely positioned to promote civic and political minded attitude and skill necessary for participation and involvement in democratic society. According to him, public forum or study group may be the most widely and popularly adopted means of adult political education. Similarly, Gastil,<sup>8</sup> asserts that deliberation on political issues has the potentials to influence the political conversation network and conversation behavior of citizens. Barber,<sup>10</sup> has stressed that full participation in public life by democratic citizens needs their understanding of important policy issues. For instance, in addressing the needs for democratic development in a polity, the first step is for the polity to educate itself and the public about democratic principles and create an environment in which more people are contributing to development by registering to vote and are voting to prepare the ground for greater citizen's voice in decision making, increased pursuit of equity and equality. The targets of this capacity building project should be CBOs organized by and for both men and women. The youth are included and should be assigned a major role in erasing the consequences of apathy and disinterestedness of the electorate. Through a partnership between the state and civil society which are saddled with the responsibility of information dissemination, voter education and mobilization of the electorate for the 2015 elections.

Political education, therefore, for the purpose of this work is synonymous with political literacy. It refers to transmission and acquisition of political knowledge, skill and attitude necessary for informed participation in the political process. A politically educated citizen, in this context, is a citizen that has acquired the basic political knowledge and awareness that enhance the citizen's involvement in conventional political activities such as registration as a voter, voting in elections, running for political offices, membership of a political party and discussing political matters. Put differently, political education should focus on the core issues of democracy and good governance.

These concepts are located within the context of sustainable democracy and development to assist electors to appreciate the link between the elections and the social development problems of the polity. With a combination of simple lectures, brainstorming and group work, for instance, the major concepts are elucidated and applied in an analysis of the developmental effects of poor voter registration, low turnout at elections and rigging. The need for elections, functions of elections and requirements for a free and fair elections are also given due coverage in political education. The Constitutional and Legal Frameworks for elections and the opportunity to understand the Constitution and laws protecting the peoples' mandate, the roles of the different layers of government, the structure and functions of INEC, the judiciary, the political parties, law enforcement and security agencies, CSOs, faith based organizations, the media, communities and individual citizens are equally vital in the understanding of political education. The (Figure 1) captures our thesis on the issue.

The above cognitive model of political education demonstrates that fruitful deliberative experience through verbal interaction, modeling, enactment or inference could boost participants' political outcome valuation because of positive feelings participants often derive from sincere dialogue. As a result of a successful deliberative experience, participants might develop more positive expectancies, self-efficacy, and group efficacy regarding political engagement and participation. Besides, public deliberation on political matters between the citizens and the fellows on one hand and the citizens and the socializing agent on the other hand, models democratic behavior and provides participants with the opportunities to practice that behavior.

### Theoretical framework of analysis

The theoretical framework for this study is cognitive mobilization theory of political literacy and participation which is one of the major strands of thought within the framework of mobilization theory. Although other strands of thought within the context of mobilization theory include social mobilization theory and resource mobilization theory, this study is anchored on cognitive mobilization theory associated with Dalton.<sup>11-14</sup>

In cognitive explanation of political education and participation, political scientists speculate that education and political involvement mobilize political literacy as an internal process. Thus, cognitive mobilization theory postulates that political education and political engagement act upon the individual to mobilize his mental capabilities in dealing with politics. Cognitive mobilization theory is the process through which people receive their cognitive cues to make decisions on voting and participation in other forms of political activities.<sup>11,13</sup> postulates that political education has an especially strong effect because it reduces the costs and increases the benefit of voting in multiple ways. First, education increases the cognitive skills that facilitate learning about politics. Second, the better educated receive more gratification from electoral participation. Thus, political education according cognitive mobilization theorists helps people overcome the bureaucratic obstacle involved in voting process. According to Tam Cho,<sup>13</sup> it is not higher education per se that increases one's likelihood of voting, but rather the socialization process that is provided through education. Cognitive mobilization theory of political literacy argues that political education increases engagement in politics by developing the citizens' cognitive skills which in turn enables them to process complex information about the political system and to enhance feeling of civic duty.<sup>14</sup>

Cognitive mobilization theory attributes the process that causes education and political participation to determine political awareness to psychological forces inherent in human nature. Converse,<sup>15</sup> maintains that political elite have higher level of political sophistication than the political masses because of the mobilizing effect of political involvement. Campbell<sup>16</sup> are of the view that rising education level in society would gradually increase the ideological consciousness of the citizens, especially at the lower level where lack of education may be more incapacitating. In their low information rationality thesis Popkin & Dimock.<sup>3</sup> are of the view that citizens with low level of information tend to be less keen in participating in politics where as those with high information rationality are more keen in political issues such as public debate on policy, voting in elections, standing for political position and canvassing for votes. In a similar view Nie et al.,<sup>17</sup> state that, in addition to promoting support for democratic principles, educational resource increases the verbal cognitive proficiency and related intellectual skills, which improves the ability to comprehend political events and act in an instrumentally rational manner. Delli Carpini & Keeter,<sup>18</sup> has concluded that people with higher level of political knowledge are more successful in linking their personal interest with matching public issues. Nie, Junn & Stelhlk-Barry,<sup>19</sup> has asserted that through its impact on cognitive ability, education not only greatly facilitates the acquisition of political information and skills to engage in politics but it, similarly, dramatically lower the cost of gaining, pursuing and integrating political knowledge.

Dalton,<sup>12</sup> in demonstrating the cognitive mobilizing capacity of political education agencies such as mass media, argues that the development in technology and mass media have increased the public's political abilities. According to Dalton, in Western democracies, the availability of mass media has equipped the electorate with greater resources of information and increased their overall political sophistication as a result. This has occurred through a process of cognitive mobilization whereby citizens now have the resources and skills that prepare them to deal with the complexities of politics and reach their own political decisions.

Cognitive mobilization involves two separate developments. First, the public's ability to process political information has increased through the higher levels of education and political sophistication among the electorate. Second, the cost of acquiring political information has decreased such as through the expansion of mass media. Thus, cognitive mobilization means that citizens now possess the political skill and resources that better prepare them to deal with the complexities of politics and reach their own political decisions without reliance on affective, habitual party cues or other surrogates.<sup>20,21</sup> Dalton<sup>20</sup> presented initial cross-national evidence that the cognitive mobilization process creates a new group of sophisticated independents and the proportion of the public that qualifies as these new independents is increasing in Western democracies. Similarly Inglehart<sup>21</sup> found that the percentage of sophisticated non partisans has increased significantly in Europe over time and Wolf demonstrated a longitudinal growth in cognitively mobilized non partisans within the American, German and British electorate. Adamson<sup>22</sup> has posited that education is positively correlated with participation in politics among any social groups. It is the most important factor in any policy that seeks to increase participation among immigrants. On his part, Jacobs et al.,<sup>23</sup> states that education level seems to be a much more important element of integration and participation. It is education that leads to sufficient "bridging" capital such as language skills and general knowledge ability on how to live in a polity.

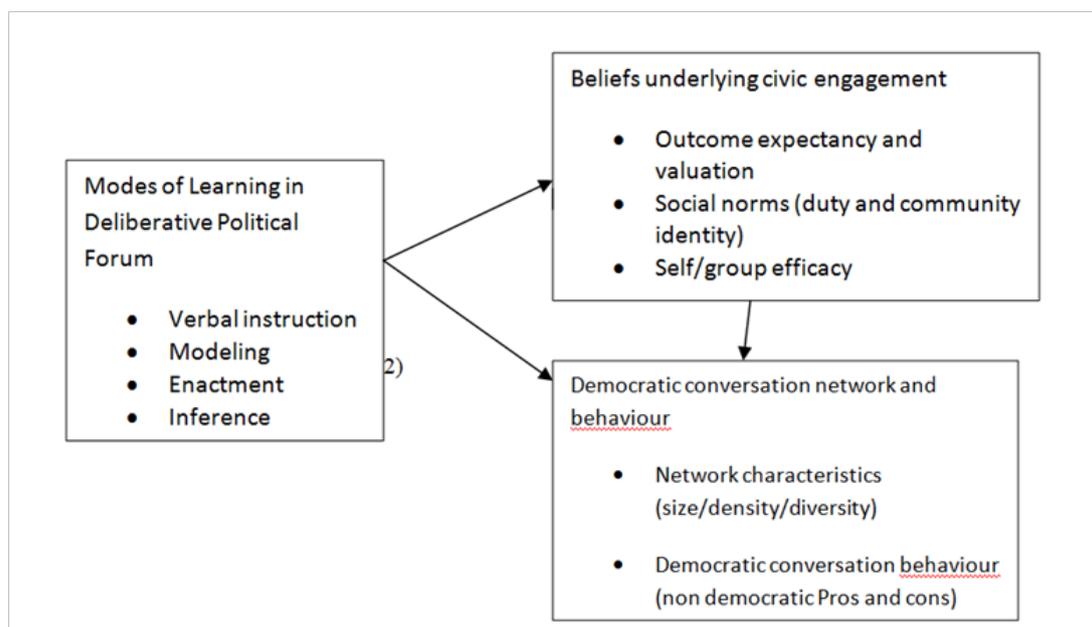


Figure 1: A social cognitive model of political education.

Source: Gastil (2004:312)

It is important at this juncture to state clearly that resource mobilization theory, which is distinct in its assumptions from cognitive mobilization theory adopted in this work, view organization and participation in collective political activities as normal, rational and institutionally rooted. The theory emphasizes the importance of structural factors, such as the availability of resources to a collectivity and the positions of individuals in social networks, and stresses the rationality of participation in group actions.<sup>24</sup> Participation in political action is not seen as the consequence of predisposing traits or states but as a result of rational decision process whereby people weigh the cost and benefits of participation.

**Tenets of cognitive mobilization theory of political literacy and participation**

The basic assumptions of cognitive mobilization theory employed in this study are as follow.

- i. Education is a key indicator and determinant in measuring political knowledge and participation because of its cognitive mobilizing impact on mental capabilities of the citizens in dealing with politics.<sup>22,25</sup>
- ii. Access to political education increases engagement in politics by developing the citizens’ cognitive skill which in turn enables them to process complex information about political system, and to enhance feeling of civic duty.<sup>14</sup>
- iii. Citizens with low information rationality tend to exhibit political apathy where as those with high information rationality have the propensity to actively engage in politics.<sup>3</sup>

- iv. Rising education level in society would gradually increase the ideological consciousness of the citizens especially at the lower level where lack of education may be more incapacitating.<sup>15,16</sup>
- v. Cognitively mobilized publics are more issue oriented in their participation in such activities as voting and less inclined to be led by the elite.<sup>11</sup>
- vi. Political education increases the verbal proficiency and related intellectual skills which improve the individual’s ability to understand political event and act in an instrumentally rational manner (Nie et.al, 1996)
- vii. Education through its impact on cognitive ability not only greatly facilitate the acquisition of political information and skills to engage in politics but also dramatically lower the cost of gaining, pursuing and integrating political knowledge for active political involvement.<sup>12,19</sup>
- viii. The process of cognitive mobilization is a process where efficacy, knowledge and participation all play a role in the political mobilization of a citizen.
- ix. Education develops the necessary cognitive skills that help voters to process complex political information such as deciphering political rhetoric and selecting the appropriate candidate and party. It can also improve the socio-economic position of individuals, which in turn may lead to higher participation as these groups typically have a greater interest in election outcome.<sup>14</sup>
- x. Citizens who have high level of cognitive mobilization are those who possess both the skills and the motivation to deal with the

complexities of politics on their own without the need of external cues from the media.<sup>14</sup>

- xi. Education instills a sense of civic duty by fostering democratic values and beliefs and encouraging participation in socially oriented activities.
- xii. Participation of people in collective political action is a consequence of a rational decision process stemming from education and other socio-economic considerations.
- xiii. There is sensitivity to the importance of costs and reward in explaining individual and group engagement in collective behavior because people tend to maximize benefits and minimize costs by weighing the cost and benefits of participation.<sup>24,26,27</sup>
- xiv. The development in mass media technology and greater access to education have decreased the cost to obtain political information, therefore individuals are able to understand the complexity of politics by being able to focus and gather information on certain events and issues that have meaning for them.<sup>11,12</sup>

### Application of theory

This study, in its analysis of the nexus between political education programmes and political participation, aligns itself with the assumptions of cognitive mobilization theory of political literacy and participation, which is one of the major strands of thought within the spectrum of mobilization theory. Cognitive mobilization theory is a process through which people receive cognitive cues to make decisions on voting and participation in various political activities owing to skills and knowledge derived from political education.<sup>11</sup> It is a process in which the citizens become politically sophisticated having the skills and resources necessary to become politically engaged with little dependence on external cues. This research, thus, uses cognitive mobilization theory to explain the outcome of the process when citizens are presented with political information and participatory opportunities through different political education agencies.

Dalton<sup>12</sup> argues that development in technology; education and mass media have increased the public's political abilities. According to him, in Western democracy, the availability of mass media has equipped the electorates with greater resources of information and increased their overall political sophistication as a result. This has occurred through a process of cognitive mobilization whereby citizens now have the resources and skills that prepare them to deal with the complexities of politics and reach their own political decision.<sup>11,12</sup> The increase in formal education in Western democracies is further evidence of a more sophisticated electorate. The increase in university and tertiary education enrolment numbers in the United States and Europe is evident that parts of the electorate are receiving higher education than their predecessors.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, with rising level of political education in Nigeria it is expected that the ideological consciousness of the citizens, their verbal proficiency and related intellectual political skills as well as cognitive ability will improve. This will lower the cost of gaining, pursuing and integrating political knowledge for active political participation.<sup>12,19</sup>

Cognitive mobilized public in a state such as Nigeria are more issue oriented in their participation in political activities and less inclined to be led by the elite. The development of this kind of political sophistication among electorate has played role in the decline

of party identification as a key variable in voters' decision-making and increased the level to which voters are influenced by issue position proximity to their own ideas and belief.<sup>11,12</sup> Declining partisanship among the cognitively mobilized citizenry may also be encouraging them to forgo traditional method of political participation encouraged by political parties and instead mobilized themselves into direct action method such as signing petition, protesting, mass demonstration and boycott. Citizens who have high level of cognitive mobilization are the ones who possess the skill and motivation to grapple with the complexities of politics on their own without the need of external cues.

The background to the development of cognitive mobilization thesis (advancement in technology and education) suggests that it is more likely to take place among the younger generation as they are the ones who are exposed to higher education and mass media from an early age.<sup>11</sup> The process of cognitive mobilization involves the interplay of efficacy, knowledge and participation in political mobilization of the citizens. Nie et al.,<sup>28</sup> has argued that education as a key indicator in measuring political participation increases the cognitive ability of individual to process complex political knowledge that enables the individual to participate actively in politics in an instrumentally rational manner. Thus, with political education, the citizens of Nigeria are presumed to have increased their cognitive ability to process complex political issues and actively engage in political activities.

Therefore, in examining the impact of political education programme on political participation in Enugu state, the question is on how political education has encouraged the cognitive mobilization of the citizens to participate in political activities such as voting, electoral campaign, voters registration, discussion of political issues, engaging in political debates, joining political parties, financing political parties, and sponsoring candidates for elections. Hopefully, the basic assumptions of cognitive mobilization thesis have the capacity to offer an analytic framework for analyzing and ascertaining how the level of political sophistication of the citizens obtained through political education has related to their level of political engagement. In other words, it provides appropriate analytic basis to examine the extent to which political education has acted upon Nigerians to mobilize their mental capabilities in dealing with political issues.

### Significance of political education

Although several studies have highlighted the important of political knowledge, some studies, however, were quite doubtful about the ability of political education, particularly in school, to influence the political attitudes of the citizens. Langton & Jennings,<sup>29</sup> found no significant effects of civic education experience on political participation and knowledge. In a later study, Jennings & Niemi<sup>30</sup> were equally skeptical about the possibility of political education efforts having a lasting impact on the political attitudes of adolescent. Their central argument was that most political attitudes are already well established before people make it to high schools. Notwithstanding some of the negative views about the significance of political education, several studies have established a nexus between political education and enhanced political behaviour. Galston,<sup>31</sup> Milner<sup>32</sup> & Home,<sup>33</sup> were of the views that political sophistication is a prerequisite for effective incorporation into the political system and inculcation of democratic values for active political participation. Delli Carpini & Keeter,<sup>18</sup>

opine that citizens with a high level of political knowledge are more prosperous in achieving their individual or group interest because of their level of political efficacy. Deductively, the justification or significance of political education may be summarized as follows:

### Interest identification and articulation

Political education helps citizens to understand their interest as individual and as members of group. The more knowledge citizens have, the better they can understand the impact of public policy on their interest, and the more effectively they can promote their interest in the political process. Delli Carpini & Keeter,<sup>18</sup> offered a wealth of evidence that political knowledge foster “enlightened self interest”, that is, the ability to connect personal or group interest with specific public issues and to connect those issues with the candidates who are more likely to share their views and promote their interest. As Eme et al.<sup>34</sup> posited, Tambuwal was not proud to identify with the leadership of the PDP since he assumed office as speaker. Lai Mohammed pointed out that he became Speaker through the support of the opposition and his personal charisma. Mulikat Adeola from Oyo State was the candidate of his party while the opposition decided to support him against his party. Perhaps, it is a personal trait of the Speaker to have gone pleading with the party leadership for forgiveness after contesting and defeating the candidate of the party on the floor of the House. He said at the time that he wanted the forgiveness of the party leaders the way a son would plead for forgiveness from his father. Since he won election on the ticket of the PDP, he has always publicly proclaimed to be a member of the party even though he made comments and took actions that were clearly targeted at embarrassing the party. His criticisms of the Federal Government was considered more biting than that of the opposition. He was also said to have avoided important meetings of state as demanded by his office. Unconfirmed report said he deliberately avoided functions where the President and PDP leaders were likely to be present. When 37 members of the House defected to the rival APC, Tambuwal refused to act despite directive from the party. It was glaring that he was more with the defecting legislators as many said at the time that he was part of the planning process for the betrayal of the party. There were reports of his meeting with the leaders of the opposition APC in the recent past. While it was believed initially that he was to be drafted for the presidential race by the party, it seems now that he has settled for the governorship position in his state, Sokoto. It would be recalled that former Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida, had planted the seed of Tambuwal contesting for the highest position in the land. Babangida did not mince words when he publicly asked the Speaker to make a bold move to be the number one citizen. To confirm the bond between him and the opposition, virtually all leaders of the APC and aspirants to state and national elective offices were at the palace of the Sultan of Sokoto to witness his turbaning as the new Mutawallen Sokoto by the Sultan of Sokoto. The event attracted the entire members of the National Executive Committee (NEC) and National Working Committee (NWC) of the APC that was led by the party’s National Chairman, John Odigie-Oyegun. Other notable leaders of the party at the ceremony proper included two national leaders of the party, former Head of State, General Muhammadu Buhari, and former Governor of Lagos State, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, as well as a presidential aspirant and former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar.

### Comprehension of political system

Political education helps citizens to learn more about political phenomena. It is difficult to acquire more knowledge unless the citizens

have a certain basis of knowledge. The new knowledge the citizen’s gain can be effectively utilized only if they are able to integrate it into an existing framework.<sup>35</sup> Unless citizens possess a basic level of political or civic knowledge, especially concerning political institutions and processes, it is difficult for them to comprehend political phenomena or to incorporate new information into an existing framework. Popkin & Dimock,<sup>3</sup> distinguished between personal character and political character. They demonstrated that low information citizens are much likely to judge officials according to their perception of non contextual personal character.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the various political activities that manifested in the 2007 and 2015 general elections and enormous resources expended by political education agencies on political education programmes in Nigeria, the impact of the programmes on political attitude or behavior of the citizens, has remained an issue of intense debate among scholars, public administrators as well as political leaders and, thus, has to be cautiously weighed. While some scholars and analysts are of the opinion that despite the public and private resources invested in political education programmes by the various agents of political education, the programmes have not achieved much in awakening the political consciousness and participation of the people and, therefore, should either be revamped or abolished, others are of the view that the programmes have contributed considerably to political sensitization of the people and their enhanced participation in the political process.

Understandably, therefore, there is ongoing concern to understand the sources and character of political abstention. Voter apathy, a subset of political apathy, has thus emerged as a major problem in mature and emerging democracies, settled and volatile societies, large and thriving economies, as well as small and troubled ones, among youth, women and other marginalized groups as much as among mainstream dominant interests.

Several factors that affect voter apathy have been highlighted in relevant literature. Some of these include broad psychological factors and collective memory of historical and contemporary events. Others are patterns of trust, feelings of efficacy, political engagement and disengagement at individual, group and regional levels. While there is empirical evidence that the global trend has been toward a decline in voter turnout, there is lack of grounded and sustained scholarly attention to voter apathy in the context of voter turnout in Nigeria despite the challenges plaguing that country’s electoral system (The Independent National Electoral Commission and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung).

### Consistency of political views

Political knowledge, it has been argued, increases the consistency of views across issues and across time. Utilizing panel survey form national election studies, Delli Carpini and Keeter found a strong linear relationship between political knowledge and the stability of political attitude. They also found that more knowledgeable voters demonstrate much higher level of ideological consistency among issues than the less informed.

### Building political trust

The more knowledge citizens have of political affairs, the less likely they are to experience a generalized mistrust of or alienation from public life. Ignorance begets fear but knowledge begets trust. Popkin & Dimock,<sup>3</sup> posit that the more knowledgeable citizens tend

to judge the behavior of public officials as they judge their own, in the context of circumstance and incentives, with due regard for innocent oversights and error, as well as sheer chance.

For example, Political efficacy and social trust theory attempt to explain how citizens' feelings that they are capable of influencing the political process and the confidence that the political system will be responsive to their needs, affect their participation in politics. Political efficacy, which is the extent to which an individual feels that his or her participation in politics will be effective, has long been considered a fundamental political attitude.<sup>36-38</sup> In deed confidence in one's capacity to exert influence on the political process is consistently associated with actual political participation,<sup>16,38,39</sup> has noted that feeling of political efficacy, which is essential to the level and quantity of political engagement, is obviously in relationship to individual's psychology and to the emotional networks an individual has to political system and practice.

Efficacy theory assumes that the more people believe that their efforts to influence the government will be rewarded with success; the more likely they will be willing to engage in such efforts. In other words, the degree to which an individual feels that he or she can make a difference politically, as well as, the extent to which that individual feels politically competent determines the individual's level of political participation.<sup>40,41</sup>

### Building democratic supports and values

Political knowledge promotes supports for democratic values. For example, the more knowledge citizens have of political principles and institutions, the more likely they are to support core democratic principles, starting with tolerance.<sup>28</sup> found direct a path from education to both knowledge of democratic principles and tolerance.

According to Riker & Ordeshook,<sup>42</sup> the electorate in voting for candidates or parties of their choice, engage in a strategic cost benefit calculation. They vote either because their votes might decide election or because it is a consummation activity. Others vote because they enjoy it and feel a sense of responsibility. In Nigeria, some citizens participate actively at the level of voting by ensuring that despite every odd, they cast their votes for candidates or parties of their choice. In 2015 general election in Nigeria, more than twenty million registered voters participate in the presidential election voting.

### Building political participation

Political knowledge promotes political participation .All thing being equal, the more knowledge citizens have the more likely they are to participate in political matter. Delli Carpini & Keeters<sup>18</sup> regression analysis demonstrates a highly significant independent effect of political knowledge on probability of voting. Popkin & Dimock,<sup>3</sup> also in their multivariate analysis, concluded that the dominant feature of nonvoting in American government is a consequence of lack of knowledge about government, not distrust of government, lack of interest in political, lack of media exposure in politics, or feeling of inefficiency. Nie, Junn & Stehlik-Barry,<sup>28</sup> added that, in addition to promoting support for democratic principle, education increases verbal cognitive proficiency and related intellectual skills of citizens.

Supporting this thesis, internal efficacy, in particular, has been identified as an essential goal of civic and political education efforts.<sup>43</sup> In their study Pasek et al.<sup>44</sup> argue that participation in citizen voices has significant relation to greater political efficacy, higher rate of

political attentiveness and higher level of knowledge about the political system. The scholars have noted that political attentiveness mediates the effects of efficacy on participation and that it is only through greater political attentiveness that efficacious individual becomes more likely to participate in politics by voting. They further maintained that enhancement to standard civic education can play an important role in long term political and civic socialization. Effective civic education according to Pasek et al.<sup>44</sup> seems to be the backbone of both political knowledge and engagement. Previous research in political socialization has established a nexus between internal efficacy and attention to or involvement with politics. Delli Carpini & Keeter<sup>3</sup> have demonstrated that internal efficacy motivates the acquisition of political knowledge which enhances political engagement.

### Alteration of political view

Political knowledge can alter citizens' opinion on specific public issues. For instance, the more knowledge citizens have, the more likely they are to change their views on policy matters base on new development. The expressive theory of participation is founded on the assumption that there exist ties between violent civil war and increased political participation. In other words, it attempts to demonstrate the political legacy of violent wars contrary to assumption of that violent civil war is counter- productive.

Expressive theory for instance is associated with the works of Carmil & Breznitz, Wood, Bellows & Migmel & Blattman.<sup>45-48</sup> Wood,<sup>46</sup> contends that violence in El Salvador prompted its victims to support and even join opposition forces out of moral outrage. Bellows & Migmel<sup>47</sup> found that war related displacement or death in the family led to greater political participation and awareness in Sierra Leonean household. Psychologists such as Carmil & Breznitz & Punamaki et al.<sup>45,49</sup> demonstrated that victims of violence are in general resilient and that exposure to war has led to political activism among groups such as Jewish holocaust survivors and Palestinian victims of bombardment. Toure, contends that the Liberian civil war witnessed birth of robust indigenous civil society and human right organinstaion. Blattman<sup>48</sup> investigated the impact of violent war on political engagement in Uganda and concluded that combatant experience and exposure to war violence led to greater political participation and engagement among young men formerly in an armed group. The expressive theory of participation in essence holds the view that voters and leaders are motivated to participate because violence increases the inherent value placed on political expression.

### Recommendations

Voter mobilization is vital to reduction of voter apathy. By definition, it requires the cooperation of stakeholders working together to ensure credible, inclusive, transparent, free and fair elections, It is for this reason that the study places much premium on voter education and mobilization. The study identified the Independent National Electoral Commission, politicians, political parties, media, Government and the voters themselves as major stakeholders on democracy in Nigeria. Based on the above, the paper recommends as follows: Political education helps electors in making the right choice, avoiding bribery, resisting the temptation to sell votes, avoidance of other criminal acts and political violence as well as ensuring that voters defend their votes and protest within the law when necessary. Again political education of the populace will help the electoral management body in conducting of a transparent and credible election which should be the most important contribution from INEC, with other contributions

including voter education, a demonstration of INEC's independence, provision of adequate election materials, recruitment and training/re-training of competent staff as well as improvement of the voter registration.

Government should Provide support to INEC, fulfill electoral promises, engage in public enlightenment campaign, ensure adequate security for voters, stop corruption, enforce the law and order in the society as well as non-interference in the electoral process.

Politicians should fulfill the electoral promise made during the campaign, stop violence and do or die politics, educate their supporters and organize peaceful political rally. Other suggestions include accepting the election results without manipulation, avoiding bribery and corruption as well as being responsible and honest representative of the people.

The Press should assist in voter education; provide timely, accurate and factual information, unbiased report, equal coverage and avoiding bribery and corruption.

## Conclusion

This study, therefore, explored the relationship between political education participation in Nigeria with a view to ascertaining the impact of political education on political participation in Nigeria. It also investigated the factors militating against political participation and suggested appropriate measures for enhanced contribution of political education programmes to political participation. In view of the above, it was discovered that Political education programme has been linked to cultivation of democratic virtues, knowledge, skill and attitudes necessary for political participation.<sup>30,50-70</sup> Between 1999 and 2015, political education agents in Nigeria such as government agencies, political parties, schools, mass media, interest groups and non-governmental organizations executed a series of political education programmes such as voters' education and mobilization programme, political party education programme, leadership and citizenship training programme, human right education programme and credible and violent-free election campaign.<sup>71-90</sup> These programmes, no doubt, consumed considerable human and material resources of the state. For instance, in 2009 fiscal year, the National Orientation Agency, which is a government institution and an agent of political education,<sup>90-110</sup> had a budgetary allocation of ₦3, 505,429,786 from Federal Government. The allocation was distributed as follows: recurrent, ₦3,148,829,786; personnel, ₦2,533,883,486; overhead, ₦614,945,940 and capital/programme, ₦356,600,000. In the fiscal year 2010, the budgetary allocation was increased to ₦5,269,806,960 and was distributed as follows: personnel cost, ₦3,130,351,426; overhead, ₦835,940,534; and capital/programmes, ₦1,123,924,885.<sup>111-130</sup>

To achieve these objectives, the study employed cognitive mobilization theory as it theoretical framework of analysis through the use of secondary sources, relevant data relating to the objectives of the paper were generated and analyzed. Consequently, the study stresses the need to institutionalize and intensify political education programmes at all levels so as to enhance political skills, knowledge and participation of the citizens. Imperatively, a reduction in the rate of electoral violence can as well be achieved through effective political education and strict implementation of electoral laws. Hence, for political education programmes to effectively mobilize the skills and knowledge of the citizens for active participation in political, there is an urgent need for adoption of grassroots-based communication approach by political education agencies in disseminating political knowledge.

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## Conflict of interest

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