

## Development of Political Science Education and Nigeria's Experience

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### Abstract

The objective of this paper is to explain the conceptual meaning and relevance of political science education as a discipline in global politics and Nigeria in particular. The study also traced the origin, historical antecedence as well as changing dimension in the development of Political Science as a discipline. The paper also explained some teaching methods relevance to Political Science as a discipline that covers different forms of specializations in politics such as political theories, political philosophy, political ideologies, comparative politics, public administration, political economy, conflict and conflict resolution, international relations and international organizations. The authors in this study identified some challenges encountered by Nigerian Political Science Teachers in both post Primary and Tertiary Institutions (colleges and universities). This paper adopted the descriptive research design method in examining Political Science Education in Nigeria. Methodologically, the study also adopted secondary sources of data collection and used functionalist theory culled from sociology as theoretical framework that offered explanations on the relevance of political science education in Nigeria. Content analysis is used in the paper to explain the findings of this study which establish positive facts in justifying the need for Political Science Education in Nigeria. Conclusively, the study made some recommendations such as national curriculum review by making political science a compulsory course/subject for all disciplines, field trip/excursion as well as in cooperating Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning Political Science subject for quicker realization of Nigeria's national policy in education.

**Keywords:** Politics, Political Science, Political Science Education, Nigeria.

### Introduction

Political Science is fundamental to the understanding of one's rights and responsibilities as a citizen and to understanding international politics and laws (American Political Science Association, 2020). In other words, it is the systematic and analytical study of the acquisition, control and exercise of power by individuals, groups and organizations within the political system. The study of political science education is very important for the understanding of relations among states and international organizations, their interdependence, co-operation, peaceful co-existence and mutual assistance (National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2012). The scope for political science as a discipline includes: public administration, international relations, comparative politics, political theory, political philosophy and political institution (Kadiri, 2017).

Robert (2007) further explained that the Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science education is available to students wishing to teach at the secondary level and colleges of education in many countries in the world and Nigeria inclusive. In Nigerian universities and colleges students supplement their study of political science with a combination of education, history, economics and geography as well as Library Science courses. The degree certificate prepares the undergraduates for teaching in both secondary schools and colleges. In Nigerian colleges and universities undergraduates' study of political science as a course usually consists of courses on Nigerian Government and Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Civil Society Organizations and Political Theories. Hence, this paper adopted the descriptive research method in explaining the discipline of political science.

### Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study as earlier mentioned adopted secondary or documentary sources of data collection which had to do with information gathered from textbooks, journals, articles, newspapers, online documents and official documents. Report and data collected were analyzed utilizing content analysis.

Also functionalism or functionalist theory extracted from sociology was used as the theoretical framework that provided basis for explanations. Functionalism emerged in the early 20th century and dominated American social theory in the 1950s and 1960s (Gómez-Diago, 2020). The theory was propounded by Auguste Comte (1789-1857), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) and Robert K. Merton (1910-2003) (Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman and Moore, 2013 and Gómez-Diago, 2020). Although this perspective emerged in the 19th century, it became dominant during the 1940s and 1950s. Functionalism is a macro-level theoretical perspective in social sciences especially in sociology to be precise (Sujan, 2021). The theory has been referred to as Structural Functionalism or Structural-Functional Theory or Functionalist Perspective or Functionalist Theory. It is one of the important theories in sociology (Sujan, 2021).

Functionalism views society as a system (or structure) of interconnected parts such as groups, institutions such as family, religion, government, economy etc which work (function) together to maintain social equilibrium, social solidarity, and stability. It states that our social lives and behavior are guided by social structures, which are stable patterns of social behavior and stability in any human society (Gómez-Diago, 2020 and Sujan, 2021). Moreover, functionalism is a theoretical perspective that focuses on the functions performed in society by these social structures such as institutions, hierarchies, and norms. Within this theory, function refers to the extent to which a given activity, knowledge or institution promotes the maintenance of a system (Gómez-Diago, 2020).

Some of the basic assumptions, tenets or Premises of Functionalism include:

- i. Society is made up of various parts, sub-parts as well as individual units. These

parts or units are grouped to form a structure of society.

- ii. This perspective views society as static and focuses on integration rather than conflict and separation. Even if a conflict occurs they are meant to contribute to social order and stability.
- iii. Society is built base on functional prerequisites and imperatives which are defined as the general condition necessary for the maintenance of a system. Functional Unity: this refers to When elements/parts or institutions of the society (system) function together to meet the goals of the society, there arises unity among them in terms of their function.
- iv. Functional Universality: The functionalists assume that in any society in the universe, the functions of the elements (parts) are always positive.

Functional Indispensability: The theory also assumes that elements (parts) cannot be separated from the whole i.e. society which means that society with its parts functioning is indispensable to keep the system (society) functioning (Gómez-Diago, 2020 & Sujan, 2021).

- i. Furthermore, functionalism was never free of Criticism just like other theories in social sciences. Sujan (2021) identifies the following limitations of Functionalism:
- ii. Functionalism emphasizes social stability and order while neglecting conflict and changes which are so vital in any society. So, it failed to explain rapid social changes taking place in the society especially in the 1960s and 1970s when revolution in technology started.
- iii. As a macro-level theory, functionalism neglects social realities at a micro-level such as the social change that occurred due to cooperation, conflict and westernization, etc and
- iv. Functionalism is also accused of explaining the social world based on presence and ignoring the past.

The theory is relevant to this study to the extent that the paper aims at revealing the relevance of

political science education in global politics and Nigeria in particular.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

**Politics:** The term “politics” is said to have been used, first by Aristotle who is generally regarded as the father of political science and the term was derived from the Greek word “polis”, meaning a city (Adamu, 2010). In ancient Greek the “city” was the state and the discipline that dealt with the city-state and its problems was depicted as politics. In ancient Greek, politics aimed at achieving moral guide for the actualization of the good life in all its ramifications. In modern times, the term politics has received a new meaning that is essentially viewed from a holistic way as of human activities including clubs, associations, institutions, organizations, and even family among others. (Adamu, 2010) defined politics as an activity that is universal to all societies, at all levels and at all times-past, present and perhaps even the future.

It is not unique to state, groups, institutions, political parties, and trade unions but also exists in the family, clubs, schools, colleges, religious organizations, multinationals companies, and work place. The central concept of politics is power, and therefore struggle for power is regarded as politics and this is why Ologbenla (2015) sees politics as the process of making and execution of governmental decision. Moreover, Kadiri (2017) noted that politics is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rule under which they live. The concept of politics is further classified into three viz: formal politics, which refers to the operation of a constitutional system of government and publicly defined institutions and procedures. Semi-formal politics, which is politics in government associations such as neighbourhood associations, trade unions or student governments' union where political party politics is not often important. Informal politics is understood as forming alliances, exercising power as well as protecting and advancing particular ideas or goals. Generally, politics includes anything affecting one's daily life (Political Science, 2020 & Idris *et al*, 2021).

**Political Science:** Political science is a social

science discipline dealing with systems of governance, and the analysis of political activities, political thoughts, and political behaviour. It deals extensively with the theory and practice of politics which is commonly thought of as determining of the distribution of power and resources. Furthermore, political science is related to, and draws upon, the fields of economics, law, sociology, history, philosophy, geography, psychology/psychiatry, and anthropology (Political Science, 2020). Specifically, when used as a science discipline, political science refers to the study of politics by the use of scientific methods in contrast to political philosophy which is free to follow intuition (Dare, n.d.). According to Ologbenla (2015) and Management Study Guide (2023) the scope of political science is vast and experts have divided the field into five sub-disciplines, namely: political theory, public administration, comparative politics, international relations, and public law. It needs to note that these sub-disciplines cover the entire gamut of the modern political economy and provide the basis for the study and understanding of how the global political economy works.

**Political Science Education:** Education is the process of developing knowledge, skills, and ability in learners for personal and societal enhancement. While Political Science Education is a discipline concerned with teaching and learning as well as critical analysis of political theories, political institutions, political organizations and activities of the State (Kwasau, 2013). It examines political dynamics, adjustment of the individual to the state, international laws, international relations, the concept of power and power relationship among members of a given society (Kwasau, 2013; Dauda & Garba, 2017). Political science education deals extensively with the teaching of analysis of political system, the theoretical and practical applications of politics, and the examination of political behaviour (Idris *et al*, 2021 and Management Study Guide, 2023). In other words, Political Scientist is a person who studies politics using scientific methods in analyzing human behaviour, political phenomena, public and private institutions as well as conflicts among men. A person could be a well-informed political scientist and seasoned

politician simultaneously. Political scientists see themselves as engaged in revealing the relationships underlying political events and conditions, and from these revelations they attempt to construct general principles about the way the world of politics works (Mahajan, 2000; Political Science, 2020; Idris *et al*, 2021 & Management Study Guide, 2023).

### Literature Review

#### Development of the Discipline of Political Science

The discipline of Political Science is one of the oldest in the pedigree of social sciences in particular and all sciences in general (Adamu, 2010). It was the need for social organization guided by specific rules in the history of human development that necessitated the need for science of the understanding of the organization and control of social relationships, particularly when contested values, interests and preferences create discords. Consequently, this prompted political thinkers to philosophize on various issues of political concern to society with a view to proffering adequate mechanism of regulating the actions of people. The discipline started from ancient Greek's city-states as historical and descriptive understanding of political phenomenon with reference to ideas of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle among others and not the study of the science of politics as it is known in modern times (Idris *et al*, 2021).

The advent of political science as a university discipline was marked by the creation of university departments and chaired with the title of political science arising in the late 19th century. In fact, the designation "political scientist" is typically for those with a doctorate in the field, but could also apply to those with a master's in the subject as a result of the breakthrough in the science of politics. This was as a result of the work of numerous scholars who emphasized new methods and techniques of scientific research (Idris *et al*, 2021). Shift in focus from the traditional to scientific methods of political analysis was also informed by what is considered by the proponents of scientific study of politics as "Behavioural Revolution". Central to behaviouralism was the development of research in political science using scientific procedures and methods as well as emphasis on

interdisciplinary approach (Adamu, 2010 & Political Science, 2020).

The advent of the World War II also brought about a re-think by political scientists that the Legislature, the Executive, agencies, and the Courts did not exist by themselves and that they did not operate independently of one another or of the other political organizations in society. Political scientists in America and Europe embarked on new fields of study by examining the political parties, interest groups, trade unions, as well as corporations and church organizations. Ideologies have also commanded the attention of political scientists because of their ideological role in the formation of Ultra-Right and Ultra-Left political parties and movements (Ologbenla, 2015).

Chicago University was one of the leading institutions in the development of modern political science today. Consequently, this led to development of post behaviouralism aimed at bridging the existing gap between theories and political relevance of the discipline to the humanity. David Easton was one of the leading scholars in modern political science (Adamu, 2010). Like all social sciences, political science faces the difficulty of observing human actors that could only be partially observed and who have the capacity for making conscious choices unlike other subjects such as non-human organisms in biology or inanimate objects as in physics. Despite the complexities, contemporary political science has progressed by adopting a variety of methods and theoretical approaches to understanding politics and methodological pluralism which is a defining feature of contemporary political science (Political Science, 2020 & Idris *et al*, 2021).

The importance of political science lies in the fact that all of us live within political systems and we are affected by the changes in the global political economy. With the advent of globalization, there has been a concomitant rise in the interest taken by the people of the world in understanding the political systems of other countries. Hence, political scientists become valued and important as they provide the lens through which we could understand the global political economy. There are many colleges and universities all over the globe that provide



graduate and higher-level degrees in political science and in recent years due to the renewed interest in political science as a field of study, there are many takers for these courses especially with the invention of many sub-fields in political science such as conflict and conflict resolutions and strategic studies among others (Management Study Guide, 2023).

### **Political Science Education in Nigeria**

According to Matusov (2023) one of the goals of political Science education is to instil the value of democracy into students as the most desirable form of state governance and develop basic skills in the students necessary for participation in civic structures and processes. Such a form of Political Education involves limited democratization of educational structures and processes for instance, the school curriculum by giving students some choices; the school instruction by organizing debates and involving argumentation especially on the history of Nigerian government and politics; the school organization by having town hall decision-making meetings and writing students-based class constitutions, and so on. Students are socialized into the process of how to participate in deliberate democracy skilfully and state affairs as a whole (Matusov, 2023).

At the degree level, political science major, combined with other courses are taught in more than hundred (100) public and private universities out of the 264 universities in Nigeria (National University Commission, 2023 and Tolu-Kolawole, 2023). As a field of study, Political science is combined with other disciplines in universities such as political science and conflict resolution, political science and diplomacy, political science/international law and diplomacy, political science and international studies, political science and defence studies, public administration and international relations (Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination Brochure, 2023). At the level of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), teaching and learning political Science is very essential so much so that it is combined and studied as single major with more than eighteen (18) different subjects in more than hundred (100) colleges of education and polytechnics out of 218 Colleges of education and polytechnics that offer NCE Course in the

country (National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2023). Political science at NCE level is combined with computer Science, English, French, Geography, Fine and applied Arts, Islamic Studies, Igala, Tiv, Yoruba, Mathematics, Social Studies, Hausa, Ibibio, Igbo, History, Music and Special Education (Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination Brochure, 2023 & National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2012).

In recent literatures, it was learned that the content of educational programmes of higher education significantly affects the quality of training of future specialists so also the countries' efforts in achieving political stability and socio-economic development of any kind (Nikiporets-Takigawa *et al*, 2020). This is why in this study it was revealed that with the beginning of the transition to new educational standards engineered by revolution in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) the group of specialties and areas of studies Political Science inclusive has established that it is important to evaluate the current trends and try to predict the future stages of the institutionalization of political science education across the globe and in Nigeria's higher education institutions inclusive i.e. colleges and domestic universities just like what is obtained in other places base on the 2022 Teaching and Learning Conference at APSA's Annual Meeting in Montreal (Julio & Allison, 2023).

### **The Challenges of Political Science Education in Nigeria**

Some of the challenges of political science education identified by Wallace (1954); Muhd (2008); Idris *et al* (2021) and Kwasau (2013) are explained below:

1. Lack of required number of qualified, skilled and experienced political science professionals capable of providing standards in political science education in both classical and contemporary context (Kwasau, 2013).
2. Lack of conducive atmosphere that will accommodate both teachers and students for teaching and learning political science education. Most of the secondary schools, colleges of education and universities in Nigeria where political

- science education is taught encounter this challenge. This may emanate from large number of students in one class or shortage of classroom facilities as well as poor conducive environment for both lecturers and students is a platform for better academic excellence as argued by Muhd (2008) & Idris *et al* (2021).
3. Poor funding of political science education programmes just like in other courses in Nigeria which leads to poor application of methods of teaching and learning. Consequently, this leads to poor instructional materials, poor research attitudes, lack of good academic commitment and devotion of the students, less attention on the practical aspects of teaching and learning the course such as excursions and media programs (Kwasau, 2013).
  4. Laxity in encouraging modern Political Science teaching techniques such as interactive classes, effective human resource methods, forum for debates, conferences and internet models. This problem comes especially from the side of teachers and school/college management (Idris *et al*, 2021).
  5. Another challenge of political science education in Nigeria is that, most of the colleges of education where the course is taught have problems of conflicting lecture time and venue with other departments due to lack of enough classes and lecture halls which also leads to poor teaching condition (Kwasau, 2013).
  6. Shortage of modern technology base instructional materials especially in secondary schools and colleges for teaching and learning political science. These greatly create obstacles in curriculum implementation. This consequently constitutes a drawback to government efforts in achieving National Policy on Education in Nigeria (Idris *et al*, 2021).
  7. Lack of cohesion or uniformity of teaching strategies or methods where there are more than one arm at the same levels especially in secondary schools and colleges. This may create poor comprehension among students as the teachers may adopt different teaching methods and interpretations of political science concepts.
  8. Cult and other social vices such as drug abuse in secondary schools, colleges of education and universities as in other disciplines hinders smooth and spoil conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning of political science in Nigeria (Idris *et al*, 2021), and
  9. Being a newly introduced course in some Nigerian colleges of education, political science education encounters challenges of shortage of enough textbooks and other reading guides in their libraries.

### **Methods of Teaching Political Science Education in Nigeria**

The 2022 Teaching and Learning Conference at American Political Science Association (APSA's) Annual Meeting in Montreal highlighted innovative presentations in the Simulations and Games track scholars discussed new ways to engage and teach students across a variety of topics in political science such as using game theory as a tool for teaching strategy in international relations. Also the use of ancient plays to understand modern conflicts through the collaboration of Political Science and Theatre Departments were seen as very important techniques in the teaching and learning of political Science (American Political Science Association, 2020 and Julio and Allison, 2023). However, the followings methods were identified by Olutade (2009); Kwasau (2013) and Idris *et al* (2021) as contemporary and most repeated use methods for teaching and learning political science in Nigerian Colleges and Universities:

#### **i. Teacher-Centered Methods of Teaching Political Science**

The teacher-centred methods of teaching political science comprise the use of lecture method, storytelling method, Repetition and drill method, Review method, Note-giving method, controlled question and answer method among others. There is no one single best method of teaching political science. It depends on how they are being used. Lecturers/Teachers are free to use any of them or to combine two or more methods to teach a single lesson in an

effective way.

### Learner-Centered Methods of Teaching Political Science

The learner-centred methods of teaching political science include; inquiry method, discovery method, problem solving method, springboard method, case study method, Role playing method, small group discussion method, Homework, supervised study, and field work (Olutade, 2009 and Kwasau, 2013). Daughtrey (1974) believes that the students-centred methods create a far better atmosphere for learning than the teacher-centred methods.

### Some Instructional Materials for Teaching Political Science in Nigeria

Kwasau (2013) and Idris; Adamu; Sufi and Adamu (2021) had indentified the followings instructional materials as very helpful teaching aids in teaching and learning political science especially in Nigerian Colleges and Universities:

#### Print Learning Materials

##### **Textbooks, Magazines and Newspapers:**

Olawepo (2003) argues that textbooks are the principal learning materials in most schools. Textbooks on political science or government include those written by Ya'u 2019 "Politicians, Fake Face Book Profiles and the Possibility of Being Unwitting Hate Speech Purveyors", Spikin B.R. (2021). "A Worthy Stewardship: Hon. Murtala Sule Garo in Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Kano State (2015-2020)", Murtala Ahmad 2021 "I am a Bandit: A Decade of Research in Zamfara State Bandit's Den", Robson L. 2005 "Countries of the World: Nigeria", Mbachwu 2008 "Foreign Policy Analysis: The Nigerian Perspectives", Mahajan 1988 "Political Theory", Kabir 2022 "Our Commitment for Kano 2023 and Beyond. The Blueprint to create a Prosperous Kano by NNPP Gubernatorial Candidate", Kadiri Yunusa 2012 "Fundamentals of Social Studies Education", Isah; Ado-Kurawa; Muhammad; Bala and Musa 2017 "Kano: The State, Society and Economy 1967-2017", Dauda Hassan and Garba Salisu 2017 "An Introduction to Philosophy of Education", Toba Alabi 2018 "Elements of Politics and Strategic Studies", Akpuru-Aja

2020 "Strategy Lenses: Masters of Strategic Thought & Strategic Studies", Bello 2011 "Nigerian Government and Politics", Oyediran 2008 "New Approach Government", Walter Rodney 1973 "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa and Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigerian, 1999 as Amended 2011 etc. Apart from textbooks, periodic magazines, journals and daily newspapers are also used in teaching political science. They both contain items on political behaviour and political actors (Olawepo, 2003).

**Pictures:** Newspapers, world/national political and geographic maps as well as magazines sometimes carry large flat pictures that are of political significance. Lecturers/Teachers of Political Science normally collect maps and such pictures to mount them on cardboards and provide titles written at the top (Olawepo, 2003).

**Non-Print Instructional Materials:** These are not hard materials that can be touch and handle by both teachers and students during instruction. Unlike other above instructional materials, the non print materials are divided into three as follows:

**Geographical Environment:** The local environment contains materials that can be used to teach political science. Museums, public palaces, courts, legislative houses, and offices of political parties could be visited by the learners in the company of the teacher. The visit could be a short one, lasting a few hours or a long one lasting for two or more days (Olawepo, 2003).

**Instructional Films and Videos:** Videos and films are also used to accomplish the objectives that cannot be attained by the use of books and other materials. Films and videos are used so that students should know what to look for. After the show, they should discuss the moving picture and follow it up with written work (Corbin 1981). Some examples of these films on African and Nigerian government and politics include: Tears of the Sun, Book of Negroes, Black November, Roots, October First, The First Grader, Hotel Rwanda, Beasts of No Nations, Naija by Jide Olanrewaju, Blood and

Oil, Half of the Yellow Sun, Cry Free Town and Amina etc.

**Tapes and Records:** Record player has a place in political science. Tape is used to record interviews with political actors, committee meetings, legislative debates, radio presentations and telecasts of political events and play back in class. Moreover, during the teaching disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic, academics became more familiar with online techniques, applications and software such as Kahoot for virtual teaching (Alhassan, Sa'idu and Adamu, 2023). Scholarly pedagogical engagements with the pandemic have pointed to several web-based apps that support online teaching especially using Padlet, Mentimeter and YouTube videos in teaching and learning not only political science related courses such as comparative politics and research methodology, government, diplomacy and strategy studies as well as other subjects of learning for both undergraduate, graduate and college students at the Nigeria's universities and colleges as obtained in other countries (*Golan-Nadir, 2023 & McQuist, 2023*).

### Conclusion

As a social science discipline, Political Science started from ancient Greek and had undergoes several changes especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the Second World War when advanced scientific methods were incorporated in the discipline. Those who specialize in various fields of Political Science discipline conduct researches to discover hitherto unknown principles underlying political phenomena and make rich contributions to the realm of knowledge. *The discipline covers different areas of specializations in politics such as political theories, political philosophy, political ideologies, comparative politics, public administration, political economy, conflict and conflict resolution, international relations and international organizations.* If the ultimate philosophy of human life is to enrich knowledge, political science education makes a major contribution to the storehouse of knowledge from ancient to present times especially in the area of critical thinking and philosophy. In Nigeria at the degree level, political science combined with other courses is

taught in more than hundred (100) public and private universities. While at the level of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), teaching and learning political Science is very essential and studied in more than hundred (100) colleges of education and polytechnics out of 218 Colleges of education and polytechnics in the country. Also Political Science Education just like other Social Science disciplines has a vital role to play in attaining Nigeria's national policy on education. This is for the simple reason that the knowledge of Political Science enriches citizen's mind and widens intellectual horizon. Finally, despite some challenges facing teachers of Political Science Education in Nigeria the field contributions to Nigeria cannot be over emphasis as this study explored.

### Recommendations

- i. Political science education should be made among the compulsory borrowing courses to all disciplines in form of a General Study Course by all Tertiary Institutions' Students, because it teaches the lesson of cooperation, adjustment and toleration especially in heterogeneous society like Nigeria.
- ii. Government should involve in the promotion of teaching and learning of political science education in both universities and colleges of education. This could be achieved by providing enough funding for encouraging research works to develop students' passion and determination for the effective realization of the desired goals.
- iii. Both government and non-governmental organizations ought to support teaching and learning of political science education by providing more text books and other instructional materials needed in our schools.
- iv. E-learning in teaching and learning of political science should be promoted by government of Nigeria at all levels. Where ICT Gadgets are not available should be make available.
- v. Field trips, project and excursion methods should be promoted in teaching and learning of political science as this will concretize the knowledge of political



science among Nigerians.

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