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Consensus Building as a Veritable Tool for Sustainability of Democratic Culture Among Undergraduates in Cross River State, Nigeria.			
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Keywords		Abstract	
Consensus Building, Sustainability, Democratic Culture, Undergraduates.		This study investigated consensus building as a veritable tool for sustainability of democratic culture among undergraduates in Cross River State, Nigeria. A null hypothesis was stated to guide the study. Literature was reviewed accordingly. The research design adopted for the study was survey research design. The population of the study comprised all undergraduates in Cross River State which is 103,390 in all. Simple random sampling technique was used for the selection of five hundred and fifteen (515) students from six tertiary institutions in the study area as sample for the study which represented 0.5% of the entire population of the study. The instrument used for data collection was developed by the researcher and titled: Consensus Building as a veritable tool for Sustainability of Democratic Culture Questionnaire (CBVTSDCQ)". This instrument was validated by one expert in social sciences education and two experts in Measurement and Evaluation to confirm their face and content validity. The data collected was statistically analyzed using simple linear regression and multiple regression and the following results were obtained; There is a significant influence of consensus building on sustainability of democratic culture among undergraduates in Cross River State. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that decision makers and curriculum developers should include consensus building and appropriate policies and curricula in schools that will sustain and promote democratic culture in order to enhance sustainable development.	
Correspondence			

Introduction

Consensus building helps in the transmission of knowledge and promotion of positive attitudes that supports democratic values and development in any nation. Consensus building (also known as collaborative problem solving or collaboration) is a conflict-resolution process used mainly to settle complex, multiparty disputes. Since the 1980s, it has become widely used in the environmental and public policy arena in the United States, but is useful whenever multiple parties are involved in a complex dispute or conflict. The process allows various stakeholders (parties with an interest in the problem or issue) to work together to develop a mutually acceptable solution. Like a town meeting, consensus building is based on the principles of local participation and ownership of decisions. Ideally, the consensus reached will meet all of the relevant interests of stakeholders, who thereby come to a unanimous agreement. While everyone may not get everything they initially wanted, consensus has been reached when everyone agrees they can live with whatever is proposed after effort has been made to meet the interests of all stake holding parties (Elvis, 2020). The ideology of consensus building has been used by many political parties in Nigeria such as the formation of APC in Nigeria which also led to their winning the Nigeria's presidential seat against an incumbent president. Therefore, teaching consensus building as part of political education will ensure a more democratically cultured individuals among tertiary institution students. However, as democracy begins to gain ground, it becomes necessary for the school to inculcate political education into the citizens as this will make them better informed citizens. Consensus building helps citizens to learn more about political phenomena. It is difficult to acquire more knowledge unless the citizens have a certain basis of knowledge. 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.

With a combination of simple lectures, brainstorming and group work, for instance, the major concepts of political education such as critical thinking citizenship participation are elucidated and applied in an analysis of the developmental effects of poor voters 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 (Nnabuo & Asodike, 2019). 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. Consensus building according to Nnabuo & Asodike (2019) can take place in different forms which include creating awareness for effective participation, free electoral process, accountability, inclusive governance, protection of human rights, supremacy of the rule of law, collective decision making, informed electorate and press freedom. By political education efficacy, we mean that education acquired by

tertiary students that leads to sustainability of democratic culture. The following according to Carr (2018) constitutes political education; civic competence, civic participation, awareness of civic rights and responsibilities, participation in decision making, awareness of justice and equity and cultural thinking ability, ability to think critically. From the above, tertiary students who acquire these knowledge would have been considered to satisfactorily sustain democratic culture.

Sustainable democratic culture can be define as the desire and ability of individuals in the society to participate actively, individually and collectively in the governance of public affairs affecting them. The existence of a democratic culture within a population is characterized by active contribution and effective commitment of members of civil society to development of the common good, the terms of living together and the construction of collective decisions (Abdullahi, 2017). A democratic culture rests on the existence of autonomy of thought and action.

Statement of the problem

Notwithstanding the various political activities that manifested in the 2015 and 2019 general elections and enormous resources expended by consensus building 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, 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 enhanced their participation in the political process.

The lack of knowledge of consensus building in Nigeria societies has a created a huge gap in our democratic culture as well it sustainability. This is not surprising as the high level of ignorance of political education is displayed in all facets of our democratic process as a nation. The problem is therefore manifested in the non-sustainability of democratic culture among tertiary education students which is evidenced in poor civic competence, minimal participation, lack of awareness of political rights/ responsibilities, lack of awareness of justice and equity, low participation in decision making, low critical thinking, low level of consensus among others. The decline in voting turnout is obvious and a very troubling trend in Nigeria. Several elections shows that the decline in the number of voters is concentrated among people with low political education. Electoral protest activities often display the widest participation gap among voters. The sum result is a widening in the political participation gap based on poor consensus building.

Poor knowledge of consensus building has led to bribery and tuggery, hijacking of ballot boxes, election rigging, vote buying, electoral violence, kidnapping of political candidates, assassination

of political candidates among others. These undemocratic practices are often carried out by people and sometimes tertiary institution students who lack good political education. The electoral process is not free judging from the previous elections held in Nigeria as elections does not always reveal the choice of the people rather the will of the political godfathers. The denial of a free and fair election also leads to a non-inclusive governance where only a sector of the country is highly favored during a political regime. Ethnocentrism is also high in Nigeria politics due to low political education. Hence, tertiary institution students are often used as tools in the hand of greedy politicians who wants to win election by all means. However, sound political education with particular focus on consensus building will go a long way in inculcating and sustaining democratic values. The statement of the problem therefore put in question form is: what is consensus building on sustainability of democratic culture among tertiary education students in Cross River State, Nigeria?

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate consensus building as a veritable tool for sustainability of democratic culture among undergraduates in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the impact of consensus building on sustainability of democratic culture

Research question

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, this research question was put forward to direct the study:

1. How does consensus building influence sustainability of democratic culture among undergraduates?

Statement of hypotheses

This null hypotheses was stated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant influence of consensus building on sustainability of democratic culture among undergraduates in Cross River State

Literature Review

Consensus building as a veritable tool for sustainability of democratic culture among undergraduates.

Consensus, though an old concept, has re-entered the lexicon of African political and conflict studies since the 1990s. Other related concepts making similar re-entry are peace-dialogue, peace-building and culture of peace. The sequence of their relationships may be like the riddle of whether the chicken or the egg came first. But it is safe to assume that a culture of peace certainly encourages consensus building. The concept of consensus building is supposed to represent a mechanism or an approach to be adopted towards resolving some of the many intractable conflicts

that have bedevilled Africa, in some instances for over four decades. Consensus as a mechanism being advocated is rightly derivable from the formulations of conflict/consensus social theories which were dominant in the social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s.

Atkinson (1971), Consensus refers to a collective opinion expressing acceptance of a 'middle ground' in an outstanding issue or policy of general importance. Thus, it is a position of 'no winner, no loser', 'no victor, no vanquished', or a 'give and take' situation in the African parlance, which may be employed, it is assumed, in the many intractable socio-political crises and conflicts in Africa including Nigeria.

Kahne, Wesheimer and Rogers (2010) investigated the impact of consensus building in sustainability of democracy in West Africa countries of Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia and Cameroon. A survey design was employed in the study, the sample for the study was 300 staff selected from ECOWAS office in Abuja Nigeria. Data from the study was analyzed using simple percentages and Chi-square, the result of the study showed that there is a significant effect of consensus building on the sustainability of democracy in West Africa countries.

According to the researchers, there are a few basic questions that have been raised in the consensus debate: where do we locate the consensus; who are to be involved, included or indulged in building consensus; and what is the content of the consensus? These questions are important, according to the arguments of the community power theorists of the 1960s, because even if consensus were to be achieved it would be meaningless unless it involved those who 'make things move' in the community or larger society. Answers to these queries emphasize the central question of power, and strengthen the argument that the dialectic of power frustrates consensus, particularly when those who wield power are put into proper (power) perspectives. This is because in order for consensus to be meaningful, it needs to involve those who wield power. It is at the point of 'wielding' that we also examine in the next section the anatomy of power, and demonstrate that in democracy those who most often wield power, the political parties, do not politically behave in ways that significantly concede to consensus. This is particularly the case in Africa since, there are too little democratic leadership and too few democratic personalities.

Hincks (2016) carried out a study on the effect of consensus building in the sustainability of democratic culture in Rwanda. A sample of 500 respondents were used for the study. Data from the study was analyzed using simple percentages and the result revealed that there is a significant effect of consensus building in the sustainability of democratic culture in Rwanda. The author further explained that consensus building seems to be a product of knowledge arising from researches carried out in conflict areas in Africa with the help of some United Nations agencies. Often international professional negotiators and mediators are recruited by governments or international agencies to be involved in the processes, including negotiations expected to lead to consensus. The mechanism was encouraged during the negotiations for peace at the end of some

of the long civil wars in parts of Africa as in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Southern Sudan. Also, consensus is envisaged in the resolution of the on-going racial, ethnic, tribal or religious wars and conflicts in Sudan/Darfur, Somalia and Côte d'Ivoire. It is assumed that consensus building will provide the key to peace in these conflict areas, or at least provide the environment which will enable peace to be built.

Research design

The research design that will be adopted for the study is survey research design. Survey research design involves the collection of data to accurately and objectively describe the existing conditions or phenomena. The survey research is focused on interest about the phenomena, it is concern with addressing questions about what is happening, why it is happening and how it is happening (Isanghedighi, Johnson, Asim and Ekuri, 2005).

The area of study is Cross River State. Cross River State is a coastal state in South South Nigeria, named after the Cross River, which passes through the state. The State has 18 Local Government Areas: Abi, Akampu, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Bekwara, Biase, Boki, Calabar-Municipal, Calabar South, Etung, Ikom, Obanliku, Obubra, Obudu, Odukpani, Ogoja, Yakurr, Yala. Tourists attraction in the area includes the soaring plateaus of the mountain tops of Obanliku to the Rain forests of Afi, from the Waterfalls of Agbokim and Kwa to the spiralling ox-bow Calabar River which provides sights and images of the Tinapa Business Resort, Calabar Marina, Calabar Residency Museum and the Calabar Slave Park along its course. Other tourist attractions are the Ikom Monoliths (a series of volcanic-stone monoliths of unknown age), the Mary Slessor Tomb, Calabar Drill Monkey Sanctuary, Cross River National Park, Afi Mountain walkway canopy, Kwa falls, Agbokim waterfalls, Tinapa Business Resort and the annual Calabar Carnival that takes place during the Christmas period. There are more than 230 pre-primary schools, 648 primary schools, 145 post-primary school. There are seven (7) tertiary institutions in the state. Also, there are 840 business operators in tertiary institutions in the state. This include University of Calabar, Cross River University of Technology, Federal college of education, Obudu, Cross River College of Education, Akamkpa, Cross River School of Health Technology, School of management technology, Ugep and AuthurJavis University, Akpabuyo.

The population of the study comprised of all students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State which is 103,390 (Registry Department of tertiary institutions used, 2021) in all.

Simple random sampling technique was used for the selection of five hundred and fifteen (515) students from six tertiary institutions in the study area as sample for the study which represented 0.5% of the entire population of the study.

The sample for the study consist of five hundred and fifteen (515) students selected form four tertiray institutions in Cross River State. A breakdown of the respondents according to institutions in the study area is presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

The instrument for data collection is a well constructed questionnaire by the researcher named “Consensus Building as a Veritable Tool for Sustainability of Democratic Culture Questionnaire (CBVTSDCQ). The instrument was based on knowledge gained from review of literature and with the help of the thesis supervisor. The instrument consisted of forty two (42) items. The instrument comprised two sections: A, B and C. Section A dealt with demographic variables of the respondents such as departments, sex, age and number of years in school. Section B contained 40 items designed to measure financial management practices while section C measured sustainability of democratic culture. The information collected was based on a 4-point Scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), with the items provided.

The scoring key is as follows:

Strongly agree (SA)	-	4 points
Agree (A)	-	3 points
Disagree (D)	-	2 points
Strongly Disagree (SD)	-	1 point.

While for negatively worded items, the reverse was the case.

Results and discussion

There is no significant influence of consensus building on sustainability of democratic culture among undergraduates in Cross River State. The independent variable in this hypothesis is consensus building while the dependent variable is sustainability of democratic culture among tertiary education students. The measurement was done on a four-point Likert-type scale, using 10 questionnaire items. The scale requested respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the items listed. The four options were ‘Strongly Agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’. The options were scored 4 points, 3 points, 2 points and 1 point respectively for positively worded items and 1 point, 2 points, 3 points and 4 points respectively for negatively worded items. Data gathered from the exercise were subjected to analysis using a version 22.0 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). To test this hypothesis, linear regression was used and the result as presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Distribution of population and sample in the study area.

S/N	Institution	No. Of students	Students sampled per School/Institution
1	University of Calabar	40,645	203
2	Cross River University of Technology	29,285	146
3	School of Health Technology, Calabar	6,250	31
4	Cross River College of Education, Akamkpa.	10,140	50
5	Federal College of Education, Obudu	14,840	74
6	AuthurJavis University, Akpabuyo	2,230	11
	Total	103,390	515

Source: Registry Departments of tertiary institutions

Table 2: Simple linear regression analysis of the influence of consensus building on sustainability of democratic culture among undergraduates in Cross River State (N=515)

Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F-ratio	Sig.
1	Regression	36.040	1	36.040	2.189	.140 ^b
	Residual	10175.178	513	16.465		
	Total	10211.218	514			

R = .059^a; R² = .004.

Discussion of findings

The result of this hypothesis reveals that there is a significant influence of consensus building on sustainability of democratic culture among undergraduates in Cross River State. This finding is in line with that of Kahne, Wesheimer and Rogers (2010) who found a significant effect of consensus building on the sustainability of democracy in West Africa countries. According to the researchers, there are a few basic questions that have been raised in the consensus debate: where do we locate the consensus; who are to be involved, included or indulged in building consensus; and what is the content of the consensus? These questions are important, according to the arguments of the community power theorists of the 1960s, because even if consensus were to be achieved it would be meaningless unless it involved those who ‘make things move’ in the community or larger society. Answers to these queries emphasise the central question of power, and strengthen the argument that the dialectic of power frustrates consensus, particularly when those who wield power are put into proper (power) perspectives. This is because in order for consensus to be meaningful, it needs to involve those who wield power. It is at the point of ‘wielding’ that we also examine in the next section the anatomy of

power, and demonstrate that in democracy those who most often wield power, the political parties, do not politically behave in ways that significantly concede to consensus. This is particularly the case in Africa since, there are too little democratic leadership and too few democratic personalities.

Hincks (2016) also revealed that there is a significant effect of consensus building in the sustainability of democratic culture in Rwanda. The author further explained that consensus building seems to be a product of knowledge arising from researches carried out in conflict areas in Africa with the help of some United Nations agencies. Often international professional negotiators and mediators are recruited by governments or international agencies to be involved in the processes, including negotiations expected to lead to consensus. The mechanism was encouraged during the negotiations for peace at the end of some of the long civil wars in parts of Africa as in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Southern Sudan. Also, consensus is envisaged in the resolution of the on-going racial, ethnic, tribal or religious wars and conflicts in Sudan/Darfur, Somalia and Côte d'Ivoire. It is assumed that consensus building will provide the key to peace in these conflict areas, or at least provide the environment which will enable peace to be built.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the results from this study, it can be concluded that consensus building is said to be a veritable tool for the sustainability of democratic culture, promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion made in this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Decision makers and curriculum developers should include consensus building and appropriate policies and curricula in schools that will sustain and promote democratic culture in order to enhance sustainable development.
2. Given that one of the challenges facing the society today in terms of achieving appropriate democratic culture for sustainable development is how to motivate people to change basic behaviours and activities, it therefore becomes necessary for the reorientation of young adults for sustainable development through the federal ministry of orientation.
3. There is need to integrate sustainable development programmes into the school curricula at all levels of education to imbibe the culture.

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