

Representative Democracy and Advocacy for the Poor in Nigeria: Finding the Missing Link

Igbokwe-Ibeto JC*

Faculty of Management Sciences, Department of Public Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, PMB 5025, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

Abstract

Political representation is a workable compromise that avoids both the dangers, of self-perpetuating leaders and the difficulties of participatory democracy. In a pluralistic society it would be absolutely impossible for all citizens to get together to make important political decisions jointly. Therefore, representation overcomes the difficulties intrinsic in such direct democracy without sacrificing the principle of popular sovereignty. Within the framework of theory of popular participation, the paper examined the issue of representative democracy and advocacy for poor in Nigeria with aim of finding the missing link. Since universal discussion and consent are highly impracticable, if not impossible in modern society, the concept of representative democracy rather than direct democracy is both desirable and acceptable as a meaningful adaptation of democratic theory. It argues that while representative democracy helps to avoid the tyranny that could accompany the enormous concentrations of power occasioned by inequity in the distribution of socio-economic and political resources to the disadvantage of the poor. However, our era has witnessed the emergence of gigantic bureaucracies and growing rate of the state in organizing and regulating social life. It concludes that representative democracy (centralized organization and concentrated powers) as practice in Nigeria has led to mass manipulation of the poor and the unorganized. Thus, advocacy for the poor will for long remain a mirage unless citizens activate the section of the constitution that empowers them to recall their representatives on grounds of poor representation. Presumably, this could ensure that representative assemblies - rooted in popular choice are responsive to constituency needs and interests as well as check concentrated unaccountable power and government insensitivities against the poor.

Keywords: Democracy; Governance; Masses; Nigeria; Representation

Introduction

Nigeria's return to civil rule after years of military and authoritarian rule raised high expectations especially by the poor for a possible resolution of the hydra-headed socio-economic crisis bedeviling the nation since flag of independence in 1960. May 29th 2015 marked 16 years of uninterrupted democratic rule in the country. Yet, this has failed to translate into sustainable socio-economic and political development as the economy though adjudged the biggest in Africa move from one crisis to the other. The system in vogue before the adoption of representative democracy as a platform of citizens' representation was direct democracy. Direct democracy, is a type of democracy that allows the people themselves, rather than the elected representatives, to determine the laws and policies by which they are governed. This according to Gaus, and Kukathas [1] was later replaced by what is today known as "representative democracy". This is because, direct democracy is complex and difficult if not impossible to operate because of the size and the huge financial cost involved. Representative democracy therefore evolved as the only workable system. According to Hénaff, and Strong [2,3] it is a form of indirect democracy which guarantees the citizens the opportunity to elect those who will represent them in government. In the words of Harvey and Harvey, the term 'representative' derives its conceptual usage from the contractual trust and consensual agreement between the elected representatives and the constituents. It therefore, behooves on the elected representatives, having been elected to fulfill their part of the contractual agreement by firmly gluing to the tenets and fundamental principles of the platform upon which they were elected [1]. The essence of representative democracy stems from its representativeness. This is because the people, who, through the ballot, have willingly surrendered their sovereignty to the elected officials in the legislature, expect vibrant and credible representation based on mutual trust and returns. Therefore, the legislature is the cynosure of the people and is expected to do for the people what the citizenry could not do for themselves as a result

of perceived constraints such as coordination and resources. However, the representative democracy now in practice in the Nigeria appears to be characterized by mal-administration, mismanagement of human and material resources, impunity and mal-integration. The beauty of representative democracy as adumbrated by its founding fathers was predicated on certain universal goals and values capable of promoting human well-being. These goals and values of democracy include security, equity in the distribution of common wealth, and their correlate such as liberty and fraternity. Where these goals and values are properly activated, they lead to effective empowerment and mobilization of the people to participate in socio-economic activities, political decision making and development. Regrettably, the reverse is the case in Nigeria as the poor has had to contend with a debilitating cycle of poverty and political decay despite the return to representative (civilian rule) democracy since 1999. The commitment to representative democracy by statesmen and political philosophers as well as the poor is now widespread in Nigeria. However, what precisely has that commitment to democracy been given to? An attempt will be made in this paper to analyze and discuss some of the debated classical documents, ideals and theories to at least make a statement as regards the nature of representative democracy in Nigeria and its imperatives. In attempt to make a statement on the nature of representative democracy, the

*Corresponding author: Igbokwe-Ibeto JC, Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, PMB 5025, Awka Anambra State, Nigeria, Tel: 2348060492273; E-mail: ugochinyerecj@yahoo.co.uk

Received July 14, 2015; Accepted August 25, 2015; Published September 05, 2015

Citation: Igbokwe-Ibeto JC (2015) Representative Democracy and Advocacy for the Poor in Nigeria: Finding the Missing Link. J Pol Sci Pub Aff S1: 005. doi:10.4172/2332-0761.S1-005

Copyright: © 2015 Igbokwe-Ibeto JC. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

following questions will guide the paper. Is representative democracy at the core, a way of reaching decisions, a process of deliberation, a bargaining process among competing interests, a market place for ideas, a system of competition for leadership, a frame of mind or the system of participation in government itself?

Methodology

The paper employed a variety of the methodology which includes: descriptive, exploratory and historical survey. It is descriptive in the sense that it provides a detailed account of how those in power/government (elected) represent the elector). It is exploratory because the paper attempts the nature of representative democracy in Nigeria and its implications on advocacy for the poor. It also, adopts historical/documentary analysis of current literature which enhances critical and contextual analysis of the nature and character of representative democracy and advocacy for the poor in Nigerian. The issue of representation and advocacy for the poor in Nigeria is of serious concern to the citizens and has therefore attracted a plethora of public commentary. To improve on the reliability and validity of the paper, multiple secondary sources were used to minimize risk of errors. To analyze issues raised, the paper is structured in the following compartments: aside introduction, the first section chronicled the methodology, the conceptual and theoretical foundation underpinning the paper. The second examined the nature and character of representative democracy, while the third x-rayed how representative democracy can work in Nigeria. The fourth, analyzed how the poor in Nigeria have so far been represented. The fifth revolves around finding the missing link between representative democracy and advocacy for the Poor in Nigeria, then comes concluding remarks and Implications.

Conceptual and theoretical insights

In social and management sciences research, in order to avoid ambiguity in the interpretation and understanding of certain concepts, it is customary to begin an academic investigation by combing the conceptual and theoretical contours of the subject matter of analysis by analyzing the views of various scholars and authors. Though, consensus may not be achieved on the validity of such enterprise. Nonetheless, it is an exercise worth pursuing if only to sketch the parameters of the subject matter. This is the intent of Babbie and Mouton methodological research diction that “we specify why we use particular terms for the purpose of facilitating their contextual operationalization and comprehension”. Democracy as a concept has taken different connotations in most cases based scholars’ ideological orientation. As defined in Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Democracy is “government by the people; government in which the supreme power is retained by the people and exercised either directly (absolute or pure democracy), or indirectly (representative democracy) through a system of representation. However, the most popular definition of the concept perhaps is Lincolnian which conceives democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Government by the people in the true nature of democracy means more than simply government by the majority. Certain basic rights are guaranteed to all the people whether they are members of the majority or members of groups within the minority. Thus, a system of democratic government reflects four basic principles - majority rule, minority rights, political equality and regular election (Blair in Nnanta). For instance, democracy provides the way of liberation both from mass intolerance and from the ruthlessness and corruption of power. To Blair (in Nnanta), it gives equal rights to all persons and by doing so it breaks all barriers of education, culture and opportunity that formerly set people apart as pre-ordained inferiors and superiors. Ideally, democracy can be viewed from this

perspective. In practice, Dahl [4] describes all existing democracies as Polyarchies. The construct Polyarchy means administrations that have been substantially popularized and liberalized, that is, it is highly inclusive and extensively opened to public contestation. Inclusiveness here, it would appear refers to representation and popular participation. Yet, in reality, representation is not enough to guarantee the peoples’ interests as witnessed in Nigeria. The people themselves have to employ other channels such as the civil society to ensure that their interests are consistently on the front-burner of the government. The concept “poverty” cannot easily be pinned down to a universally acceptable definition. This is because it has fallen into semantic predicament to the extent that the literature on it replete with so many definitions of the term with subtype based on scholars world view and orientation. However, we shall comb the conceptual terrain of the term with a view to finding the middle ground for its heuristic investigation. Poverty is not easily defined, yet, a precise definition has been applied in the statement that many Nigerian are poor. According to Elekwa [5], poverty is the lack of enough income and resources to live adequately by community standards. These standards and definition of poverty vary according to place and time. World Bank conceives poverty as the inability to attain a minimum standard of living. This report constructed some indices based on a minimum level of consumption in order to show the practical aspect of poverty. These include lack of access to resources, lack of education and skills, poor health, malnutrition, lack of political freedom and voice, lack of shelter, poor access to water and sanitation, vulnerability to shocks, violence and crime, political discrimination and marginalization. Poverty causes suffering among millions of people. Many of the poor cannot buy food, shelter, clothing and medical care that they need. Poverty causes malnutrition and poor health. It also produces feelings of frustration, hopelessness and loss of dignity and self-respects [6]. In some cases, the poverty-stricken become angry and turn to violence. Indeed, poverty is measured according to yearly income. The government identifies as poor those households whose incomes fall at or below a certain level called the poverty line. The poverty line is based on the income households need to eat adequately without spending more than a third of their income on food [7]. Before the current level of inflation people who were before now above the level have fallen to our below the poverty line in Nigeria. As elaborate as all the above definitions are, they however, failed to provide the graphic picture of those who are poor. This, the following section seeks to address. According to Elekwa [5] the poor can include all low income families. However, according to Igbokwe-Ibeto, Akhakpe and Oteh [6], the poor have the following characteristics: No house to live in; where they have houses, they are uninhabitable; no food to eat; if they have food, it will be tasteless and monotonous; no water to drink; no access to education; no fire to warm themselves; where they have warm, it must come from smoking fire; no land to cultivate some crops, where they are able to get land, it will be unproductive; no fresh air to breed, even if they get air at all, it will be polluted i.e. either too hot or too cool.

Basically, in a given society and at a particular point in time, poverty indicates a class of underprivileged individuals. In other words, the underprivileged group is underprivileged in comparison to privileged group within the same country. In the words of Galbraith, “People are poverty stricken when their income, community. Then they cannot have what the larger community regards as the minimum necessary for decency and they cannot wholly escape, therefore, the judgment of the larger community that they are indigent. They are degraded for it, in the literal sense, “they live outside the grades for it, in the literal sense, “they live outside the grades or categories which the community regards as acceptable”. Such a view naturally lays more emphasis on the

disparities of income [8,9]. Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan point out that many values may contribute to the acquisition of power. Values that are so used are called base values, or power bases [8]. Among these values are wealth and health, and it is not hard to imagine situations in which that can be used to acquire power. Wealth in the form of a campaign contribution may be exchanged for a promise to support or oppose a particular policy (understandings like these are usually tacit when they occur). Wealth in its crudest form can be physical force, used to influence actions, or on a less crude level it can be superior energy, applied in the drive for power. In referring to much the same thing as base value or power bases, Dahl uses “political resources” or “political resources”. He says that a “political resource” is a means by which one person can influence the behavior of other person; political resource therefore include money, information, food, the threat of force, jobs, friendship, social standing, the right to make laws, votes and a great variety of other things” in Akhakpe. Equal distribution of political resources among groups would certainly contribute to the development and maintenance of pluralistic political systems. So would unequal distribution, provided that groups which had much of one resource did not have much of another this is, if inequalities did not accumulate or were non-cumulative – assuming that different political resources are of somewhat equal usefulness. For instance, according to Flim, some group with little social standing but a lot of money would have about as good a chance to be influential as a group with very high social standing but little money if social standing and money are more or less equally useful in the struggle for influence. Some political resources are equally distributed in many communities. The right to vote is one, and physical force is another, in the sense that all groups are usually denied its use. Food and money are not distributed equally, but for many minimal needs are not met, with the consequence that petty bribery of voters is in vogue. Generally speaking, the situation is that political resources are unequally distributed and their effects have cumulative impact on the poor, the have-nots of these political resources. The consequence is the low level of interest and participation exhibited by the poor many; political process. In social and management sciences, no one theoretical approach or model can adequately explain a social phenomenon. Nonetheless, we need a platform on which to interrogate our subject of discourse. Taking a holistic view of the term “representative democracy”, the trusteeship, delegate, mandate, and resemblance models becomes heuristic in analyzing the issues raised. While all the models are relevant in their own right, we anchor the paper on mandate and resemblance models because of the advantages they present in analyzing the subject under interrogation. Before the emergence of modern political party system, representatives were viewed as independent actors. Individuals rarely were selected but on the basis of their individual qualities, unique attributes and talents and are supported because of their personality. The emergence of modern political parties however has brought about new theories of representation. The most influential of these according to Heywood [10] is known as doctrine of the mandate. This is based on the fact that the electorates have to surrender their mandates to the selected or elected individuals to represent them in the parliament. The kernel in this model is that, a party is given a mandate after winning an election to carry out policies or programs canvassed during the electioneering campaign. Rather than individual politicians, the mandate model gives the responsibility of representation to the political party, which enables the political party to enforce party discipline against any erring representative member. It is the party manifestoes that attract people’s support and not really the credentials of an individual. Resemblance model emphasis is on whether the representatives are selected based on the sentiments they have with people and their sympathetic attachments

to the cause of the group from which they were chosen. By implication, it is expected that a representative government should be a replica of the larger society; a representative government is a microcosm of the larger society, containing members drawn from all segments of the society [10]. The thrust of the model is that only people who come from a particular group, and have shared the experiences and sentiments of that group, can fully identify with its interests. All theories, models and approaches are born refuted, mandate and resemblance models not an exception. The mandate model has been criticized for downplaying the importance of personality in election issue while the exponents of the resemblance model fail to recognize the nature of representation. For instance, if a woman represents women, only a worker can represent the working class and a member of a particular ethnic group represents his or her ethnic group, it therefore means that all will be canvassing for the interest of their groups; the result could led to social division and conflict in the society. Despite the criticisms, it would appear that a combination of mandate and resemblance models fits into Nigeria’s representative democracy. Representations in the National Assembly and states Houses of Assembly reflect the resemblance model, as representatives emerge on the basis of ethnic groupings. Appointment of commissioner or minister of women affairs; commissioner or minister of youth affairs in the cabinet at both federal and state levels in Nigeria is a reflection of the resemblance model of representation. Also, the election of the executives such as President, Governor and local government Chairman is a typical example of mandate model. For instance, the president of Nigeria has the mandate of the entire Nigerian people to represent and project their interest while State Governors has a mandate to represent the interest of his or her state. The transformation of the country will remain a mirage unless the people are carried along in the decision making process and public policy implementation that affect their well-being and welfare. Against this line of thought, it therefore becomes imperative that popular participation be seem a ritualistic exercise performed at regular interval as witness in Nigeria just to signify approval or disapproval of certain individuals and political parties. Participation as used here refers to actual and active involvement of the people in the process of setting goals and making decisions about their lives and not just the acceptability of end results which satisfies the need to participate [11].

The nature and character of representative democracy

The single most important influence upon the thought of the nature of democracy was probably the philosophy of John Locke. Locke’s liberalism focused its attention upon the relationship between the individual and the state. The state existed to preserve the life, liberty and property of the individual and the rights of the individuals were defined as limitation upon the state. No account was given of other social realities - family, church, social status - to near exclusion of the individual, and Locke was attempting to restore the individual to a place of importance. Adopting Locke as their patron, proponents of democracy, built a government on the fallacious assumption that the whole of political and social reality is encompassed in the relationship between the individual and the state. Thus, it became, commonly accepted that the core concepts of democratic theory evolve around the nature of the individual citizen from which the concept of the state in which a person lives is developed. This sequence of roles is in sharp contrast to other systems of government that explain the nature of the state first and then construct the concept of the individual around his life and duties as a citizen of the state. Therefore, expanding the democratic space in the society would go along way in achieving the goals of democratization. To Garrenton [12], democratization is “the establishing, strengthening, extending the principles, mechanism and

institutions that define a democratic administration. This process is imperative especially in some African countries for example Zimbabwe, Cameroun etc., where there has been oscillation between semi-democratic and authoritarian rule thereby stunting the growth and development of democratic institutions, structures and behavior [13]. No wonder Salim Ahmad Salim vividly capture it that: *Democracy is a fundamental right, an engine of liberation and a catalyst agent of human development. Democratization must involve not only the free and unfettered exercise of fundamental freedom of expression, association and political choice, but also the ability of all citizens to participate in the process national governance. Political freedom will allow people to work harder. Political freedom will enable people to exercise their talent and responsibility.*

The above submission if examined points at some key features and indicators of democratic governance that should permeate all democratic institutions. Although, the characteristics of democracy vary from one country to another, however, certain basic features are more or less the same in all democratic nations [14]. The indicators of democratic governance include free, fair and credible election. Free and fair election gives the people a chance to choose their leaders and express their opinions on topical issues. Elections are held periodically to ensure that elected officials truly represent the people. The possibility of being voted out of office helps assure that these officials pay attention to public opinion. In most democracies, the only legal requirements for voting or for holding public office have to do with age, residence and citizenship. The democratic process permits citizens to vote by secret ballot or at times open ballot system. Majority Rule and Minority Rights is also emphasized: In a democracy, a decision often must be approved by a majority of voters before it may take effect. This principle called majority rule, may be used to elect officials or decide a policy. Democracies sometimes decide votes by plurality. Majority rule is based on the idea that if all citizens are equal the judgment of the many will be better than the judgment of the few. Democratic values freely given consent as the basis of legitimate and effective political power [14]. Also, political parties are a necessary part of a democratic government. Rival parties make elections meaningful by giving voters a choice among candidates who represent different interests and points of-view. In many democratic countries where multiparty systems exist, no single party gains a majority in the legislature. As a result two or more parties must join to make such a majority. These parties form a coalition government. In democratic countries, the party or parties that are out of power serve as the "Loyal Opposition". That is, they criticize the policies and actions of the party in power. In various dictatorships, criticisms of the party in power may be labeled as treason. Quite often, only the "government party" is allowed to exist. The people have no real choice among candidates and no opportunity to express dissatisfaction with the government. People once thought that the greatest obstacles to individual freedom and equality were political. They believed they could preserve freedom simply by changing the form of government from monarchy to republic. They claimed that the government that governs least governs best, But with time, many people became convinced that government regulation of the society and economy was necessary to much personal freedom more meaningful and to promote equality as well as to improve the welfare and well-being of the nation. In today's democracies, there are extensive programs such as the provision of economic security, easing of suffering and development of human potential, insurance, minimum wage laws, old age pension, health insurance, civil rights laws, and aid to education.

Making representative democracy work in Nigeria

Citizen participation: Democracy calls for widespread

participation in politics by the people. It is believed to be the duty of all adult citizens to vote in local, state and national elections. Qualified individuals should be willing to run for public office, to contribute to the welfare of their country. Citizens should help in shaping public opinion by speaking out on important issues and by supporting the political party of their choice. An active citizenry is thought to be one of the best guarantees against corrupt and inefficient government.

Education and Democracy: Faith in the power of education is a characteristic of democracy. According to democratic ideals, widespread participation in politics does not necessarily ensure good governance. The quality of government depends on the quality of participation. Well informed and well educated citizens are able to participate more intelligently. A democracy needs educated citizens who can think for themselves. Citizens have a duty to take part in public affairs, to keep informed on public issues, and to vote intelligently. Democratic institutions must produce leaders worthy of public trust and responsibility. For this reason, democratic governments support education for their citizens.

Voluntary action: An important quality of democratic government is its emphasis on trying to get people to act on the basis of understanding and agreement instead of force. Although, all governments use force sometimes, democracies usually emphasize dialogue, negotiation, bargaining and ultimately; voluntary citizen cooperation. This approach is clearly linked to the widely held democratic belief that people are generally rational and well disposed toward the common welfare [14]. Yet, the role of economic development and agreement on fundamentals cannot be over stated: In a democratic polity, literacy rates are high, per capita (per person) income ranges from moderate to high and there are few extremes of wealth and poverty. Some scholars believe democracy works best in countries with a large middle class. The relationships between representatives and constituents is concerned with the system under which representative are elected, this involves the central question of structural bias. Who does the representative represent, his immediate constituency, the nation, the state, his party or special clientele? These questions point to the classic problem of representation: are representatives free to follow their own judgments on legislative matters or are they merely agents of their constituents? In actual practice, of course, the issue is neither simply nor sharply drawn. Other factors beside "constituency" and "personal judgment" require weighing. In some measure, the representative must assess his responsibility to his party, and it is also probably that he will need to consider the claims that organized interest groups have placed upon him. Each vote carries snares as well as opportunities, and the decision that satisfies one sector of his constituency may distress another. The part of the constituency that may be distressed is usually the poor.

How the poor in Nigeria have been represented

The poor and the organized are sometimes members of representative assemblies which are popular in Nigeria. There exist the state legislature, local government, local government service commission, school boards and several other commissions and board for which some poor people may be made members. In addition we find such representative bodies throughout our economic and social life. Stockholders elect boards of directors; union members elect delegates and officers and so on. One would naturally think of representation of the interests of the poor in these set ups. What happens is that the poor are committed to levels of non-participation that have been contrived by power holders to substitute genuine participation. The power-holders' real objective is not to enable the poor participate in planning or conduct of government programs and

projects, but to enable power-holders to “educate” or “cure” the participants. In the name of citizen participation, the poor are placed on rubber stamp advisory committees just for engineering their support. According to Arnstein, instead of genuine citizen participation, the membership of the poor in some of these representative assemblies signifies the distortion of participation into a public relations vehicle by power-holders [5]. The participation of the poor in some of these representative assemblies progresses to levels of “tokenism” which allow the have-nots to hear and have a voice. When they are proffered by power-holders as the total extent of participation the poor may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions, they lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded to by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow up, no muscle hence no assurance of the poor changing the status quo. Participation of the poor in this manner is nothing more than a higher level tokenism (placation) because the ground rules allow the have-nots of advice, but retain for the power-holders the continued right to decide. The poor never have increasing degrees of decision making clout because they cannot enter into a partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with the (elites) traditional power-holders. This above analysis has helped to illustrate the point, so many have missed that there are significant gradations of citizen participation in the representative assemblies, knowing these gradations makes it possible to cut through the hyperbole to understand the increasing demands for participation in decision making from the have-nots as well as the gamut of confusing responses from the power-holders. At this juncture therefore, it is imperative to give some graphic pictures on how the power-holders in Nigeria have represented the poor. While the World Bank have consistently ranked Nigeria as one of the 25th poorest countries in the world despite the huge amount the country earns from oil and gas. Also, National Bureau of Statistics in 2014 alerted that 54 percent of Nigerian youths are unemployment [15]. The paradox is that the poverty level in Nigeria contradicts the country’s immense wealth. The reason for this poor state of affairs could be attributed to distortion of representative democracy. For example, the budget allocation for National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives) indicates that despite the poverty in the country, their yearly appropriation has risen from N3.4 billion in 1999 to N106 billion in 2009 excluding the 2009 supplementary budget. The desire to increase financial allocation of National Assembly members makes law-making a lucrative venture for the elected representatives. Accordingly to Babalola and Babalola [16], the senators in 2009 budgeted #1.1 billion as allocation for refreshment and meals, while #957 million and #180 million goes to maintenance and procurement of vehicles and fuel. The upper (red) chamber also spend #429 million for training. In the same vein, the lower (green) chamber spend #1.36 billion on meals and refreshments in 2009, while N1.2 billion was spend for vehicle and generator maintenance. The House of Representatives in 2009 spent #340 million for training and another #400.6 million for fuel and lubricant. Senator Ita Engang who was the then House Committee Chairman on Rules and Business justifies the huge wasteful expenditures [16]. Globally, Nigeria legislators according to Adeyeye receive the highest pay. Senators earned \$48 million that is #656 million in four years while \$35 million that is #576 million after four years went to the members of the House of Representatives every quarter of the year. The cost of legislative governance in Nigeria as at 2009 is put at #1.3 trillion. Corroborating the above submission is the statement credited to the former governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Sanusi Lamid Sanusi in 2012 that less than 25 percent of Nigeria’s annual budget is being used to cater for about 469 members of the National Assembly, while the executive arm of the government ensure that in the remaining 75 percent, the

expenditure supersedes the capital expenditure even as high as 65:32 ratio in favour of the former [17]. The obnoxious and primitive sharing of common wealth through representative democracy calls to question the issue of representative democracy and advocacy for the poor in Nigeria. Although, no matter how benevolent and altruistic a man may be, he cannot always be trusted to act in the public interest. Man can hardly be impersonal because he is value free given the so many considerations surrounding him including cultural values. Given the tendency in modern representative democracy for the elected to dominate the electors, new ways need to be explored for the citizens to bring those in power/government under constant surveillance, checks and balances. This is in line with the popular slogan “that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely”. Scholars and social commentators have written and spoken copiously on this ugly development just to awaken the consciences of those in government. However, rather than adjusting, the representatives are becoming more daring in appropriating a large chunk of the national common wealth through budgetary allocation to themselves. For example, National and State Assembly members instead of seeking alternative vocation in manufacturing and agriculture that could reduce the rate of unemployment and insecurity in the country prefer to perpetually remain in the National or State Assemblies. In fact, political elites in Nigeria do not care if majority of citizens are living under the bridge. In representative democracy, the poor people are often excluded from both the political process and full participation in the economic activities. Quite often, it is the government that closes the door by ignoring the poor and being less than energetic in trying to learn their problems. At the other hand, it is the poor themselves who contribute to loss of their rights out of fear and ignorance because of inadequate knowledge on how they can make their needs known to those in authority. Here lies the importance of the civil society organizations. The increasing transfer of policy questions from politics to technical solutions made public management to become very interesting, necessary and vital. The increasing complexity of the management apparatus has made it difficult for ordinary voters to make judgments and develop choices relevant to its exercise. Unfortunately, this mechanism, by which diverse groups may interact in policy process, leaves out special interest groups who have the least political equity with which to compete favorably. Also, the poor’s attitude towards policy process, policy content and policy implementation makes it increasingly difficult to represent them. Anger, suspicion and resignation leave their indelible imprint on the social milieu from which many of the poor and their leaders perceive an endemically hostile society. For the poor, decision-making’ is regarded as irrelevant process [5]. The demands made on human survival are too enormous to justify involvement in an activity that inherently denies the most urgent human needs. How can people realistically be expected to formulate long range goals and objectives when the exigencies of the present create huge, complex and unsupportable a burden? It would appear that is why there is frequent suspicion by many poor area residents in the way they view participation in decision making. For some, policy is a means of positive change, and to others, a dead end. Suspicion of planning schemes is common among low income residents. In the view of Wilson, to substantiate the varieties of behavioral manifestations by the poor against any policy or planning scheme, citizens’ attitudes in renewal efforts indicate that: *such people are likely to have a limited time perspective, a greater difficulty in abstracting the concrete experience, an unfamiliarity with a lack of confidence in government institutions, a preoccupation with the personal and immediate and few (if any) attachments to organizations of any kind with the possible exceptions of churches lacking experience and the*

participation in organized endeavours, they are to have a low sense of personal efficiency in organizational situations. By necessity as well as by inclination, such people are likely to have what one might call “private regarding” rather than a “public regarding” political ethos. They are intimately hound up in the day-to-day struggle to sustain themselves and their families.

The juxtaposition of powerless citizens with the powerful is in order to highlight the fundamental divisions between the two groups. In actuality, neither the have-nots nor the power-holders are homogenous in nature. Each group encompasses and manifests a host of divergent points of view, significant cleavages competing vested interests and splintered sub-groups. The justification for using such simplistic abstractions find expression in Elekwa [5] that in most cases, the have-nots perceive the powerful as a monolithic “system” and power-holders actually do view the have-nots as a sea of “those people” with little comprehension of class difference among them. It should be noted that topology does not include an analysis of the most significant road blocks to achieving genuine levels of citizen participation and decentralization. These road blocks lie on both sides of the simplistic fence. On the power-holders side, they include paternalism and resistance to power redistribution while on side of the have-nots’, the road blocks manifest in lack of resources and knowledge base, plus difficulties of organizing a representative and accountable citizen’s group in the face of futility, alienation and distrust [5,18] Flowing from the above, it would appear that the only social safety net that remains resides in President Mohamadu Buhari especially if intends to fulfill his campaign promises and the social contract between him and the citizens. If Buhari can demonstrate leadership by example, by cutting down the budgetary allocation of the State House, those of his ministers and other public office holders, then, the federal legislators and perhaps state governors and legislators will have no option than to toe the same line.

Representation democracy and advocacy for the poor in Nigeria: Finding the missing link

In Nigeria, it would appear that those in government have lost the very essence of representative democracy and advocacy for the poor. Before, we commence this section of the discourse, it will be necessary to define the term advocacy representation. To Elekwa [5], advocacy representation refers to the means by which professional help can be given to those interest groups, “usually the poor”, who claim that their interests are damaged or inadequately represented in the proposals of the official government agency. Also, advocacy has been defined as “the preparation of plans or planning proposals and their advocacy by professionals on behalf of an organization to plans or planning prepared by an official government agency” [19]. Implicit in this proposal or concepts is (the poor) losers. However, within the present economic structure of the Nigerian society, simply giving the poor more access to decision making does not basically change their chances of getting the same goods and services as wealthier citizens. With this, it gives them more power to compete among themselves for government’s welfare products. Pluralist opportunities are therefore necessary but hardly a sufficient condition for real social equality. For such equality to occur, pluralism must be tied to political ideology which deals directly with the means of equally distributing economic power [20,21]. But advocacy representation seeks to retain and reform existing institutional structures while promoting pluralism of competing and cooperating forces that together will produce a new dynamic situation for effectively negotiating citizen values and needs. In trying to achieve a pluralist society through advocacy representation, there is an attempt to balance

the interests of those with financial power and political resources as against the “have-not”, the already control economy and government willing to share power, then of course, the problem would be one of articulating and arguing the needs of different interest groups [20-22]. As policy progressed beyond defining the broad public interest to that defining the trade-offs between various special interest groups, policy planners began to think in terms of advocacy [22]. Advocacy would not change the fact of trade-offs and transfers of wealth, but may ensure that planning decisions adhere to some concepts of due process and equity that are required by legal decisions. Where plural representation is practiced, advocacy becomes the means of professional support for competing claims about how the community should be represented, for advocacy describes the role performed by the professional in the problems. The advocate representative in addition to pleading for his own and his client’s view for the good of society provides information on or analysis of current trends simulates future conditions and is a proponent of specific substantive solutions [23]. Furthermore, role of the advocate representative would lie in preparation of plans for all the other elements comprising; the policy process for the client. The advocacy plan would be a document which represents the facts and reasons for supporting one set of proposals, it should be noted, however, that the original calls to advocacy were aimed at representing the poor who had no resources in legal matters. However, the concept was never fully tested because the problem of funding advocate lawyers was not adequately addressed. This is one of the most debilitating challenges confronting advocates for the poor today in the political arena. The impact of pluralism and advocacy in decentralization of decision making is one of the most important advantages, since they embody principles of decentralization and participation. Decentralization involves the wide allocation of authority within a given unit of rule so that increased number of individuals or groups may have easier access to, and more influence on the process of policy formulation and implementation. Trends towards decentralization frequently reflect popular sentiment that “big government” is not representative of the people and unable to fulfill individual human needs. For the poor especially, the government closed the door by ignoring the poor who are less than energetic in trying to learn, understand and share in their problems [24]. It is along this line of thought that Northlinger and Hardy defined decentralization as:

1. Giving affected residents more power to provide for diverse governmental responses to particular and differing localized needs;
2. Overcoming the pervasive and deep disillusionment with municipal government, the sense of political alienation and government disaffection by sharply mitigating the redistribution of power influence towards concomitantly bringing governmental and bureaucratic officials closer to citizens served; and
3. Remedying bureaucratic insensitivities, unresponsiveness toward the delivery of city services, thereby improving the quality of such service [5].

Concluding Remarks and Implications

We commenced this discourse by firstly having a look at the meaning of representative democracy and advocacy for the poor relying on the views of various authors with an attempt at clarifying the intellectual cob web sounding representative democracy and advocacy for the poor, with the aim of finding the missing link. A summary of various theories taken together; isolate the mandate and resemblance models, an eclectic approach as heuristic in analyzing the issues raise in the paper [25-29]. Efforts at x-raying the nature and character of

representative democracy and advocacy for the poor help us have an insight into the ideal situation and what obtains in the Nigeria which is the central theme of this paper. Political representation can be seen as a workable compromise that avoids both the dangers of self-perpetuating leaders and the difficulties of participatory democracy. In a society such as Nigeria, it would be absolutely impossible for all citizens to get together to make important political decisions jointly. Representation overcomes the difficulties intrinsic in such direct democracy without sacrificing the principle of popular sovereignty. Since universal discussion and consent are highly impracticable, if not impossible in modern society, the concept of representative democracy rather than direct democracy is both desirable and acceptable as a meaningful adaptation of democratic theory. Political representation also helps avoid the tyranny that could accompany the enormous concentrations of power occasioned by the inequity in the distribution of economic, political and social resources to the disadvantage of the poor. Our era has witnessed the emergence of gigantic bureaucracies and growing role of the state in organizing and regulating social life. Centralized organization and concentrated powers can too easily produce mass manipulation of the poor and the unorganized. Genuine representative assemblies - rooted in popular choice and presumably, responsive to constituency needs and interests - can serve to check concentrated, unaccountable power, and bureaucratic insensitive against the poor. Thus, this is a litmus test for the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) government in Nigeria. The implication is that President Muhammadu Buhari should appreciate the fact that the greatest legacy he will bequeath Nigeria and Nigerians is to first and foremost restore the confidence and faith of Nigerians in representative democracy in particular and Nigerian federation in general. Failure to do this, will amount spending his 4 or 8 years and hand over a beleaguered nation to his successor [30-32].

References

1. Gaus GF, Kukathas C (2004) Handbook of political theory. New York: SAGE Publication.
2. Hénaff M, Strong T (2004) Public space and democracy. USA: University of Minnesota press.
3. Dibia C (2003) Essential government. Lagos: Tonad publishers ltd.
4. Dahl RA (1963) Modern political analysis. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice hall, Inc.
5. Elekwa NN (1995) Representative democracy and advocacy for the poor, Nigerian journal of public administration and local government 6: 56-69
6. Igbokwe-Ibeto CJ, Akhakpe I, Oteh CO (2012) Poverty and sustainable socio-economic development in Africa: the Nigerian experience, Asian economic and financial review 2: 367-381.
7. The world book encyclopedia (1991) Chicago: World book Inc D. 5.
8. Osaghae E (2011) The crippled giant: Nigeria since independence, Ibadan: John Archairs Publishers.
9. Srivastara D (1975) Poverty - its concept and definition, poverty III Nigeria: proceedings of the 1975 annual conference of Nigerian economic society. Ibadan: Nigerian economic society, department of economics, university of Ibadan.
10. Heywood A (2007) Politics Hampshire: Palgrave macmillan.
11. Ake C (1994) Democratization of disempowerment in Africa, center for Africa social sciences. Accessional monograph No. 1 Lagos: Malt house press ltd
12. Garretton M (1995) Redemocratization in Chile. Journal of democracy 6: 146-158.
13. Okunade B (1998) Democracy and human rights in the context of twenty-first century Africa.
14. The world book encyclopedia (1991) Chicago: World book Inc D 15.
15. Igbokwe-Ibeto CJ, Ewuim NC, Agbodike FC (2015) Nigerian government and oil subsidy regime: a horn of dilemma, International journal of development and management 8.
16. Babalola A, Babalola B (2009) Ten years of democracy, The Punch 7-8.
17. Gbemiga O (2015) Agbakoba and the Legislatures' bogus pay, The Punch 24.
18. Amstein SR (1969) A Ladder of citizen participation, Journal of American institute of planners 35.
19. Whittick A (2005) Encyclopedia of urban planning. New York: Mc-Graw hill.
20. Ikelegbe A (2006) Public policy analysis: concepts, issues and cases. Lagos: Imprint services.
21. Goodman RA (2001) After the planners. New York: Simon and schuster.
22. Eneanya A (2013) Policy research, analysis and public policy making. Ibadan: University printer.
23. Adedeji A (1997) Popular participation, democracy and development: is there a dialectic linkage, Nigerian: renewal from the past: the struggle for democratic development. London: Zeb books.
24. Ball AR (2004) Modern politics and government, London: The macmillan press ltd.
25. Blecher EM (1969) Advocacy planning for urban development immigration. London: Frederick A, Praeger Publisher.
26. Cassinelli CW (1959) The consent of the governed. Political Research quarterly.
27. Davidoff P (1965) Advocacy and pluralism in planning. Journal of American institute of planners 3.
28. Durbin EFM (1972) The politics of democratic socialism: the essence of democracy, in Carl Chen (eds.), communism, fascism and democracy: theoretical foundations. New York: Random house.
29. Ewuim NC, Nnamani DO, Eberinwa OM (2015) Legislative oversight and good Governance in Nigerian national assembly: an analysis of Obasanjo and Jonathan's administration, Review of public administration and management 3.
30. Friedreich CJ (1950) Constitutional government and democracy. Boston: Gin and company.
31. Neuman WL (2006) Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches, New York: Pearson.
32. Nworgu K (2006) Introduction to research methodology. Enugu: Cheston publishers.

This article was originally published in a special issue, **Political Science and Government Systems** handled by Editor. Dr. James A. Mitchell, California State University, USA