

John Dewey's education and social inquiry: A nexus towards democratic consolidation and citizenship education in Nigeria

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Abstract

The idea of good governance is central to democratic consolidation; and there can be no good governance without a vibrant democratic order that is participatory. Citizenship education is a tool for enhancing participation of the citizenry in the affairs of governance and all that pertains to the socio-economic and political life of the people as it relates to the common good. John Dewey argues that for there to be an enhanced form of participatory democracy, the education of citizens is very important and must be given utmost priority. For Dewey, this kind of education is one that is geared towards 'problem solving' which comes through the process of 'social inquiry'. It is through the process of social inquiry that citizens can take informed decision to enhance their condition for moral and economic progress. This paper critically x-rays Dewey's concept of education and social inquiry and translates it into the current practice of democracy in Nigeria *vis-a-vis* the socio-economic and political realities in order to activate citizens in participating in the political life through citizens' education. It is only through education of such as envisaged by Dewey that we can activate a problem solving citizenry rather than political liabilities. This research used the qualitative method to carry out its analysis in the topic of discourse.

Keywords: Democracy, Education, John Dewey, Political participation, Nigeria, Citizenry.

Introduction

Democratic consolidation and education are very vital to the progress and growth of any nation. Yet, this has been taken for granted in Nigeria. The educational system in Nigeria is in dire need of overhauling if it must meet the standards and norms of democratic consolidation. It is this overhauling that we must put into consideration the words of Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu when he critiques the product of our Nigerian educational systems thus:

Our leaders are pseudo-leaders; our intellectuals, pseudo intellectuals; our professionals are pseudo-professionals, whilst our occupations are pseudo-occupations. Our middle class is pseudo-middle class; our elite are pseudo-elite, our socialists, Marxist, liberals and even our conservatives, are very often pseudo, no matter the appellation they spot (Odumegwu 1989:12).

This suggests a fundamental challenge with our educational system which has even affected our politics and polity in Nigeria were the people only applaud and criticize and not for them to participate in politics (1989:12). The question is, could the level of political apathy and inability to translate our acquired education in Nigeria a problem to democratic consolidation? What does it take to be an informed citizenry in a country where the game of politics has been transformed into the game of bitter politics and which does not translate into the socio-economic and political realities that characterize the challenges we face as a people and as a nation? At what point do citizens know when to fully participate in politics beyond just going to vote on Election Day? To what level do Nigerian citizens know when the social contract has been broken between them and their leaders? To Nigerians what is the meaning of democracy and democratic consolidation? Can there be democratic consolidation without an informed citizenry participation advanced by education that can bring solutions to the difficult realization of good governance in Nigeria? Is the problem actually with the citizens, or the government or even democracy?

The aforementioned questions raised will be given a critical look with the prism of John Dewey's concept of education and how it can help consolidate our democratic institutions in Nigeria through the process of social inquiry as proposed by Dewey "to address precisely those matters that have previously been left to common sense,

especially morals and politics" (Sorrell 2013:814). According to Kory Sorrell,

the thought that the logic of experimental inquiry, already abundantly successful in the sciences, could be fruitfully applied to moral and political problems that have long been subject to public disagreement (2013:810).

As Dewey also writes:

The domain of opinion is one of conflict; its rule is arbitrary and costly. Only intellectual method affords a substitute for opinion. A general logic of experience alone can do for social qualities and aims what the natural sciences after centuries of struggle are doing for activity in the physical realm (Dewey 2008:314).

It is this intelligent method as proposed by Dewey that would steadily provide increasingly reliable, refined and inclusive judgments regarding intractable social problems; and this consequently led to his discourse on democracy and education.

This paper therefore, uses John Dewey's discourse of education through the process of social inquiry to consolidate our Nigerian democracy that is very far from mass participation through consensus, political discourse and engagement, communication, dialogue, inclusion and consultation to solve social problems for integral development.

Conceptualizing of terms

1. Education and its nature

The etymological definition of education has its root from the Latin 'educare' which means 'to make or mould'. However, the word education seems to be very complex and has no exact definition and this has made each definition become limited in its own right (Irabor 2018). There are two perspectives to the definition of education; the broad perspective and the narrow technical perspective (Kneller 1964:20). In the view of G.F Kneller, when viewed in the broad perspective, education deals with the act or experience that helps to create a formative effect on the mind, the behaviour or character of a person or the physical ability of a person or an individual. On the other hand, in its technical or narrow perspective, education is the process by which any society through schools, colleges, universities and other institutions deliberately transmit its cultural heritage i.e. its accumulated knowledge, values, skills, from one generation to another (Kneller 1964:20).

Nevertheless, we shall begin to implore various scholarly definitions of the concept of education. According to Abdul-Kareem, education is an inevitable tool for sustainable development and a vehicle for advancing the frontier of

knowledge (2001:127). In this regard, in *Teachers Education and Development in Nigeria: An Analysis of Reforms, Challenges and Prospects*; Ogunyinka, Okeke, and Adedoyin argue thus:

Education is severally conceived and inculcated by people of varying backgrounds, ages, needs and aspirations for sustainable development. The potency of education is more evident in its globalization trends imbued with instrumental values of nurturing productive citizens for sustainable development and democracy... (2015:111).

Godwin Azenabor has described education as a continuous reconstruction of experience and adjustment of the individual to the society, to nature, to his fellow human being and to the ultimate (2005:5). This, according to Azenabor, defines education as a moral, physical, mental, societal, cultural, intellectual and spiritual adjustment of an individual (2005:5). According to Peters, for education to be seen as having taken place, it must have given what is worthwhile to those that are committed to it, it must involve knowledge and understanding and it must establish procedures of transmission based on the teacher and the learner or student

(1966:30). Education creates the means through which a person learns and practices what has been learnt for human's advancement; and thus the aim of education is the enhancement of functional and patriotic elements of society through culture and tradition of the people (1966:30).

Plato asserts that education should deal with morality as it entails what enables an individual to show the right conduct to other members of the society (Irabor 2018). Aristotle on his part however, believes that education makes an individual develop a sound mind in a sound body. He is of the view that education has to work with both the mind and the body (2018). This definition sprang from the ancient times and has been maintained through the modern era to the contemporary times as John Dewey views education as the transmitter and bearer of a society's identity through the preparation of youths for adult society. In his development of childhood democratic education, Dewey emphasized "the most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning" (1916:49) and this is the very reason education plays a fundamental role towards educating citizens in a continuous process of enlightenment so as to inculcate in adult citizens on the ever changing policies that

influence theirs and others' lives, so that their desire to partake in democracy is not diminished. Hence, education has been recognized as a process of imparting knowledge, skills and attitude to the learners... Education is the most powerful instrument for social and economic progress and it is the greatest power get known to man for his/her own improvement (Ogunyinka, et al 2015:111). In *The School and Society* (1976) and *Democracy of Education* (1980), John Dewey argues that schools' insistence on mastery of facts and disciplining of bodies has led to the production of passive students who lack the ability to contribute actively to economic sustainability and societal developmental growth.

Therefore, it has become imperative to define education as a process of learning and as an instrument towards enhancing our democratic culture for purposeful democratic consolidation so as to become stakeholders in the affairs of making informed decisions in solving problems that affect their socio-economic and political life.

2. Democratic consolidation and its natures

Democratic consolidation according to Gasiorowski and Power in *Evidence from the Third World* defines democratic consolidation as the process by

which a newly established democratic regime becomes sufficiently durable that a return to non-democratic rule is no longer likely (1998:740). This automatically implies that such democracy is devoid of authoritarian tendencies, but involves its citizenry in the democratic process. It is possible to have a leader that is duly elected by the people and later such leader turns out to be undemocratic because the citizens have been alienated or as a result of 'political apathetic citizenry'. This happens when citizens refuse to vote during elections and at the same time not consulted in matters that affect the policy framework of the country. Hence, scholars have argued that public participation in government and attitudes toward government were significant in democratic transition and consolidation in cognizance to the political culture therein (Almond & Verba 1963). It is the participation of the public characterized by an educated citizenry by constantly putting government on their toes that makes democracy consolidated. For the purpose of this paper, democratic consolidation is the participatory dimension of the citizens to be part and parcel of the democratic nature and process of problem solving for the realization of good governance and integral development. As such, democratic consolidation

goes beyond elections and securing voters card; but it is a day to day involvement of the citizens and this is considered as 'participatory democracy' as David Beetham clearly states:

...on conditions for democratic consolidation suggests the necessity of going beyond procedural definitions of democracy (based on fair, honest and periodic elections) to more normative ideas about decision-making being controlled by all members of the group as equals... democracy is a matter of the degree to which basic principles are realized and democratization is always and everywhere an unfinished process (1994:157).

This understanding of democratic consolidation will set a background into John Dewey's perspective on education through its process of social inquiry as a basis for democratic consolidation.

Dewey's process of social inquiry

Dewey's basic demonstration of social inquiry is a practical judgment that facilitates a pragmatic approach to solving problems that are very much realistic and as such, the inquirer is an agent that helps in ameliorating difficult situation for the purpose of social transformation and meeting social needs and troubles within his environment (LW2 364). Dewey deepens this minimal and instrumental justification by taking

democracy to be a form of social inquiry and an operational approach to the problem of inquiry in his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*; thus:

The controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations so as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole (104).

Dewey develops his conception of inquiry against the backdrop of a metaphysical vision of humans as embedded in an objectively precarious world and seeking a mode of activity which will allow them to overcome this precariousness (Festenstein 2008:7). Social inquiry is demanded by what he calls an incomplete situation; that is, one in which something must be done. Dewey follows C.S. Peirce in a publication "*The Fixation of Belief*" in viewing inquiry as a response to some distress and settlement of opinion. However, Dewey tends to view this incompleteness in naturalistic terms, as an objective feature of the situation, rather than as a matter of what a particular agent feels or thinks: "we are doubtful because the situation is inherently doubtful" (106). This explains how we are exposed to a situation that we find somehow confusing, conflicting, controversial or uncertain. In Dewey, things are quite different from how they are in traditional empiricism, since "experience is not random sense stimuli imposing itself upon the sensory organs

of a disinterested spectator" (Bleazby 2013:31). Yet, there is an underlying perception that we share that is problematic to our existence as it affects our immediate environment and as such, a problem envisaged is a problem half solved. Therefore, in order to initiate an inquiry, we must first judge that the situation will have a very strong impact for the common good and it is a situation worthwhile, since it is a need that is very urgent and imperative. Hence, Ewelina Czujko-Moszyk in *John Dewey's Community of Inquiry* opines:

The process of reflection here is not one that occurs between a subject and an object,
But rather between a subject and an unresolved situation that has emerged within the environment (2014:134).

Democracy as a social inquiry is primarily about problem solving. It is something practical and achievable. Hence, Dewey sees the process of social inquiry as not an end which does not reach its ultimate terminus with reasoning but arrives at a judgment about the problem solution in practical terms (2014:136). Social inquiry for Dewey is a community inquiry; and community inquiry need not be critical but practical. The existence of community as an element embedded within the social functions of nature makes communal inquiry more superior to individual inquiry (Czujko-Moszyk 2014:138). This is the very reason Dewey in his work on *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* argues:

The operative force of facts is apparent when we consider that no fact in isolation has evidential potency. Facts are evidential and are tests of an idea as far as they are capable of being organized with one another. The organization can be achieved only as they interact with one another (1938:117).

The end product of social inquiry for Dewey is judgment and this knowledge arrives from knowledge and knowledge is not finite but temporal and also enables future inquiry (Bleazby 2013:37). We start out upon an inquiry with a certain body of knowledge already in place. All new judgments and experience are necessarily based on past knowledge. Every completed inquiry enriches our knowledge. By reconstructing our existing knowledge, we also partake of what is sometimes referred to as the *constant spiral movement of knowledge* (2013:39).

Richard Rorty, in *Philosophy and Social Hope*, defended democracy as social inquiry as a pragmatic approach in relation theories in action from two major perspectives. First, public democracy is a proposed method of social enquiry. This means we cannot underestimate the role of educated citizens in making intelligent inquiries into their social conditions and changes to society. They are in a position to learn about how their society functions and how it can function differently. Secondly, public democracy is itself an experimental test of political proposition that citizens become more powerful over the conditions of their life if their society

becomes more and more democratic (1999:69). As such, democracy as a process of social inquiry presupposes some degree of community goodwill and respect for all participants, even as these processes encourage fierce competition between subgroups aims. This is where the relevance of the Hegelian notion of recognition becomes very imperative. Dewey requests members, and particularly leaders, of social movements to “adopt an attitude of inquiry” to determine “which needs of their society are not being reasonably met” and who “are not being afforded opportunity to develop themselves so as to contribute to enrichment of the total society” (Midtgarden 2015:33). This is the essence of ‘polyarchy’ as proposed in *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* through which political power is distributed over many energetic publics competing for community and government attention to their aims (Dahl 1971:234). The channels of such political power distribution passes through ethnic associations, civic action organization, political parties, religious organization, businesses, unions, political actions committees, trade groups, grassroots community groups, charities, etc. Although, Dewey's democracy as social inquiry could be labeled *public deliberation polyarchy*; this deliberation polyarchy is in agreement with Dahl in which a genuine democracy of social inquiry will facilitate the uprising of activist and protest groups (1971:234); what Lippmann and Dewey labeled as *Publics* by providing conditions for easy communication, free association, and honest media information (Lippmann

1925:52). Furthermore, democracy as social inquiry will provide the sort of civic education that fosters mutual respect and appreciation for all members of society, it will teach the skills of collective problem solving. If a democracy can meet these minimal requirements, then those publics that do arise can frequently get a fair hearing before the entire community – the Public. Such a democratic society would also be more resistant to authoritarian temptations.

John Dewey: Education and democracy

Dewey's work on education as the transmitter and bearer of a society's identity, through the preparation of youths for adult society is his development of childhood democratic education. Dewey emphasized "the most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning" (1916:49). This is the very reason education plays a fundamental role to educate citizens in a continuous process of enlightenment so as to educate adult citizens on the ever changing policies that influence theirs and others' lives; so that their desire to partake in democracy is not diminished. In the current social climate we live in, where many different lives of individual backgrounds and aptitudes co-exist, democratic education could take form in the sharing of individual experiences as a method of establishing shared experiences. Dewey states that "education is the reconstruction or re-organization of experiences that increases the ability to direct the course of subsequent

experiences" (1916: 39). Perhaps if all citizens were given the opportunity to step into one another's shoes from time to time, each would gain a better understanding of the core values that unite a community of differing individuals, such as the desire for social progress. John Dewey attempts to create a childhood education, carried through to a democratic adulthood, is a democracy of empathy; an education centered on shared experiences of individuals to allow them intelligently choose the best courses of action in light of their understandings of other's experiences as well as their own. The need for constant, informal education of "personal initiative and adaptability" (1916:111) is, according to Dewey, in a mobile society, such as ours, vital in preventing citizens from becoming "overwhelmed by the changes in which they are caught and whose significance or connection they do not perceive" (1916:111). Daisy Turner believes that Dewey is referring to the current state in which many citizens find themselves, affected by voter apathy, and ultimately the growing sense of disassociations from political policy and governance. Lydia Wraw in *Deweyan Democracy and the Free Schools: What Constitutes a Good Education and What Social Conditions are Conducive to It?* Highlighted a problem which reflects the problem of voters' apathy in adults, in relation to the educational system in which proper methods of teaching are not tailored to the individual. It necessarily follows that without appropriate methods of communication, students without an aptitude for a specific subject become overwhelmed

and “lose the desire to go on learning” (2013:4) the same could be said of inappropriate communication of government policy.

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey defines education as “that reconstruction of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience” (1916:76), and it is through this concept that he links education with democracy. According to Dewey in *The Public and Its Problems*

Democracy is understood as a mode of associated, conjoint, communicated living, is the only type of society in which individuals are able to grow and socially participate in a manner that allows for the realization of their unique interest and gifts (1991:148).

Conversely, for a democracy to flourish, it requires individuals who maximize their potential in activity with others. Democracy, then, is shared progression by all people towards the good life, both as individual and as a society. This progression happens because of conjoint communicated experience. To put it differently, society progresses through communication, which is in essence-educative. Thus, in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey argues further:

Not only is social life identical with communication, but all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative. To be a recipient of a communication is to

have an enlarged and changed experience... The experience has to be formulated in order to be communicated. To formulate requires getting outside of it, seeing it as another would see it, considering what points of contact it has with the life of another so that it may be got into such form that we can appreciate its meaning. Except in dealing with commonplaces and catch phrases one has to assimilate, imaginatively, something of another's experience in order to tell him intelligently of one's own experience. All communication is like art. It may be fairly said, therefore, that any social arrangement that remains vitally social, or vitally shared, is educative to those who participate in it. Only when it becomes cast in a mold and runs in a routine way do it loses its educative power (MW 9:89).

The implication of this line of thinking is that democracy is not only a form of government, or a mode of social living, but essentially a broad conception of education as the movement of individuals and societies forward, towards something better. Dewey believes that the ultimate ends of such movement cannot be determined in advance – that goods, like other objects of experience, are continually reconstructed in the light of ever changing experience. Since each new experience carries with it the possibility of new insights, knowledge, skills, or

attitudes, each new experience contains within it the possibility of new conceptions of goods, new capacities for attainment, and new conceptions of how best to support such attainment by a greater number of persons within the society. Thus, experience for Dewey is inherently progressive and an education that conduces to progressive experience is inherently democratic.

Learning in isolation perpetuates the duality of mind and action, and of the individual and society. As such, the method of Deweyan democratic education is an experimental process in which thought and reason are applied to activity to find the best answer to a problem at a particular time and place. This is the scientific method and his application to the field of education, is one of the greatest themes in his work. The scientific method shows that knowledge does not exist statically or separate from action. Knowledge that is isolated from action and is acquired passively prevents the formation of new habits and the reconstruction of experience, thereby preventing growth and learning. The experimental method unites mental activity and experience, and allows for the creation of new knowledge. This presupposes that knowledge is not a body of universal truth waiting to be uncovered by rational, objective thought. As such, Dewey argues that "there is no such thing as genuine knowledge and fruitful understanding except as the offspring of doing" (Dewey 1966:275).

In summary, in *Democracy and Education* Dewey emphasizes the associational and communal aspects of

democracy, and finds that conscious, directed education is necessary to establish these conditions and form democratic character in children. Growth, experience, and activity are the preferred terms by Dewey to describe the type of learning to social, communicative activity that allows for the flourishing of democratic community.

Nigeria education and its democratic problems

No doubt, in Plato's *Republic* one of the most popular works of Plato, there is a repulsive attitude for democratic institutions and it is normal for the argument to be that some countries in the world have tried not to practice democracy but are doing better than those which practice democracy. It is important to look at the context in which Plato rejected democracy in *The Republic*; it was a tendency for people to be casually executed; considering his friend and Master Socrates who was condemned to death by the policymakers of Athens in 399 BCE. Despite Plato's rejection of democracy, contemporary scholars of democracy posit it as the best form of government as envisaged by Karl Popper (Eidlin 1993:69). Yet, the Athenian system of government was designed to be a direct democracy, which would mean that every eligible citizen would have the opportunity to vote on each piece of legislation. Here in lies the problem with Nigeria democratic problems. Despite the high level of Nigerians who went to school and acquired exclusive degrees from foreign universities and in the best universities in Nigeria, there is still a very low level of

political participation in Nigeria. This raises a very big question, is it the educational system that causes the disinterestedness in political participation or is it the type of education with its orientation and mindset that leads to political apathy in Nigeria?

To understand the problem of Nigerian democracy there is a need to connect with the root of democracy, the city of Athens. Athenian education reflected that of the city itself, which was moving toward increasing democratization. Education in Athens was a teaching process that was oriented in an entirely realistic direction, education for political participation. This is where education in Nigeria deviates from the original standpoint. Firstly, education is not considered a teaching process from the attitude of Nigerians because it is an end to a means. Secondly, our education system does not reflect the social condition of Nigerians. This is largely because education must be the four walls of the classroom and must end in the certificate. The Sophists who were professional educators saw education in the light of *Encyclopedia Britannica* thus:

The Sophists proposed to meet a new need that was generally felt in Greek society- particularly in the most active cities, such as Athens, where political life had been intensively developed. Henceforth, participation in public affairs became the supreme occupation engaging the ambition of Greek man; it was no longer in athletics and elegant leisure activities that his valour, his desire to assert himself and to triumph would find

expression but rather in political action.

Aristotle said:

No one will doubt that the legislator should direct his attention above all to the education of youth... The citizens should be moulded to suit the form of government under which he lives (Book VIII).

Does the Nigerian education system suit the form of government under which she operates? Do the Nigerian citizens understand the dynamics of the art of politics as their nature in reference to Aristotle's maxim "et homo socialis; et homo politicus"? What is the current state of the Nigerian Democracy? What is the best suited form of government that will reflect the realities of Nigerians if not democracy? There ought to be a strong connect between education and the system being operated in Nigeria so that Nigeria as a country will consolidate its dividends of a consolidated democracy or else will end up like the Spartans were known for training their citizens in the act of war; the Athenians trained their citizens in wisdom and knowledge. The Spartans have been forgotten but the Athenians and Athens have been remembered and will always be remembered. This, Bertrand Russell rightly argued in his work, *The Scientific Outlook*:

Education has two purposes: on the one hand to form the mind and on the other hand to train

the citizens. The Athenians concentrated on the former and the Spartans on the latter. The Spartans won, but the Athenians were remembered (1954:251).

To undertake the challenges of education and the problem of democracy in Nigeria is both systemic and attitudinal. It is systemic because of poor government policy and funding; it is attitudinal because of teachers and student attitude in education. As such, Isawa Elaigwu sees this problem in the fact that:

The universities are recognized as indispensable (at least, in providing manpower) but they are suspect. Many think the universities are composed of a sybaritic class of egg-heads feeding fat on the nation's resources without producing much that is relevant to the nation's needs, enough to justify the heavy expenditure on higher education. Unless the universities take the initiative in making themselves more relevant to the best interest of the nation, they will have little support from the public when their autonomy is eroded and the old stereotypes will remain unchanged (2005:191).

Unfortunately, the private institutions have followed suit and of course education is now a business making venture to the detriment of the nation's interest. What we now envisage as problems and challenges lies in the Deweyan concept of education for the consolidation of our democracy. No

doubt, Dewey drew from the usual Athenian tradition of a participatory democracy with the value for education.

The need for problem solvers in Nigeria and re-definition of our educational system

Various scholars have conceived of education from various perspectives but the bottom-line in defining education is that it is for the purpose of problem solving. Oyekan, in *Foundations of Teacher Education*, pragmatically agrees with Dewey that we must redefine our educational system in a manner that:

coherent teacher education programme should systematically embrace integrated curriculum innovations which reflect the social, economic and political environment of a modern society to solve societal problems (2006:24).

This problem solving is hinged on sustainable development; a sustainable development that is a drive in the improvement of the society and not the retrogression of the society. Abdulkareem A. Y, in *Nigeria University and Development of Human Resources*, asserts that "education is an inevitable tool for sustainable development and a vehicle for advancing the frontier of knowledge" (2001:127). Hence, there cannot be sustainable development without solving problems such as ignorance, conflict, disease, and poverty. Thus:

This really demands coherent information processing systems anchored on manipulative skills which help to coordinate and transform conceptual ideas, emotions and feelings into life supporting operations beyond the school setting. Herein, a sufficiently educated and enlightened population is a quality assurance for individual and social productivity, responsible leadership and prosperous future (Ogunyika, Okeke, & Adedoyin 2015:112).

Every development in human history comes with its own renewed challenges and problems and as such, this can only come through the vehicle in the involvement of the citizens in political participation. In *Teacher Education and Development in Nigeria: An Analysis of Reforms, Challenges and Prospects*, Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin reiterate thus:

The potency of education is more evident in its globalization trends imbued with instrumental values of nurturing productive citizens for sustainable development and democracy (2015:111).

Nevertheless, this can never be achieved in isolation because the teacher has an indispensable role to play in the formation of students in preparing their minds in various areas of citizenship education for sustainable development. It is the teacher that holds the key to the

door as they translate educational policies into practice, and programmes into action. It is therefore expected that students graduate and swung into action through its involvement in the democratization of the polity and become stakeholders of national interest; as they think national and act locally in their various areas of domicile or residence. Therefore, Nigerian leaders cannot undermine its educated citizenry because they are its greatest asset for democratic consolidation.

Nigeria: Too many graduates and yet bad political participation

It is an obvious fact that Nigerian institutions produce so many graduates from the primary to tertiary level of education; yet, the factors responsible for political apathy in Nigeria do not translate the level of its citizenry in the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. The level of voters' registration card shows the degeneration of interest from Nigerian youths supposedly educated and unable to change the political culture of its contemporary situation for the purpose of making progress in our polity. In fact, the participation of Nigerian graduates to the polity is an inherited sentiment replete with prejudice and religious biases to getting involved to democratic consolidation. In the end, politics is left in the hands of a selected few who will truncate the democratic process with its citizenry displaying a lackadaisical attitude towards governance. Hence, what we now have in Nigeria as the definition of democracy becomes "government of the people, by the parties, for the powerful, or as

exploitation of the people, by the powerful, through the parties” (Nwabueze 1993:70). This of course is contrary to the tenets and ideal of democracy as a government of the people, by the people and of the people. It entails that the welfare of the people is the primary focal point of ideal democracy; because without the people, or better still, without the citizens or the electorates, there is possibly no democracy (Ekei 2009:287). Any democracy devoid of educated citizenry in full participation is detrimental to democratic consolidation. This goes beyond voting alone as it is currently stressed “go get voters card” but requires continuous intervention of the citizens in all that affects them. This is the essence of Late Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu quotation in the introductory part of this work. Nigerians have too many graduates but ineffective in democratic consolidation due to their incapacitation that has brought about pseudo professionalism which unable to translate our democratic status into problem solving.

Conclusion

Education in Nigeria ought to go beyond the four walls of the classroom and certifications into a robust engagement of citizens to solve the problems that impedes on democratic consolidation. Education ought not only to be idealistic but pragmatic in nature for the purpose of impact and social progress in every strata of human existence. This is why John Dewey made recourse to an educated intelligent citizenry through the process of social inquiry and robust

engagement can help in the transforming of our lives as citizens in need of integral development. This can be realized through the pathway of John Dewey discourses on Education and Democracy.

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