



**NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY**

**EDUCATION, SECURITY, ECONOMY AND  
VIABILITY OF DIGITAL RESPONSE**

**VOLUME 33 NO. 1, OCTOBER, 2022**

**ISSN: 0794-0114**

**e-ISSN: 2971-5652**

Published by

**PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (PEAN)**

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# **Philosophy of Education, Politics and Leadership in Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

This paper discusses Philosophy of Education, politics and leadership in Nigeria. Philosophy of Education is always confronted with the problem of explaining the nature of man and his society. Hence, it is needed to put order, harmony and meaning to the different and conflicting issues that emerge in an effort to solve the problems encountered. In Nigeria as in many African nations, leadership is a big problem. It is simply not enough to criticize Nigeria and Nigerians, an attempt should equally be made on how to salvage the nation. The paper discusses Nature of society, leadership question for Nigeria and the Philosophy of Education for Nigerians. The paper recommends among other things a special training course for Nigerian leaders.

## **Introduction**

Every society has its outlook, expectations, aspirations and norms, which guide or condition the responses of its members to life. Besides, the philosophy of a group or an individual is not static. It changes and grows with new insights and influences from other aspects of life. Such changes occur in response to the political, economic, religious, cultural and social changes or innovations.

According to Federal Government of Nigeria (2013), One of the five cardinal objectives for the Nigerian nation is to build a free and democratic society-. Such a society, hopefully, will enable people to interact among themselves, act within the dictates of their conscience and make laws that will govern them. Generally, democracy implies collective leadership, collective responsibility and equality of opportunities. The above rests on the following which embrace an outline of democratic beliefs: The worth and dignity of the individual as a human

being should be acknowledged: faith in the potentialities of the individual; every person should be able to achieve a creative and viable individuality.

Everyone has the capacity to learn how to act. Everyone has or can develop sufficient capacity to manage his life with others through conscious and planned actions. This above does not suggest that individuals have equal capacity; rather, it presupposes that the individual can learn and should be provided requisite opportunities to develop maximally relative to his capacity, both inherent and acquired. The values held by each group should be respected in order to provide the desired opportunities to the citizens.

The process of living is the interactive process in which each individual works with every other individual and agreeing upon the most fruitful ways of achieving desired common goals. This presupposes that freedom for consultation, collective decisions, of speech of assembly and the like should exist in a democratic society. There should be interdependence amongst the constituent elements in a society to ensure coherence and orderliness as well as accomplishment of societal aspirations. Thus, mutual trust, co-operation, interdependence, intelligent interaction tends to characterise the democratic process.

### **Nature of Society**

Man is a political animal in that he essentially lives in and forms groups or associations in achieving his life's objectives. Consequently, a political society can broadly be defined as a consciously devised association of individuals for the achievement of deliberately defined purposes. It comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life. It is the most complete, the most self-sufficing of all communities or political associations natural to man. It is indeed a natural extension of the family and village life. The state or society exists and continues in existence for a purpose, for the sake of a good life of the citizens. This good life is not something "out there", something already made but is achieved through hard-work, discipline, and conscious co-ordination and co-operation of all the citizens. The state becomes a moral entity with its own rights and duties to be recognized and respected by the citizens (Arinze, 2011).

According to Nwankwo (2017), the important political education for the Nigerian is first of all that the state is a moral body whose rights can be violated by the citizens; whose reason for existence is for "a good life" achievable by the will and co-ordinated activities of its members. Consequently, dissipated and immoral lives of the citizens such as embezzlement of public funds, stealing, armed robbery, bribery and corruption, are certainly destructive of the "good life" of all, which is the very end and reason for the continued existence of the society itself.

The Nigerian has to be convinced of the fact that his high rate of immorality ultimately means suicide to the society itself. The Nigerian should not abuse "government" time, taxes, or damage its property, defy its laws and prohibitions or get around them for selfish reasons. For he simply has no qualms about public property or anything which belongs to the government, the state or the church, for that matter. Life for him is a gamble, one big opportunity to loot what he can, when he can. For him to learn to respect other peoples' rights including the state, is truly to come of age. Why people live in society as a social unit is an important political education for the Nigerian in the effort to expand his social and mental horizons. Men live in

society because of the obvious advantages which accrue to them from it. For without society, men cannot survive, since society alone makes possible the division of labour and exchange of, commodities necessary for the satisfaction of peoples' material needs (Arinze, 2011). Also, of course, men value one another's company and friendship quite apart from any economic benefits. On the whole, people live in society for both egoistic and utilitarian reasons, the good of each individual separately and the fact that more total good (for all) can be and is achieved if men live in society than if they do not. Consequently, people live in society for the maximum good of all, and, therefore, to help not prey on one another; co-operate with, not exploit or ruin one another; advance each other's goals through advancing the goals of all. These ideas should be highly instructive to the Nigerian. One needs all as much as all need one for the society to achieve common goals. This is what "common good" is all about. (Nwankwo, 2017).

What is also characteristic of the Nigerian is his lack of the true notion of the "common good". The proverbial and often vaunted "national cake" in the estimation of the average person is something "out there" to be shared out for self and for one's family and friends. The notion of the good of the society, or the general good becomes illusory and of no one's concern. Consequently, the Nigerian needs enlightenment and broadening of perspectives on this point. As a matter of fact, "common good" as a concept is of fundamental important in understanding the social order. No society of human beings is possible without what binds them together, what they strive after communally (Arinze, 2011).

A social relationship is thus constituted by the coordination of the personal activities of the members of the group. The coordination itself is regulated by the specific purpose or the common good which motivates and binds the group together. Hence, the common good is the basis of social order. The common good is thus the good of the members of the society. But what constitutes the common good of a political society? In short, they are those things which make up the good of the society as a whole. We must however note that the common good is just not a mere collection of individual goods. It is something quite different from and superior to the individual personal advantages and utilities from it. Hence, there is usually a distinction between "private or personal good" and "common good". It is also for all, not just for a few members of the society (Nwachukwu, 2019).

The Nigerian has to be made to understand that there is greater world than his own private, often times, selfish world. His ethnic concerns have at times to give way to national and public interests. He has to be made to learn that in working together and cooperatively for the common good and interests, he achieves his own tribal objectives, the state being higher and more important than his tribe. In other words, the Nigerian should at times aim at achieving tribal values and goals through promoting the common good and not in opposition to it. Consequently, he should see his tendency to tribalism, as destructive of public good and national interests. The Nigerian should cultivate patriotism or love of fatherland. He should convince himself of the fact that it pays to be patriotic, to love and defend his fatherland (Arinze, 2011). A dictionary definition of a patriot is "a person who loves and is ready to defend his country", which in practice, means readiness to sacrifice for one's nation. Patriotism is as old as man himself. It entails being a good man and a lover of one's country. The reason for the love of and sacrifice for one's country appears obvious for it gives one national and hence,

cultural identity just as a father gives his son physical identity. Ask not what the country can do for you but what you can do for your country. The Nigerians should learn to be patriotic, to do good or sacrifice for the love of his country. Patriotism is a rare virtue among Nigerians.

Hence, the average Nigerian looks upon whatever belongs to the government, to the nation itself as one big loot to be shared out. Consequently, the Nigerian ought to be educated not only on the nature and rights of the society but on his fundamental obligations to it, of which, patriotism is primary. He must learn to appreciate and love his country, if need be, die for it, too, which is the highest call of patriotism. (Nwankwo, 2017)

### **The Leadership Question for Nigeria**

The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership. The present economic state of the nation is definitely traceable to irresponsible and corrupt leadership (Ani, 2018).

Consequently, the leadership question is a serious one in Nigeria. The reason for it is not far-fetched. There are all sorts of competitive customs and social habits which drive individuals to greed and selfishness. The ever-perplexing question is how selfless and greed-free leaders can come from such a society of mortals.

Aguba (2016), in confirmation of Platos ideas on a special training course for future leaders, philosopher kings/ rulers for a perfect working out of ideal state, insisted on a special training course for leaders, Nigeria has been less than fortunate in its leadership, It is a very mild way of stating this basic weakness of the Nigerians, his misuse of power and authority because of his wrong notions of them. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. This is the real problem with Nigeria. As a matter of fact, it is ignorance and poverty among power-wielders which turn power demonic in Nigeria. The emphasis on the wrong notion of power and authority on the part of the Nigerian leaders is to highlight their narrow and selfish interpretation use of power. (Nwankwo, 2017).

According to Ani (2018), what is called for is the challenge of personal example, responsibility, accountability which are the hallmarks of true leadership. If the common man is called upon to cultivate values higher than material and wealth acquisitions and the social prestige which goes with it, the leaders, must live up to the same challenge. Nigerian leaders therefore have to rise to their responsibility in this regard and exhibit in their lives higher and more lasting values. Such values as good name, honour, self-discipline, sense of responsibility, should be their hallmarks. Self-integrity, self-or family reputation are definitely higher values than mere wealth acquisition and display. It is not enough for the leaders to cultivate higher values, they must also fight against tribalism, nepotism and narrow-mindedness, particular in the conception and administration of the common good. Tribalism or ethnic prejudice, a known evil in Nigeria, has significantly shaped the course of the nation's history. Consequently, it is imperative for national leaders to widen their vision and social horizons beyond their own good and that of their relatives in pursuit of national goals and objectives. They have to serve the nation, not themselves. As custodians and promoters of the common good, servants, not masters of the people, they should handle the common good equitably and wisely.

The nation's wealth and assets certainly become mismanaged when managed along partisan and ethnic interests. Political leaders should therefore be responsible, self-disciplined, broad-minded, patriotic in the true sense of the word and above all, with upright conscience, that is to say, morally good individuals who has a good soul is good. The role of leadership in reshaping and reorientating the values and mental bearing of the Nigerian people cannot be over-stressed. For as the leaders, so are the people whom they lead, whose value system they generally imitate. In this question of lack of initiative, inventive or creative spirit on the part of the average Nigerian, we certainly, in part at least, have to go back to the problem of leadership, its failure to rise up to the responsibility and challenge of personal example (Nwankwo, 2017).

### **The Philosophy of Education for Nigerians**

The philosophy of Education for Nigerians is of utmost importance. The great world educationists know the value of good and relevant education. They see the task of education as an emancipation and enlargement of experience. Education frees individuals from prejudices and irrational assumptions of everyday life. It also emancipates the human mind from error, prejudices, false opinions. Education is advanced and classified as the freedom and comprehensive development of human powers. Knowledge is power to master and interpret one's environment. The need for relevant Philosophy of Education for Nigerians becomes clear and acute. Prejudices, wrong values, wrong priorities, erroneous assumptions, disordered ambition and goals are manifestations of ignorance, the results of false education and philosophy of life (Okeke, 2016).

It is not to say that theory or correct philosophy of Education alone suffices to transform the Nigerian mind. The system under which it operates is equally important. The whole point of the leadership question is an indispensable part of the total curative process. For theory and practice; thinking and doing in this case, complement each other. Theory nevertheless comes and should come before practice since it is necessary for one to look before one leaps, to think before one acts (Nweke, 2013).

Among the things that should form the basic philosophy of Education for Nigerians is the concept of human dignity through labour. The Nigerian needs to be re-educated on the true notion of man and what gives him real worth and dignity. This is labour. False education or education in wrong values has inculcated false notion of human dignity in the Nigerian. He conceives human dignity and social status in terms of wealth acquisitions. The Nigerian builds up his sense of social importance, influence, and dignity practically in terms of wealth-acquisitions alone. As a result, his conceptions of labour or hard-work is in connection with occupations of immediate material gain. The labour which gives man true dignity is the productive and creative one which makes individuals masters of their environment and controllers of their rhythm of progress (Arinze, 2011).

Another important item that should form philosophy of Education for the Nigerian in the effort to give his mind a new value orientation is self-discipline. The Nigerian must be prepared to restrain his unruly desires, goals, and ambitions which he generally defines in materialistic terms. In his eagerness to have more, display more, enjoy more, the Nigerian has lost all sense of self-control in his desire for money. Indeed, the opposite, self-indiscipline, has characterized his way of life and it is an important root-cause of his present economic and social predicament.

We see, hear and read about indiscipline in the home, in the school, in the public service, in the private sector, in the government and in legislative assemblies, on the roads, in the air (Nweke, 2013).

The Nigerian therefore needs to be re-schooled in discipline, to learn to appreciate self-discipline, respect the right of others, orderly conduct, restraint in life's goals and desires. He should be made to be conscious of queues, to sacrifice for others, to respect and work for the common good. He should aim at subduing the monster of selfishness in him (Okeke, 2016).

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations are made thus:

- i. Special training course is recommended for Nigerian leaders.
- ii. Patriotism should be promoted among Nigerians
- iii. Tribalism and Nepotism should be discouraged among Nigerians.
- iv. Accountability should be the hallmark of leadership in Nigeria.
- v. Functional education should be made compulsory for the promotion of progressive Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Self-discipline is needed in Nigerian leadership. The Nigerian needs to expand his knowledge and social horizons through political education. Education widens one's perspectives and outlook of life. The Nigerian needs to aim at higher values such as good name, self-discipline and self-integrity. He has also to learn to be global in his outlook of life and adventures for the good of others and mankind in general. His philosophy of education in the effort to fight selfishness are the correct ideas on the nature of the society for purposeful leadership.

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