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A Philosophical Reflection on the Relationship Between Politics and Education

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Abstract

The question of what ought to constitute the nature and determining ground for the relationship between politics and education has become one of the contemporary subjects bothering on most Nigerian academics. In a bid to resolve this lingering imbroglio, this paper investigated the relationship between politics and education using the descriptive research method. In examining the relationship between politics and education, this work began with a clarification of the major concepts that underlying our discussion. Findings from the study revealed that politics and education are closely knitted together and they mutually reinforce one another. A good educational system is an off-shoot and consequence of a good political system and a good political system is impracticable without quality education because education helps in the provision of the needed manpower to drive the political system of a nation. The study also revealed that when a nation gets it right with politics and education, the country will surely be great and stable. The study however, concluded that the well-being, development and success of an individual or society at large depend to a large extent on the politics and education of that society. It recommended among others that authorities of educational institutions should partner with the government and international organizations to provide continual political education that gears towards political reorientation and sensitization of all facets of Nigeria beyond the limits of the classroom.

Keywords: Education, Politics, Development, Nigeria

Introduction

Education is the key to development. It is the greatest catalyst to individual and collective development of any nation. An educated citizenry is empowered to be productive, progressive and informed. Such participate and demand transparency and accountability from the politicians. Only a good educational system that is well planned and executed can produce such qualitative citizens who no doubt will be easier to govern than the un-learned populace (Asogwa, 2019). However, such educational system does not fall from the skies. It takes a good political system that is well organized, responsive, responsible, transparent, and effective to

engender such a virile educational system. Such well led society invests heavily on education, knowing that it is the key to economic, political and social stability of the society. In other words, a good political system is needed to stimulate good education and a good educational system is needed to produce a good political system. The two according to Asogwa (2019) are mutually reinforcing: one leads to the other while the other in turn enhances the one.

Education is interlinked with politics. Education and politics can be so mutually related that education can be employed to enhance politics, while politics can bring about a good education for a country and enhance a proper application of the philosophy in educational institutions. A good educational system is an off-shoot and consequence of a good political system. Only well-organized societies will have the political will to invest adequately in education, mindful of the immeasurable dividends accruing from such investment. On the other hand, a good educational system is an asset to any nation; indeed it is all that is needed for the economic, political, and social breakthrough/stability of any nation. When a nation gets it right with politics and education, the country will surely be great and stable.

Disappointingly, the Nigerian political and educational landscape has remained turbulent due to frequent infractions on the rights of the citizens, corruption among public officers, unequal access to educational resources, and poor funding to policy inconsistencies, to mention but a few. While some countries have exploited the relationship between politics and education for their progress, nations like Nigeria have used it to generate problems. The political structure in the nation is so rigged that individuals in public office are compelled to act as though they have no idea how crucial education is to the advancement of the nation. As a result of these infractions, education has been neglected or excluded from the nation's priorities, which has over time led to a conflict between the Federal Government's refusal to invest the required fund and the institution's financial demands. This undesirable situation is what has caused the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to have a storied history of strikes. The worst of them was the year 2022, which had a protracted 8-month impasse between the ASUU and the Federal Government, which was represented by the labor and education ministries. With such ugly situation, how can the country be great and stable? Due to the blusterous background of the Nigerian political and educational landscape, the question of what ought to constitute the nature and determining ground for the relationship between politics and education has become one of the contemporary subjects bothering on most Nigerian academics.

This paper is however, mainly concerned with the nexus between politics and education. In addressing this concern, the paper will among other things attempt to answer the following questions and related ones: what is education and its aim? What is politics? What is the relationship between politics and education? In what ways can politics be used to enhance education and vice versa. Suffice to say that the ultimate aim of the paper is to show that politics is relevant to education and education is also relevant to the day to day politics of any country.

Education

The concept of education has different interpretation as there are different educationists. It is a word with far-reaching meaning and dimensions. The word education according to Ozmon (1976) was first coined from the Latin word 'educere' meaning to lead out or to bring out. In another interpretation, Bowan (1994) says it is a Latin word 'educare' which means to form or impact. The etymological definition of the concept education has already pointed out the disagreements that exist in trying to get the meaning of education. Apart from this etymological

definition, various scholars have also offered their own definitions. For instance, Nduka (1975) says education is the process of cultural transmission and using culture to embrace the people's art, music literature, philosophy, science and technology. For Fafunwa (1980), it is the sum of all the processes by means of which an individual develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour of positive (and sometimes of negative) value in the society in which he lives. Education, according to Peters (1976), is a process of socialization, enculturation and transmission of what is worthwhile to those who are committed to it, be they children or adult. Education in the view of Osokoya (2010) is the leading out of the inborn powers and potentialities of the individuals in the society and the acquisition of skills, aptitudes and competencies necessary for self-reliance and for coping with life's problems.

Education for Okafor (2002) is a process of acculturation through which the individuals are helped to attain the development of their potentialities and their maximum activation when necessary according to the right reason and to achieve perfect fulfillment. Asogwa (2017) perceives education as the process of imparting knowledge, skills and judgment. It may be acquired through the process of teaching, schooling, instruction, and training and so on to improve knowledge and develop one's skills. In the same way, Chauhan (1987) sees education as the shaping of behaviour or modification of behaviour of the individuals for adjustment in the society. This tallies with the definition of education by Emenanjo (2002), who opines that education is the summation of all the processes for developing abilities, attitudes, and all other forms of positive attributes (like transparency, accountability, responsiveness, obedience to the rule of law, effectiveness and efficiency in handling responsibilities, etc) needed for self and group socialization, realization and the total empowerment, the acquisition of skill of all sorts including the skills of being civilized, ability to live with problems and paradoxes and find solutions to them.

Kosemani in Harry (2019) describes education as a societal institution invented by man to satisfy essential needs. The needs are unique to each society and are addressed in different ways by different societies depending on the peculiar and particular circumstances the society finds itself at any particular point in time. Again, Okoh (2015) avows that education entails the process of transmission of values, cultures and skills, considered worthwhile, from one generation to the next. It is all about a deliberate and conscious attempt by one person to effect a change in the behaviours of another person by exposing the person to certain experiences. It could be a way of transmitting from one generation to the next, the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society and the preparation of young people for active participation in societal maintenance or development

However, for the purpose of this work, we shall adopt a definition of education that emphasizes the need and importance of human development. This is precisely because any education system that cannot produce, enhance and facilitate the total development of the human person or touch all the major aspects of our life is not education. Thus, education is a tool that produces, enhances and facilitates the overall development of the human person or total development of the human person. In other words, education is the total development of the individual according to his needs and demands of society, of which he is an integral part. This simply means that education provides the individual a bundle of information needed for the right politics.

Aims of Education

Aim as it were, give direction to education, and this aim varies from country to country, individuals to individuals. O'Connor in Ategwu and Obia (2019) considers the following as the general aims of education:

1. To provide men and women with the minimum skills necessary for them to take their place in the society and to seek for more knowledge
2. To provide men and women with vocational training that will enable them to be self-reliant
3. To awaken interest in and a taste for knowledge
4. To make people critical
5. To train people to appreciate the cultural and moral achievements for humanity

Politics

There is no universally accepted definition for the concept of politics because it yields itself to many interpretations and this can be attested to by the position of Harrison and Boyd (2003) who claim that there is more than one way of describing politics. To be expected, a concept in this category can be in common use with professionals and amateurs claiming to know what it is. In the minds of many people who claim to know what politics is all about, there can be meanings of the concept which they may claim to know and highlight and others which they can undermine. This suggests that there are meanings, views or notion of politics that one man or state can emphasize which another man or state may ignore. For instance, many people see politics as a dirty game because violence, deceit, lies, and manipulations, etc. are always the response it invokes.

However, it must be noted that politics is derived from the Greek word 'politika' meaning affairs of the cities. Politics is "the process of making decisions that applies to members of a group" (Hague & Harrop, 2013). It has to do with achieving and expressing positions of governance with organized control over a human community, particularly a state. In its broadest sense, politics concerns the way in which people interact – how they make decisions and settle disputes. It concerns with power and the way in which power is distributed in society. For Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, politics is the activities involved in getting and using power in public life and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or society. In other words, politics is a game of discussing, grabbing and using power to make decisions that control and affect people's lives, organizations or a country.

Politics according to Asomoah, Yeboah-Assiamah and Osie-Kojo (2014) is about power to make authoritative decisions or means through which society collectively synchronizes idea, deliberates on issues, manages conflicts and reaches consensus on how best resources can be allocated. In contributing to the existing definitions of politics, Ajayi (2016) posits that politics involves theory and practice that guide the making of a common decision for group of people; it is the system that unifies the society together, especially, in the area of public affairs, welfare, social amenities and exercising of power to organize and control a particular community or state. Also contributing to the definition of politics, Laswell (1958) asserts that politics is concerned with who gets what, when and how. Similarly, Asogwa (2017) says politics is seen as the struggle for power as well as allocation of values, that is, who gets what, when and how.

It also refers to activities related to the capturing of power, consolidation of power and use of state power. It ensures the distribution of power and other values are fairly done. It is seen as the art of doing something for the good of the people in the society. On his part, Ward (1996) views politics as a concept that concerns itself with studying where our past leaders succeeded and where they failed in order to ascertain why they failed. It can also be seen as that aspect of human behaviour which specializes in the administration and government of people, systems or communities.

Politics focuses on developing policies and initiating actions that target the development of citizens and their state. Consequently, politics influences and shapes all areas of human existence. The process of playing politics involves careful deliberations and systematic and skillful reconciliation of diverse views of citizens on local and national issues. In this process, skills for persuasion, consensus, compromise and argument are inevitable (Nwaokugha & Anagwo, 2019). It is through argument that one builds up his presentation and in this argument one tries to systematically sound logical, analytical and convincing by making non-sense the position of the other person or persons as the case may be. Compromising involves skillful aligning with others so as to get or benefit from something one has interest in where the disposition that is expected from the player of politics is one where he displays shrewd skills that can make him to jettison permanent enemy but to pursue permanent interest while consensus involves scheming to be part of the influential group whose agreement on a matter or issue is always preferred (Nwaokugha & Anagwo, 2019).

Politics according to Iyieke-Jaja (2019) is a multifaceted word that is descriptive and non-judgmental. For instance, it is “the art or science of government and political principles”. It also carries a connotation of dishonest malpractice. Like the weather, politics presents two starkly contrasting faces. Often it comes in the form of calm and seemingly cloudless routine, stability, predictability and consensus. As often, however, politics brings conflict, struggle, disruption, coercion, brutality, uncertainty, disorder, violence, destruction, fear, subversion and menace; one thinks of bombing raids, pogroms, terrorist attacks, genocides and collateral damage of coups, revolutions, sweeping legislative change, invasions, electoral reversals, forced evacuations, conscription, hijackings, martial law, and the imposition of violent legal sanctions and penalties; of divided loyalties, naked ambition, sharp moral and religious disagreements, international realignments, and ethnic hatreds; and of intrusive surveillance, invasions of privacy, confiscations of property, arrest, interrogation, and torture.

It is popularly believed that the success and survival in politics involves some display or show of sharp practice, scheming, maneuvering, intrigues and the playing of tricks of all forms, all targeted at out classing the others in the game and through such means secure power. Singularly or in combination, the invocation of the above in politics brings about crises and conflicts in the game of politics which when mismanaged brings about political instability and how best these are managed or resolved and the incident of political instability reduced to its barest minimum are part of the game of politics (Nwaokugha & Anagwo, 2019).

Although, what actually makes politics interesting and exciting is that it involves disagreement. This is normal among individuals who have divergent interests and needs. When individual interests and needs are at variance with each other, there is bound to be disagreement. These disagreement centers on how power or resources need to be shared. That is, who gets what, how should people live, who should have a say, how much influence should each person have

and so on. Iyieke-Jaja (2019) points out that politics can be classified into four places and they include:

Formal Politics: this refers to the operation of a constitutional system of government and publicly defined institutions and procedures. Examples of formal politics include political parties, public policy or discussion on war and foreign affairs. People view formal politics as something outside themselves and yet capable of affecting their daily lives.

Semi-formal Politics: this is politics in government associations such as neighborhood association or student union government. It also includes political party politics.

Informal Politics: This has to do with forming alliances, exercising power and protection, including advancing particular ideas or goals. This affects a man's daily life e.g. how an office or household is managed or how a group exercise influence or power over another, informal politics is understood as everyday politics, hence the idea that politics is everywhere.

Global Politics: Global politics concerns itself with the rise of global and international organizations. It includes different practice of political globalization in relation to question of governance to issues of globalizing conflict.

Relationship between Politics and Education

From the above explications, it is largely evident that politics and education are inevitable factors for national growth and development. The two are so related and connected that they seem to reinforce each other. Education is a "*condition sine qua non*" for responsible politics. That is why Aristotle places his emphasis on law as a necessary requirement for responsible governance or politics, while Plato places his own emphasis on knowledge for "no law is mightier than knowledge" (Omogbe, 2007). Worthy education according to Attah, Odo, Bala and Bala, (2019) considerably influences politics especially with regards to political socialization which refers to that process by which individuals acquire attitudes and feelings towards the political system and towards their roles in it.

The importance of education as an important agent for political socialization is difficult to doubt because not only is it that it is in schools that individuals come in contact with the main flow of political ideas and events, but it is also true that literacy, a product of education, allows for participatory democracy. Affirming the above, Amartya (2012) points out that education is crucial since it gives people capabilities such as literacy, confidence and attitudes that they need to participate in society. For instance, providing education to poor and marginalized children and young people often means that they are more likely to participate in meetings of local political bodies managing resources such as education, health and water, etc.

On his part, Asogwa (2019) maintains that a good political system is impracticable without quality education because education helps in the provision of the needed manpower to drive the economy or the political system of a nation. The knowledge and skills acquired via the educational system leads to higher productivity which in turn leads to stronger and better economy. Education empowers the populace to participate in politics and demand rights and services from the government. In line with the above, Dryden-Peterson, Adliman, Chopra and Muliman (2014) noted that the knowledge and skills acquired through education determines whether and how individuals have voice, seek accountability, and counter corruption. Furthermore, education instills in man the spirit of moral rectitude. It helps in the development of an individual capacity for moral judgment and a sound character. Virtues subsumed by

morality include goodness, truth, rightness, honesty, self-control, justice, fair play, and transparency, etc. A man who is morally upright is transparent in all his dealings. This is why Eyibe (2000) avers that education is a process of developing sound moral character not only for the benefit of the individual but also for the benefit of the society. An educated person with a sound moral character is more useful to the society than one without a moral conscience. A transparent political leader guided by moral conscience will always make decisions and enforce them openly in accordance with rules and regulations. In essence, education empowers the citizens unto civic participation; demand accountability and transparency from the political leaders. Thus, from individuals that are educated, the nation grows because such citizens are less given to crime and violence (Asogwa, 2019).

Contributing further, Harry (2019) submits that education as an instrument of societal development cannot be limited only to economic growth and development because it has its political dimension which consists in the establishment of a framework of declared principles, according to which the society is to be guided towards development, and instrumentations whereby decisions may be taken in accordance or actions be measured against these principles. So, a functional educational system has political components and roles it should engage in especially in these modern times. Though, it is recognizable that the increasing complexities and growing scale of educational provisions necessitate multi-scale and multi-level coordination and planning that increasingly require large cost of education which are mostly met by public funds and must therefore be subjected to political consideration and accountability (Quadri, 2019). Thus, a good educational system is ordinarily a product or an offshoot of politics. This is mainly because it takes deliberate and concerted efforts in the direction of planning, and implementation to engender and sustain a good and effective educational system. Such a system does not fall from above, it entails good politics. Only a good political system will invest well in the education of her citizenry, knowing that an educated citizenry is the bedrock of national growth and development. This is because the benefits of education goes well beyond the individual and ensure an impact in the whole society. The knowledge base acquired through sound education is used to drive the economic, political and social structure of the society (Asogwa, 2019).

A good political system ought to improve the quality of life and well-being of the people. As an organized and formalized system, education is designed to promote specific and social goals. Education is not only a means to individual development; it is also the instrument for the creation of a better society. Thus, as a dynamic instrument of change, the structure of education has a profound effect on the political structure and so cannot be divorced from politics. In the same vein, education cannot be divorced from politics because politics regulates, controls, and directs the operation of the educational system. It also helps in the promotion and establishment of educational institutions. Just as education have a role to play in the development of man and his society, politics has immense power over the educational system of the nation Attah, Odo, Bala and Bala, (2019). The political leaders control the curriculum of the educational institutions by determining what they can and cannot teach, they determine how the educational institutions run their programmes, who should be educated, should education be free for all or not, and so on. These days, politics determine who emerges as the vice-chancellors and other office bearers of educational institutes.

However, it is important to note that educational system and politics are symbiotically linked. The greater participation and interaction between politics and education in the life of any nation

is thus, what constitutes the major objective of community development. Technology (no matter how modest) alone does not solve problems nor does it even create friends. There is an increasing awakening that people are more important than techniques. People should have their own voice in and understanding of what is being done. This is the basis of mutual benefit the world over (Quadri, 2019). Symbiotic relationship between politics and education as earlier posited comprises the people plotting their graph, the direction of their values, identifying way of catching up with the graph so plotted and working meticulously towards the realization of set goals and objectives. This implies that a mutual relationship between politics and education requires that people exert their own efforts, joining with government to improve their economic, social and cultural conditions. It is concerned with total community life and needs. It should involve the entire community participation in decision making. In another dimension, Obanya (2002) perceived politics and education as interaction in the fullest and best sense for stimulation of the desire for better things and the urge to attain such better things. To her, mutual interaction of politics and education strive to educate and motivate people to self-help with a view to developing responsible local leadership among them, as well as inculcating in them a sense of citizenship and a spirit of civic consciousness.

In a nutshell, a good political and educational system is an asset to any nation; indeed it is all that is needed for the growth and development of any nation. A good political system is needed to stimulate good education and a good educational system is needed to produce a good political system. Just as the structure of politics has a profound effect on the educational system of any nation, so also the structure of education has great effect on the politics of any nation. They are both value-laden and at the center of both concepts is man. The two are mutually reinforcing: one leads to the other while the other in turn enhances the one.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion of this paper, the following recommendations are drawn:

- Authorities of educational institutions should partner with the government and international organizations to provide continual political education that gears towards political reorientation and sensitization of all facets of Nigeria beyond the limits of the classroom.
- Educational institutions should collaborate with civil society organizations to organize public debates and interactive forums for politicians and academics on issues of politics and education.
- Regular and consistent training, seminars, workshops, conferences and talk must be held frequently for public awareness as well as value reorientation as regards what we want education to be and do for Nigeria
- The three tiers of government should pay adequate attention to the education sector so that there would be sustainability and improvement in the state of our education

Conclusion

Although, the topic has not been exhausted, but as it gear towards a conclusion, it becomes necessary to bear in mind that the paper is confronted with examining the relationship between politics and education. Whatever position one might decide to take, the fact remains that there seems to be a possible correlation between politics and education. They are both value-laden

and at the center of both concepts is man. Politics and education affect every facet of an individual and society's life. Both politics and education helps in the regulation and direction of human behaviour. They are both very important and needful assets of any nation for effective and positive growth of the nation because no nation can be great without the two factors mingling in perfect order. Thus, the well-being, development and success of an individual or society at large depend to a large extent on the politics and education of that society. In all, it is largely evident from the above explications that education and politics are mutually reinforcing.

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