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# **Philosophy of Education and Electronic Voting in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospect**

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## **Abstract**

This paper set out to analysed issues in philosophy of education and considered how some of the principles contain there in can affect, improve and promote the use of electronic voting in the democratic process in Nigeria as being canvassed for in public space. This is against the back drop of loss of public confidence in the hitherto previous processes. Views of prominent social and political philosophers e.g Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others in philosophy of education like Dewey, were in focus. The analysis suggested that some of these principles of philosophy of education can play a vital if not prominent role in the democratic processes. For instance, the promotion and acquisition of knowledge which in turn bring about awareness to the electorate on how to protect excesses such as manipulation and short changing of votes that are mated against innocent and ignorant electorates. These vices form the concern of the paper. It was therefore recommended among others that aggressive mobilization of the public to be knowledgeable and self conscious is required. This will enable them protect their voting rights and appreciate the benefit of electronic voting in the democratic process in this digital age.

**Keywords:** philosophy, education, electronic voting and democracy.

## **Introduction**

The mission of Nigeria education is to use it as a tool for fostering development of all Nigerian citizens to their potentials in promotion of a strong democratic, egalitarian, prosperous, indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation. Philosophers of education in particular have made statements in this direction to serve as a guide to the kind of education Nigerians should pursue which can lead us appropriately into the league of democratic nations. Nations that have been practicing democracy and succeeding i.e. America who have been into it for the past 250 years did not emerge from the moon, but rather by strict adherence to democratic principles and respect for rules of law and institutions. This paper principally focuses on some principles of philosophy of education, and what it stands for. Also, the role of electronic voting in the current democratic arrangement. Some pertinent questions that would guide the study include; what is

philosophy? And what is education? What is electronic voting what role can philosophy of education play in sharpening electronic voting system to enhance the democratic process in Nigeria?

### **Conceptual Clarification of Keywords**

Philosophy itself is not a straight-forward concept that lend itself to literal definitions or explanations. This according to Adewole is mainly owing to the complexity of the concept and particularly the different view held by practitioners about what philosophy is supposed to mean and do. Following from this, both classical and scholastic philosophers have categorised the definition to various convenient arrangements.

These are categorized into three, namely: pedestrian sense, esoteric and the professional or academic sense. For the purpose of this paper, the writers adopt the professional sense approach<sup>2</sup>: According to this school of thought, philosophy is seen as a technical term that is applied to an intellectual and theoretical discipline, reflection, logical argumentation, and theoretical organization of phenomena.

**Education**-According to Alli,<sup>3</sup> education can be seen as a deliberate, purposeful activity directed at individuals who at the end will be able to think rationally. Similarly, Oguche<sup>4</sup> sees education as a continuous process of developing the personality of an individual and getting prepared to be useful member of his/her community. In like manner our prominent elder and professional, Fafunwa<sup>5</sup> sums up on education as the aggregate of all process by which a child or young adult develop the ability, attitude and other forms of behaviours which are positive to the society he lives. All this to say the least is that education is a necessary prerequisite for development in the society.

For the overall philosophy of education in Nigeria, The National Policy on education<sup>6</sup> stated, thus;

- a. Education is an instrument for national development and social change.
- b. Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and United Nigeria.
- c. Education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-fulfilment and general development of the society
- d. Education is compulsory and rightly of every Nigerians irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and any particular individual challenges and
- e. Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society.

Philosophy of education – Arnold<sup>7</sup> states that philosophy is the use of philosophical instruments, the application of philosophical methods, to questions of education as well as the relation to education of the relevant results of philosophical thinking. Philosophy is therefore applied to education by using the methods and tools of philosophy in investigating educational issues. In like manner, Peters and Hirst<sup>8</sup> aver that philosophy of education draws on established branches of philosophy and bring together those segments of them that are relevant to solution to educational problems. Other philosophers of education have either added or modified this position i.e Baker and Tendre<sup>9</sup> observe that school play a crucial role in making of our social world. With particular reference to democracy, Socrates<sup>10</sup> stood for truth and justice which to him constitute high ethical values. He felt that there was injustice in the way leaders ruled the common and therefore recommends that;

1. Education should teach students virtues like truth, honesty, equality
2. He advocated for state control of education so that the poor and rich, can attend or access it
3. He also proposed that schools should be run democratically
4. It is hoped that knowledge gained would be used in promoting the society.

Similarly, Plato<sup>11</sup> was an innovator of the dialogue and dialectic, he was influenced by his masters Socrates, Parmenides, Hericlitos and Pythagoras. He actually proposed that the society is made up of three categories of persons namely; philosopher kings, soldiers and labourers. He further submits that: people with very high level of reasoning are controlled by reason and are to be called philosopher kings, they are to be supported by people with high spirits or referenced people with high level of appetite or labourers, Accordingly he endorsed the following:

1. State control of education for reasons as stated above
2. He insists that true justice requires citizens contributing to welfare of the state in areas in which they have natural talents and entrepreneurship training
3. Education should be on merit
4. He also welcome the principles of professionalism which encourages competences and efficiency
5. In like manner, the views of Aristotle<sup>12</sup> are considered; he believed that there could be no equality in the society. Following from this consideration, he recognised three forms of government namely, monarchy, aristocracy and polity, and grouped the society into two, the weak and strong while the slaves are entirely the property of their masters. He accepted Plato's (his master) idea that knowledge should be universal, permanent and changeless. His view on education was very welcoming, seeing it as a tool for self reliance and so support both support
6. Private and private ownership of education
7. Insists on the calls of teachers to be morally upright
8. Development of rational mind
9. Emphasising that without reasoning ability an individual is just but useless.

Awolowo<sup>13</sup> also added his voice to the importance of education to shape the country's life and democracy.

1. He had a strong conviction that education is the only potent tool that can turn around the fortune of any nation
2. He also observes that one definite contribution made by education has been political enlightenment particularly by the elites
3. This informed his idea of promoting free primary education (he even went further to be the first to establish a university (University of Ife). Others also added their voices to promoting education to fast tract development and promote democratic process, Like Azikiwe, Aminu Kano, Sir Ahmadu Bello, all this fall in line with what Ojoade<sup>14</sup> had in mind when he avers that; regardless of their aims or other occupations, philosopher have by and large shared a common conviction that thoughtful examination and analysis of our views and our evidence for them are important and worthwhile.

### **Education, Democracy and electronic voting:**

Dewey<sup>15</sup> avers that democracy is usually thought of a specific form of social control. This falls in line with thinking in the Greek world, here it referred to a situation in which the people did the ruling, but who the people might be and what the ruling might amount to is far from clear, i.e in the original home of democracy, Greece political theorist meant by the people to refer to the poor as opposed to the rich. Whereas for the Athenians, the move was far towards popular participation as being canvas for in this paper, Adewole<sup>16</sup> observed that democracy has come to be regarded as the proper and ideal description of all system of political and social organization advocated by influential proponents, although observing that there might be differences in the descriptive sense given by different people.

Dewey<sup>17</sup> reasoned that when the concept of democracy is applied generally to political institutions rather than confined to its natural home in the Greek-city, very little can be spun out if it is in the way of institutional provision, because of size and understanding. Writers of this paper add illiteracy and lack of proper understanding of the principles underlying democracy particularly on electronic voting.

Globally, what generally sustain democracy as the best system of government is its underlying principles namely, consultations, freedom of speech and association, rule of law, accountability closely followed by procedure of peaceful change of government which entails voting and forms crux of the matter for this paper.

Infact, this aspect seems to have eluded Nigerian democratic process. It is the case that from 1999 beginning of the current political journey up to 2023 general elections, experience suggest that Nigerians have not gotten it right when it comes to voting and election results. This has often triggered crisis that trail each elections, in some cases, the outcome has been catastrophic with colossal loss of life and property apart from loss of confidence in the process and outcome by both local and international community.

**Electronic voting:** This is voting that uses electronic means to either aid or take care of casting and counting ballots including time. In some countries like Brazil, e-voting machines are used for voter identification, vote casting and tallying. That is why politicians even have access to the voting machines. History has it that Estonia happened to be among the first set of countries to use this machines for her parliamentary election. This was way back on March, 2021 and was said to have recorded 51% success in the votes cast and counted. Actually, its significance is rooted in one of the basic principles of democracy namely; that which provides for procedure for peaceful change of government. It is expected that at the end of tenure of each administration, there must be provision and procedure for peaceful change of hand and normally democratic norms prescribed elections as the appropriate means, unfortunately in Nigeria, this aspect seems to have eluded us despite several attempts as mentioned earlier. From 1999 – 2023, little success has been recorded in this sphere given the number of complaints arising from each passing election. First, it was direct voting, with its problems, secret voting, open secret (a modification) then the current mode which is said to be electronic. Just before the 2023 general election, the Independence Electoral Commission (INEC) introduced the new technology, assuring Nigerians and indeed international community that all was going to be well with the voting and counting/tallying system from unit to final collection. A trial of the above was carried out in Osun and Ekiti. It was proven to be very successful and effective.

This was very much welcome and anticipated by Nigerian electorates and the international community. Unfortunately this was to be short lived because when the collation started from the wards, to local government, state and finally at the national collation centre being the final point, Nigerians and indeed the international community were astonished when the INEC chairman informed the panel that, it was not going to be so, a clear deviation from one of the principles of tallying. This single statement threw Nigerians off balance. The question arising is what is the implication of non-compliance to electronic voting in democratic setting and which way forward.

In approaching this issue, writers of the paper proposed the following; advantages/prospects, challenges and implications.

#### **Advantages/Prospects of electronic voting**

1. Casting of votes is made easier and faster
2. This saves time
3. Counting of votes and tallying is made more effective almost error free
4. Voting is made very transparent
5. It adds value and confidence to the whole electoral process, both locally and internationally because the result can be accessed with ease
6. Verification of the electoral process is made easier and almost accurate
7. In the long run, its outcome can serve as a good reference point and source of reliable data for scholars and researchers

#### **Challenges of these include**

1. Lack of awareness or ignorance on the part of the public, Gyot<sup>17</sup> observe that, majority members of the public are illiterate i.e some cannot read and understand laws and manifestos of their political parties to talk more of applying same and to rise to the challenge when there is a violation
2. Impunity on the part of some state actors who parade themselves as being far above the law
3. Lack of constant review of electoral and other relevant laws make it difficult for citizens to keep track of current happenings in the system to be up and doing
4. Lack of knowledge which made Plato to categorize our stratification in the society into three as mentioned earlier lack sufficient technical personnel that can easily attend to malfunctioning machineries as at when due
5. Lack of constant energy source to power these machines in some part of the country

#### **Implications of Non-Compliance to Electronic Voting**

1. This often leads to lack of order in the final collection exercise, yet this is one of the main guiding principles of electronic voting
2. Disenchantment by members of the public becomes order of the day
3. Cases of litigation follow and on the increase which also lead to voter apathy
4. This often leads to loss of confidence in the entire electoral process by members of the public both nationally and at international level
5. Violence and many unpleasant outcomes may not be ruled out as has been the case with previous elections



## **Conclusion**

The thesis of this paper is that if philosophy of education is to be understood and appreciated by members of the public and its basic principles adhere to as outlined in this paper, issue of moral bankruptcy could be averted, also if individuals do the needful with the right institutions in place, particularly with the e-voting approach, democracy will thrive, and development can be enhanced in the society and the credibility of our electoral process may not be doubted either locally or internationally in this digital age.

## **Way Forward/ Recommendations**

1. Need to put in place a viable and workable electoral process that will guide the populace which is e-voting because of its advantages and transparency
2. Members of the public needed to be properly educated to enable them be aware of their rights and rise to the occasion when such are infringed upon
3. Advocacy on acquisition of education and knowledge that promote reflective thinking
4. Orientation on handling/operating the e-voting machine is very necessary for all members of the voting class
5. Training technicians to promptly handle these e-machines particularly during elections
6. Educational institutions should teach students virtues like truth, honesty, and equality as advocated by Socrates
7. Appropriate sanctions should be meted to violators
8. Constant review of relevant laws affecting elections and other related matters so that only relevant and current laws that can stand the test of time are enacted.

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