

Viability of Adult and Non-Formal Education in Enhancing the Development of Democratic Culture in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined the viability of adult and non-formal education in enhancing the development of democratic culture in Nigeria. In the process, it conceptualized democracy and democratic culture. Against the backdrop of the national policy on education, education was seen as a major approach of transmitting sustainable values of democratic culture. The programmes through which democratic culture can be transmitted or learnt were also identified. The paper also looked at challenges facing adult and non-formal education in the transmission of democratic culture and finally recommendation were made.

Keywords: Adult Education, Democracy, Culture, Nigeria

Introduction

Stable democratic experience can be said to be relatively nascent in Nigeria. The various dilemmas that are evident today lend credence to this. Abuse of power, fraudulent elections, oppression of political opponents, intimidation of journalists and corruption of electoral process are some of the pointers of the dilemmas of Nigeria democracy (Joseph: 1991: 30). On the contrary most Nations of the world under relatively stable democratic rule or administration have often prided themselves with avalanche of positive developments or indicators regarded as corollary of stable democratic perseverance. Peace, political stability, prosperous economic growth, sustainable development, functional and effective education, dependable social welfare and availability of basic infrastructure, respect for fundamental human rights, free press and unbiased and independent judiciary are usually cited as indicators of democratic experience. Comparatively the prevailing political experience of various nations directly informs of the political institutions, structures and activities, inclinations, loyalties, and associations which are identifiable.

Looking at both extremes, the one in which democratic variables are evidently institutionalized and lived and the other in which democratic experiences are being gradually imbibed, considerable attention is paid to citizens who operate or should operate political system. Citizens who are germane to developed democratic culture or developing democracy are identified as possessive of certain cultural evidence, values and norms in every given epoch. Abdi, Ellis and Shizha (2005) identified the point as they drew from Pinkney (1999) that sound governance systems do not initially start with hastily organized multi-party elections and quasi immature parliamentary debates, but are greatly influenced by actions that emanates from citizens themselves, which in the long run, would strengthen civil society so that it can exercise a check on those who have political power.

The critical place of the citizens in political dispensation of any society fundamentally provides the impetus in undertaking to explore the place of adult and non formal education as a viable

option in helping citizen the development of democratic culture in Nigeria. The benefits of democracy will be examined. What democratic culture is, shall be also be x – rayed. The need for education in the promotion of the development of democratic culture will equally be espoused. Finally the place of adult and non-formal education in developing democratic culture will be critically examined.

What is Democracy?

Regardless of the subterranean interpretations of the term, Dictionary of contemporary English defines it as a system of Government in which every citizen in the country can vote to elect its government officials. Rudimentary as the definition is, it paints the picture of involvement or participation of citizens of a country in the determination of their political leadership. The civic duty of voting is identifiably the significant role of citizens here. Democracy as it is today goes beyond the definition given above. Yale University Professor of Constitutional Law, Jack M. Balkin sees democracy as not only containing procedural mechanisms like Universal suffrage but is conveyed in cultural modes like dress, language, manners and behavior and cultural egalitarians. <http://aristotleadventure.blogspot.com/2011-> Making Progress: Nyerere (1998, p. 27) contends that “democracy means much more than voting on the basis of adult suffrage every few years; it means (among other things) attitudes of toleration and willingness to cooperate with others on terms of equality”.

Nzongola – Ntalaja (1998) argues that democracy viewed philosophically, historically and comparatively simply is a universal principle of governance that is a normal imperative, a social process and a particular type of political practice applicable to all human societies.

Drawing from Balkin, Nyerere (1998) and Nzongola – Ntalaja (1998) democracy is a behavior of a given society in cooperate existence; it is an array of positive attitudes that emphasis acceptance of values that promote equality, and a social process that provides the defining framework that make for the continuous existence of society through political practice of governance. Democracy then can be conceptualized as a political framework that promote the social process of coexistence based on equality and the recognition of the common values, attitudes and behaviours that identify the nation as human society.

What then is Democratic Culture?

Democratic culture represents the ways, behaviours, values, attitudes, norms, principles and practice as they relate to the political processes of a given society practicing democracy. The democratic culture will reflect in political participation, political tolerance, freedom and Fundamental Human Rights of citizen in choice making, expression of views and opinions, freedom of the press, independence of the judiciary, rule of law, transparent electoral process, liberal education, political association prevalent in a given society (IDEA, 2000).

Developing Democratic Culture for Sustainable Democracy

Democratic culture like other aspects of the broader culture of society is usually transmitted from generation to generation especially in relatively stable societies. Transmission is only successful if when the principles and practice of such democratic culture are successfully imbibed and behaviourally exhibited by entering generations. The transmission of democratic culture will differ

from one country to another. The approaches adopted in the transmission are also likely to differ from place to place.

Historically, pre-colonial societies in Nigeria organized democratic structures and processes mostly via affinity of leaders to the led. Cultures were embedded in the traditions of religion and mythical ancestry (IDEA, 2000). The transmission of democratic culture, then depended on how much exposure of citizens to traditions of their societies. In post colonial and modern day Nigeria, democratic culture necessary for the development of viable democracy has remained clearly undefined, manipulated for selfish ends, arbitrarily stagnated or subverted or even corrupted by religious and sectional sentiments (Joseph, 1991; IDEA, 2000). Harber, (1997) expressed the narrowing democratic culture taking place in Africa as systemic removal of citizens constitutional rights and protection, elimination of institutional checks and balances and confinement of political participation to a privileged segment in society. IDEA, (2000) also cited exclusion of popular participation by majority of Nigerians in enjoying political, social and economic improvements as part of the reason always given by the Armed forces for military intervention and disruption of democratic culture in Nigeria. Democratic culture lay significant emphasis on participation of citizens in the stretch of political process. This point itself forms the epicenter of genuine democracy. Citizens must be actively involved in creating the society they wish to live in. Harber, (1997) argues that this (participation) has not been successful in most African countries. The reason may be partly because citizens abhor certain violent democratic culture alien to democracy which tends to disrupt their existence and or contradict societal value. Lack of knowledge of the demands in participating in democratic process as the case in Zambia may also be responsible (Abdi, et al, 2005).

Role of Adult and Non Formal education in Democracy

Quality participation for the development of democratic culture remains imperative. Viable democracy remains the viable option for genuine and progressive improvement to national development and life. Quality participation, which itself entails social conscientization, political awareness and transformative attitude, is the most essential ingredient for stable and viable democracy (Abdi et al, 2005). The inculcation of social conscientisation, political awareness and transformative attitude are necessary for quality participation over a period of time and through planned learning. Harber, (1997) agrees to the importance of socializing people (young and adult) into the political norms, values, attitudes and behaviours of any system of rule as agreed by the given society. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle in Harber, (1997) had this to say of the relationship between education and political system of a country:

But of all the safeguards that we hear spoken of as helping to maintain constitutional continuity the most important, but most neglected today, is education, that is educating citizens for the way of living that belongs to the constitution in each case...

Philosophy and Goals of Education in Nigeria and Development of Democratic Culture

The philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria derive directly from the five main national goals of Nigeria. Fundamental among which are the quest for a society that is free and democratic as well as possessing just and egalitarian dynamics (FRN, 2004). The educational goals immediately geared towards addressing those are the deliberate efforts at:

- (a) the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity and

- (b) inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigeria Society (FRN, 2004:).

There is no doubt as to the implications of the above statement in lieu of developing a civil society in need for cooperative existence. The policy of course identifies that educational revolutions is simply the needed approach to adopt in realizing these lofty goals. Fundamental to this, is the proposal for all encompassing education - Basic education, Secondary education, tertiary education and life long education.

Adult and Non formal education in the development of Democratic Culture

Adult and non-formal education and mass literacy is tuned to encourage all forms of functional education provided for youths and adults outside the formal school system. The scope of Adult and Non-formal education according to Ochoma (2006) and Wordu (2006) is wide ranging. It is conceptualized to include human experiences and persists throughout period of living, encompassing the socio-economic, political and spiritual aspects of life. What this means is that through Adult and Non-formal education people can learn about health, family life and welfare, occupation, work skills, political dynamics, cultural practice among many others.

Using Adult and non formal Education to improve knowledge of Democratic Culture

Adult and Non formal education is pervasive and has been used in making people functional (Wordu, 2006). It has been used to address the problems of targeted population. Using Adult and Non formal education in educating people about democratic culture is prevalent in some African countries. Tanzania under Nyerere used extension education for both agricultural and political development. It is possible here in Nigeria, given that democracy or any system of government is a socially learned behavior that is not genetically inherited (Harber 1997). Thus Adult and non-formal education according to Wordu, (2006) is able to achieve even political education of adults and young people who live in community, who did not complete formal schooling. Abdi et al (2005) succinctly agree that democratic culture can be achieved through programmes such as:

- social conscientisation
- teaching target population issues of civic responsibilities
- teaching classes that expose target audience to their rights as citizens of the community and country.
- programmes of political awareness regarding their role in development
- citizenship education that educate about political processes
- education that emphasizes the value of participation in democratic processes
- education that teach acceptable political behavior
- programmes designed to boost democracy in community
- programme designed to teach local values comparatively
- programmes that emphasis gender equality
- programme that encourage public discussion
- education on rule of law
- education on social and economic justice

Challenges of Adult and non-formal education in developing Democratic Culture

Despite the recognized role of Adult and Non-formal education play in education of a given segment of the populace, it still continues to face some challenges especially in providing education which supports democratic development. These challenges can be located as institutional and client oriented [Ochoma, (2006) Tomasevski (2003) and IDEA (2000)].

Challenges from clients are majorly attitudinal. These include:

1. Suspicion of education on democratic culture as not being beneficial to immediate needs (Abdi 2005).
2. General apathy arising from the feeling that the political process and space is suffocating (Harber, 1997).
3. Lack of consistency in class attendance, Wordu, (2006).
4. Disillusionment arising as to the use of knowledge obtained.

Institutional Challenges

1. Inadequate funding for Adult and Non-formal education adversely affects types of programmes available. Sponsors and institutions are drawn to mount programmes regarded as retaining the interest of adult learners than those suspected to have less relevance.
2. Little attention is paid to welfare of teachers in Adult and Non-formal education leading to lack of attraction of quality teachers (Kedrayate, 2011).
3. Lack of publicity as to its objectives and benefits.
4. Lack of Data Base for use in identifying targets and their peculiar needs.

Conclusion

Democratic culture may vary from place to place depending on the systems of political arrangement. What, however, is common is the need for human participation since political or democratic behavior is learned and not passed down through genetic inheritance. Since Adults are more in participation in political arrangement it becomes expedient to make deliberate effort in transmitting political values, norms and behavior to those adults and others who for various reasons are not versed and who may suffer lack of participation in democracy as a result.

For those who never had any opportunity of schooling or those who dropped and may not continue, Adult and non-formal education is handy to raise their knowledge base of democratic culture.

Recommendation

1. Providers of Adult and non-formal education have to intensify effort in educating the public on the benefits of having adult and non-formal education.
2. The learning of Democratic values norms and behavior should be prerequisite for continuity in Adult and Non-formal education programme.
3. Providers of Adult and Non-formal education need the database of those who should benefit from Adult and Non-formal education. The more educated persons who possess democratic culture the more the improvement in our democracy.

4. Funding for Adult and Non-formal education be improved to enable expansion of its programme accommodate political education.
5. Teachers for Adult and Non-formal education should be employed and treated as their counterparts in the formal schools.
6. More than other aspects, government needs to do a policy that gives education of adults on democracy and democratic culture.
7. Education for development of democratic culture should be made compulsory for every adult through Adult and Non-formal education.

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