
POLITICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A VERITABLE INSTRUMENT FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The irregularities that fraught the political process of the Nigerian State stems from the deviant perception, orientation and attitudinal disposition of the political class and the masses. These irregularities which bedevil the nation are shown in the ethos of leadership and followership, the intolerance of election, failed roles of educative institutions, low level of patriotism and popular participation etc. This paper revealed that these absurdities accentuate the expediency of civic re-orientation and positive attitude which can only be facilitated by the process of political education. Consequently, the paper argued that enhancing institutional efficiency of agencies of public enlightenment is timely and expedient for national orientation and development. Hence, the paper opined that political education is a process of orientation that could elicit patriotism and a sense of responsibility which are imperative for national development.

Basically, education is intrinsically inter-linked with national development and is therefore the bedrock of any meaningful and sustainable national development of a developing economy such as Nigeria. In this discourse, the nature, content and trends of skill and knowledge inculcating process (otherwise known as education) gained relevance within the context of politics and governance. Although political education is not novel in the literature and reality of politics, Nigeria, as a developing economy and democratizing polity, exigently needs political education to mitigate its myriad of challenges.

Explicitly, Nigeria is a heterogeneous polity bedeviled with certain fundamental challenges undermining the processes towards national development. Interestingly, most of these problems stems from the crisis of leadership and governance. Kesselman and Krieger (1996) explicate further on this view:

Over the years, the Nigerian government has failed to harness the vast human and material resources at its disposal to break the cycle of poverty and autocracy that has characterized it since independence in 1960. Thus, Nigerian State has been constantly struggling between the forces of democracy and authoritarianism and characterized by the push for development and the pull of underdevelopment, the burden of public corruption and pressure of accountability. (p. 7)

Certainly, failed governance and political corruption serve as the foundation to other irregularities that militate against Nigeria's socio-political and economic development as aptly identified by Ogbonnaya, Omoju and Udefuna (2012):

Among the multiplicity of irregularities that have confronted democratic governance in Nigeria since inception of the fourth republic in 1999, the following would be considered more worrisome: electoral irregularities and malpractices, inter and intra-ethnic rivalries, religious crises and insecurity, poverty, inadequate and weak democratic institutions and institutionalized corruption. (p. 687)

Emphatically, these absurdities that fraught and limit the Nigeria's democratic process stems from uncivil attitudinal orientation and dysfunctionality of relevant institutions of the State. Hence, the defective variables to the country's policies, strategy and process towards improving social welfare, stimulating industrialization and economic development and accountable governance revolves substantially on the uncivil attitudinal orientation and deficiency of instituting responsibility in Nigeria. Invariably, exponents of political development such as Gabriel Almond, Powell, and Samuel Hungtington assert that political structure and political culture are imperative to the functionality, stability and capability of the political system – the structural differentiation and secularization. Political education becomes expedient and instructive to reverse these irregularities and institutionalised practices as that will plausibly accelerate social, economic and political development. In other words, constructive and institutionalized civic orientation that reflects the values of patriotism and sense of responsibility is indeed timely at this period of our nationhood. In recognition of this factuality, the nexus between political education and national development is glaring in response to the challenges of governance, patriotism and national cohesion.

Conceptual Clarification: Education, Political Education and National Development

It is germane to operationalize the key terms relevant to this discourse.

Education

In a generic sense, education is aimed to stimulate interest in knowledge and skills for a functional behavior relevant in a societal context. Though it may be inculcated through informal and formal channels, the ultimate is a change that reflects on attitude and behavior. In line with this assumption, the *National Teachers' Institute Booklet* (2009) conceptualized that: Education is concerned with the transmission of skills, knowledge, vocation and culture and that is usually through teaching, research and dissemination of the findings for ultimate utilization.

In furtherance, Aderibigbe (2010) succinctly remarked:

In the broadest sense, education is normally thought to be about acquiring and being able to use knowledge, developing skills and understanding and cognitive capabilities. It can be claimed that as humans, we are identified by our capacity to learn, communicate and reason. We are involved in these things throughout our lives and in all situations. (p. 8)

Pertinently, education is designed to inculcate appropriate skills and knowledge for human and societal development. Therefore, the content and process of education is structured and streamlined in a manner that responds efficiently to the plights and expectations of every developing economy, nay Nigeria. This is indeed exemplified in the fundamental objectives of successive *National Policy on Education* in Nigeria. This is because education is generational trend depicting a life-long process and reflecting on the needs and challenges of the society. On this premise, Olawaiye (2013) asserted that:

Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interests, abilities, competence and cultural norms of a society by people and to transmit the life to the coming generations so as to enhance perpetual development of the society.(p. 27)

Conclusively, education is instructive processes that inculcate skills, develop competencies and respond to the expectations of the societal populace. In this paper, we thus, critically examined the expediency of this instructional process (education) in mitigating the irregularities and absurdities that fraught the context of Nigerian governance and politics.

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Descriptively, when this instructional process takes the dimension of inculcating relevant skills, norms and values appropriate to the dynamics, challenges, trends and development of the political system, then it is called political education. Similarly, political education is only an aspect and specialized form of education. Like education in general, it is viewed as a way of bringing about a better polity in existence (Ozmon and Craver 1976). Expectedly, the peculiarity and exclusiveness of this specialized instructional process that is relevant to politics and governance obviously elicits plethora of definitions and interpretations of scholars of political science. However, for this paper, some insights are useful. For instance, Nwankwo (2012) explicated on the nature and scope of political education thus:

The concept of political education is very apt and more encompassing. Apart from stating explicitly that a preparation of the young ones for life in the society must deal in content with political matters, it also encapsulates non-formal ways of orienting or even re-orienting the citizenry for better polity through more and better involvement in the nation's life. (p. 393)

Hence, political education is broad in concept, scope and trend. It is designed to facilitate exposure to relevant values for attitudinal orientation and re-orientation and elicits awareness and consciousness imperative in the stability and development of the polity. In line with this thought, Obasi (2005) indicates that:

Political education provides the people with full concept of democracy; principles and procedures of democratic governance, democratic values and electoral process and with low political education people will not appreciate the numerous socio-political and economic problems facing the society, and as such cannot be expected to contribute towards solving the problems. Functions of the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary are taught through political education so as not to leave the people vague about the functions of government. (p. 85)

Invariably, political education is a process driven by relevant structures in enhancing partisan and civic orientation of persons and collectives in the political process. Hence, political education as a process is institutional and transmissional as exemplified in family, school, mass media, political parties and relevant public-enlightenment agencies of the State. From this indication, political education constitute an aspect of political socialization which represents a process through which individuals acquire beliefs and values relevant to the dynamics, challenges and expectations of a political system. Hence, it constitutes the dominant orientation of people towards politics and governance. Therefore, political socialization is the process through which the individuals internalize politically relevant attitudes, beliefs, cognitions and values

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(Bender: 1967; Okafor and Okeke: 2002). Furthermore, the internalization shape political culture institutionalized roles and elicits participation in the political process. However, Johari (2005) raised a fundamental question on the process of internalization of political values in these words:

The process of political socialization generally acts in a causal or imperceptible manner. That is, it operates in a quiet or smooth manner without people being aware of it. The people take the norms for granted without questioning their legitimacy. Thus, the subject-matter of this concept is the process by which people acquire active political participation, but also in the period before they engage in explicitly political activity. (p. 210)

Therefore, the process of inculcating civic values is indeed an exposition on the dynamics and viability of the institutions that are involved in political education. To this extent, we shall examine within the framework of this analysis, the challenges inherent in the crises of governance and other myriad of problems of national development.

National Development

Indicatively, the term “national development” is a derivative of development. The concept of development as used in contemporary social science literature is vague and nebulous eliciting plethora of definitional perspectives. Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) lend credence to this factuality with a historical perspective and state thus:

The concept of development seems to be in a flux since the end of Second World War. In the early 1940s the ideological differences between the Socialist East and Capitalist West appears to have influenced the meaning and conceptualization of the term. (p. 287)

Consequently, this ideological divide accentuates the euphoria of the Liberal and Marxist conceptualizations of development among scholars of social sciences. Okereke and Ekpe (2002) aptly sum up the assumptions of the liberal and Marxist or the radicals on the meaning and nature of development:

Development in the liberal perspective has been variously defined. In its elementary form the term is inextricably tied to the economic domain. Most liberal theorists see it as economic development, which could be gauged in terms of the growth of Gross National Products (GNP). Accordingly, development is defined as the maximization of the growth of the GNP through capital accumulation and industrialization. The radical scholars' perception of development is quite different from that of their liberal counterparts. In their view, development rather than being an abstract economic category is multi-dimensional process. When viewed from the dialectical material's inocular, development rather than being restricted to macro economic variables focuses on man and his well-being.(p. 2)

Though there are different interpretations of development; however there are some reflective attributes on which development is premised. According to Audu (2013:2), the following viewpoints can be discussed as common grounds of agreement:

- Development is a process and not a state and this process are many-sided.
- Development involves action which emphasizes the conscious efforts of the State to induce development in the society.
- It focuses on quantitative and qualitative changes in the structure, composition and performance of the forces of production.
- It also emphasizes an increasing capacity to make national value and use of natural and human resources for meeting people's social ends.
- It ultimately brings about qualitative improvement in the standard of the living people.

Logically, development is multi-dimensional. On this premise, The World Bank in World Development Report (1991) indicated that:

The concept of development has economic, social and political attributes such as sustainable increase in living standards including consumption, educational, health and environmental protection, equality of opportunities, liberties and political freedom.

Thus, the term “development” when prefixed denotes the political, economic and social development which constitutes the necessary components of national development. Accordingly, Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) state that: “National Development can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation” (p. 238) Similarly, Imhonopi and Urim (2010) posited that national development is the ability of the country or countries to improve social welfare of the people, namely by providing social amenities like good education, power, housing, pipe-borne water and others. In furtherance, we shall examine the extent of, and viability of, political education as a veritable instrument for national development. However, it is imperative to establish the link between education, political education and national development.

The Nexus between Education, Political Education and National Development

Explicitly, the inter-link between the three terms underscores the imperatives of nationhood. Hence, as earlier indicated, education is the bedrock of any meaningful and sustainable development. It is, therefore, imperative to social, economic and political development of every developing or developed economy. Apparently, education identifies the plights, set the priorities and design the modalities to actualize the targets of national development. This is indeed the philosophy and mandate of successive *National Policy on Education* in Nigeria as highlighted by Olawaiye (2013, 29-30):

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The National Policy on Education focuses on self-realization, individual and national efficiency, national unity with the objective of achieving social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological development. In 1985, the objectives of National Policy on Education were broadened to place premium on manual activities, technical proficiency and respect for dignity of labour and economic efficiency. In 2004, Nigeria education policy was redefined to adopt education as an instrument per excellence for effecting national development. Education goals were then redefined in terms of its relevance to the need of the individual as well as in terms of the kind of society desired in relation to the environment, realities of the modern world and the rapid social changes. Emphasis was placed on skill acquisition. The policy on education proposed a priority of place for religion and moral instructions for the moral and spiritual wellbeing of individuals but directed that no child should be forced to accept any religious instruction which was contrary to the wishes of the parents. However, the Nigeria's education reform of 2006 shifted focus to entrepreneurship and skill training and realignment of curricula to meet emerging needs of a global economy and knowledge society. The reform introduced the 9-3-4 system of education which is referred to as the Universal Basic Education (UBE).

However, there are gaps between the national education curriculum and the rising challenges and expectations emanating from Nigerian society. Scholars and stakeholders in education sector continue to stress the need for scientific and technological based education that responds efficiently to the challenges of Nigerian nation-state in the global competitive economy. For instance, most of the graduates produced yearly by the Nigerian tertiary institutions lack entrepreneurial to be self-reliant and productive. Furthermore, the relevance of political education in the successive educational reforms and curriculum is exemplified in the civic or citizenship education and civics taught at primary, secondary and post-secondary institutions of higher learning. Soja (2014) indicated that:

It is an educational process, formal and/or informal, through which the citizens get acquainted with the basic requirements of good citizenship. It behooves us to note that citizenship education is also referred to as political socialization. (p. 1)

Citizenship education is a component of political education designed to inculcate in the minds of people the values of responsibility, selflessness, patriotism and industry as the indices of a good citizen. On this assumption, Domike and Osakwe (1996) opined that it is necessary to provide Nigerians the type of education that is characterized with inter-cultural education. Essentially, political education not only provides appropriate orientation in governance, citizenship obligation and events of the political process, but it also articulates viable options or alternatives for accountable

governance, rule of law, citizen's relation with the decision-making structures of the State and purposeful diplomatic relations with other countries of the world. Conclusively, education and political education are the indices of national development. This is because it prioritizes on defective challenges and specifies modalities for the realization of laudable targets of national development.

The Incidence of Irregularities in Nigerian Political Process

Presently, Nigerian State is confronted with series of excruciating socio-political problems which reflects in the absence of accountable and transparent governance, political corruption, intra-party undemocratic practices, inter-party murky politics, doubt on the credibility of election management body and violent-fraught electioneering process. Other such problems include dysfunctional ties and deficiency of relevant institutions of the State and apathy of the masses in the events of the political process. Interestingly, the unconventional practices that precipitated these absurdities are institutionalized and consequently transmitted to satisfy inordinate interests at the expense of the masses. In essence, the following are not uncommon in the context of Nigerian governance and politics.

- Inflation of contract figures.
- Inflation of monthly and annual salaries and the entitlement of the political office-holders.
- The euphoria and acceptance of consensus candidate in intra-party process
- Material inducement alternatively known as “stomach infrastructure” during electoral campaign.
- State Chief Executive determining authoritatively who the Chairman of Local Governments in the state becomes.
- Deduction of monies in the State and the local government Joint account.
- Absence of issue-based campaign during elections which make politicians resort to offensive and uncivil advertorials and aspersions against their political opponents.
- Victimization, falsification of results, killings and arson during election.
- Ethnicity, nepotism, statism and fanaticism which reflects on the people's attitude.
- Apathy and ignorance of the citizens on their rights, privileges and expectations of governance.

Besides the above undemocratic practices that reflect on the attitude and behaviour of the Nigerian politicians, the following depicts the institutional character and process which are antithetical to democratic values.

- Institutional weakness exemplified in redundancy and failure to perform its statutory responsibilities. For instance, National Orientation Agency in most States across the federation remains inactive.

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- Corrupt practices pervading public institutions of knowledge such as universities across the federation of Nigeria.
- Undemocratic and unconventional practices that had undermined the relevance of political parties in the political development of Nigerian State.
- The dependency syndrome which has persistently eroded the constitutional roles of media institutions. It is evident that both private and public media institutions are vulnerable to the antics of desperate politicians and partisan affiliations.

Expectedly, these exceptions and absurdities had indeed mutilated other processes of political development. Hence unabated rise in unemployment figures, inflation trend of our economy, gap between economic development and economic growth, voter apathy, and Boko Haram insurgency can all be attributed to the failure of governance. All these are perpetrated by deviant attitude and behaviour of persons within the institutional framework of decision-making. Hence, these ugly developments lend credence to the imperative of political education.

Strengthening of the Structures and Channels

It is instructive to re-examine critically the channels and structures involved in the formal and informal processes of political education. It is established fact that these channels and structures are inherent with militating challenges, but however, remain critical to national development. First, the family represents the bio-social group where the child's physical, emotional and social development begins. Hence, it constitutes the nucleus of the Nigerian society. The family shall be aware that it is instrumental to the child's behavioral traits and sense of security, responsibility, confidence and respect for constitutional authority. However, a child that lacks affection and sense of home is thrown into the society as a miscreant and public scum. The religious institution (church and mosque), humanitarian and Non-Governmental Organization should, therefore, step-up its sensitization and advocacy network to reach out to the families at urban and rural areas on the essence of re-awakening their natural roles. Necessary to be upheld are also societal or indigenous values of probity, honesty, respect, love, loyalty, industry, self-dignity, empathy, patriotism etc. Subsequently, the government should intervene in the trend through relevant policies and legislations such as Family Support Fund, Family Patriotic Initiative (FPI), Child and Parent Advocacy Network and Social Security Legislations to assist the home in building patriotic, value-oriented and productive generation as the indices of national transformation.

Secondly, the school as a formal institution has enormous influence in the intellectual and personality development of the individuals through the inculcation of appropriate knowledge, skill and discipline. Evidently, there are subjects and courses taught by Nigerian Schools at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels to develop personality of professionalism, sense of responsibility and patriotism. These subjects and courses include social studies, government, civic education, citizenship education

and political science. There is still exigent need for serious concern on the instructional process and materials in the teaching of these subjects and courses. Hence, the instructors serve as models in character and learning to the pupils and students with regards their behavioral traits. There is equally need for comprehensive text books that reflects the national symbols, national anthem, nationalist leaders, and history of nationalities and political development of Nigeria etc. In addition, the pre-primary education should be re-evaluated to accommodate these priority needs. Furthermore, political education is a laudable instrument of political mobilization and participation. There is also need to organize pupils and students in primary, secondary, colleges of education, monotechnics, polytechnics and universities into national and patriotic brigades such as War against Indiscipline and Corruption, National Patriotic Front (NPF), Patriotic Citizens Club (PCC), Nigeria First Initiative (NFI) etc. In these forums, the young ones can learn and internalize values of patriotism, national cohesion, discipline, obligation, industry, self-reliance etc. The government, on its own part, should intervene by providing funds and relevant policy-options to strengthen the educational and national regulatory bodies in the areas of research, seminars/workshops and logics so as to record enormous relevance on political education.

Essentially, the mass media is very important as an instrument for civic enlightenment and advocacy. In the public and private electronic media (television and radio) litany of programmes are designed to enhance awareness, orientations and consciousness of Nigerians on sensitive policy-options, issues of governance and events of the political process. Invariably, the print media is equally imperative in this trend. Consequently, the media have enormous roles to play especially at this critical time of the nationhood. The Nigerian nation-state is currently engrossed with crises of political leadership, euphoria of ethnicity and regional affiliations, *Boko Haram* insurgency and loss of confidence in public governance. Mass media should, therefore, isolate itself from the antics and inducements of these centrifugal tendencies and rise to the needs of patriotism and national integration. For instance, Nigerians needs to be told that:

- Nigeria is the country of ours and does not serve as the private estate of any person, politicians nor group of persons.
- Nigeria shall not break up but remain united and progressive.
- As Nigerians, everyone irrespective of region, tribe, state, religion, economic status owes the obligation to contribute in the development of Nigeria.
- Governance is to serve the people and not to serve for personal or group enrichment etc.

As a vanguard of political or civic enlightenment, the mass media has a large audience and so remains an engine of national development. Fourthly, the religious institutions (church and mosque) can equally serve as instrument that promotes the tenets of culture and patriotism. Hence, the attitude and behaviour of people can be influenced through the moral teachings of the church and the mosque in allegiance to

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the state. Again, there are irregularities that fraught the government and the political processes that can also be condemned by the religious institutions in deference to the plights and expectations of the masses. Nigerians are religious people whose values, beliefs and attitudes are enormously influenced and shaped by religious teachings. The Religious bodies should, therefore, refrain from partisan politics but rather stand as an institution of hope, national integration, rebirth, national reconciliation and forgiveness. Such a stance will contribute in ensuring good governance, accelerating social welfare and stimulating economic development and industrialization.

Subsequently, the political party is conventionally an institution that facilitates political socialization of the citizens, besides acquisition of political power. Unfortunately, the murky nature of intra and inter-party politics has influenced Nigerians to internalize centrifugal values of ethnic politics, tribal affiliations or regionalism, manipulative practices, election irregularities and other Machiavellian tendencies. All these are contrary to democratic values and expectations of patriotism. Hence, the irregularities that marred Nigerian political process stems from undemocratic practices of Nigerian political parties. There is, therefore, need for intense political education for Nigerian political parties (both the ruling party and the opposition party) to imbibe democratic values in the conduct of its members within its fold and in government. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), an institution that exerts regulatory influence on political parties, should step-up her statutory responsibilities with regards regulation and assessment of party process in reference to public interests, democratic norms and constitutionalism. Hence, INEC should enforce a national code of conduct for Nigerian political parties and ensure strict compliance (with sanctions for defaulters) to democratic values and procedure, especially during the internal primaries in Nigerian political parties.

Similarly, the Nigeria's national electoral body, Independent National Election Commission (INEC) is also a complementing institution in the process of promoting civic sensitization advocacy and participation in the political process. The political education unit or department of INEC should step-up the task in constructive enlightenment of Nigerians on the essence of voting as civic obligation of every eligible citizen, essence of credible and transparent elections etc. Conversely, it is not uncommon to witness thousands or millions of void votes in Nigeria, and this underscores the expediency of civic enlightenment. And the democratic conduct of the electoral body enhances the transparency and the credibility of the elections which constitutes one of the bedrock of national development.

The National Orientation Agency (NOA), is a statutory institution of public enlightenment but had failed in most States of the Federation in accomplishing its tasks with regards to political education and advocacy. Hence, the federal government is advised within the content of this analysis either to scrap it or enhance its institutional

leadership and process for effectiveness. The Presidency and the National Assembly should intervene through provision of funds, policy-options, legislations and oversight functions to resuscitate National Orientation Agency to discharge its statutory duties efficiently, with regards the sense of nationhood and unity. Hence, the institutional effectiveness and focused leadership of NOA is imperative for national development.

Recommendations

First, the re-orientation and strengthening of the channels of political education is imperative to respond to the daunting challenges of governance and national development with regards to the attitude of our political class and citizenry. Hence, the family, school, Religious Institutions, mass media, political party and National Orientation Agency should step-up with their conventional and statutory responsibilities to reverse the endemic values which has militated or undermined Nigeria's national development.

Secondly, as earlier indicated, the government's enabling legislations, policies and assistance shall also strengthen the capacity of these institutions. The process of inculcating and internalizing appropriate values and norms therefore begins with obligation-focused and functional institutions that identify plights, define priorities and specify modalities for national development and rebirth.

Subsequently, the content of political education should continue to lend credence to the following values:

- Responsibility and dignity
- Probity and diligence in office
- Selflessness and positive attitude
- Patriotism, tolerance and national cohesion
- Reward for competence and excellence
- Enterprising and innovation
- Civility and liberty, etc.

Furthermore, these values should be transformed into national brigades and institutionalized in public schools for national mobilization and consciousness. This is timely and critical for our nationhood.

Finally, as a nation-state there is need to de-emphasize on certain unconventionalities and actions that violates the law and conventions. To this extent, the National Policy on Education should lend more priority on political education as one of the veritable instrument for national development.

Conclusions

In the final analysis, this paper argued and concluded that the irregularities and deviances that fraught governmental and political process stem from the adverse orientation and dysfunctionality of the informal and formal institutions that are indirectly or directly involved in political education. Therefore, the strengthening of these institutions is imperative to drive the process of political education to enhance patriotism and national development.

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