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AFRICAN JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL SCIENCES IN EDUCATION*Volume 6 Number 1 April, 2010.***CONTENTS**

Akanbi, Grace Oluremilekun:	Educating the Rural Women for Sustainable Development: Reassessing the Nigeria's First Ladies' 'Pet projects' 1983 – 2008.	4
Olusegun Akinbote:	Creating A Learner-Friendly School Environment In Nigeria: A Veritable Means To Sustainable Growth And Development.	20
Sarumi, A.A and Ojokheta, K.O:	Repositioning 'Town and Gown' Relationship for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria: Implications for Adult and Non-Formal Education.	28
Ijah, C.N:	The Millennium Development Goals: Towards Promoting Gender Equality And Women Empowerment.	45
Ebere Comfort:	Nigeria Women and Higher Education: Benefits and Challenges.	54
Ibrahim I. AbduRahaman:	Influence Of Supervision On Secondary School Teachers Productivity In Kwara State, Nigeria	63
Nwafor, N.H.A:	Equal Educational Opportunity: The Nigerian Experience.	74
Patrick Akinsanya:	A Diagnosis of Philosophies And Policies on Education In Nigeria.	85
Muraina Monsuru Babatunde:	Some Psycho-Social Variables as Correlates of Senior Secondary School Students' Achievement In History.	101
Rasheed Olajide Alao:	Great Depression and Global Financial Crisis: Impact on the Nigerian Education Sector.	109
Agbonna, Samuel Ayorinde:	Criminal Intent And Educational Aspiration of Disadvantaged School-Age Hawkers in Two Selected North Central Cities of Nigeria.	116
Amali, I. O. O:	Teachers' Obligation to the Promotion of the Objectives of Pre-Primary Education Policy in Nigeria.	127
Oyelade, A.F:	Democracy and Globalisation: Implications for Education in Nigeria.	138
Akande Eniola Olutoyosi:	The Effect of Video-Tape Instruction on Primary School Pupils' Achievement in English Language.	147

Gbenro, A.I.	Adult and Non-Formal Education: A Catalyst for Sustainable Development	160
Amosun, Moses Dele:	Comprehensive Basic Education: A Means for Enhancing Disadvantaged Children Access to Education and Sustainable Development In Nigeria	169
Oluremi Ayodele-Bamisaiye and Valentine Ntui:	The 21 st Century Higher Education Teacher and the Challenges of Sustainable Development in Africa.	178
Olotu Gbenga:	Increasing the Viability of Nigeria Economy through Effective Teacher Education.	192
Tugbiyele, Adebawale Babajide:	Promoting Sustainable National Development in Nigeria through Effective Teacher Education.	198
Ayoola R. Adeola and Osundina D.O:	The Place Of Free-Feeding In Primary Schools Towards The Implementation Of Universal Basic Education.	208
Ipem, Josephine Nkechinyere; Ajagbe, Fedelia Nwamaka and Okpanachi, Shaibu Stephen:	Challenges Of Teacher Education in the Period of Global Economic Meltdown In Nigeria.	217
Jayeola-Omoyeni:	Reasons for Adults Participation in Adult Education Programmes in Ekiti, Ondo and Osun States.	228
Adepoju H. Folake:	Investing in Women Education: A Strategy for Poverty Reduction among the Rural Women in Nigeria.	236
Tuoyo M.U:	Perception of Stakeholders On HIV/AIDS Education, for Handicapped Adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis.	244
Odewusi, M.B:	Investment in Adult and Non-Formal Education As a Panacea Solution to the Problem of Underdevelopment Nations	253
Okenwa- Ojo, M:	Role of Adult and Non-Formal Education and Sustainable Development in Nigeria.	268
*Tunji Adepoju	Right to Education in Nigeria: A Re-Examination	280
T. AAsiru & O. J. Olayanju:	The Drive Towards Achieving Gender Parity at the Secondary School Level In Nigeria by 2015: Issues and Challenges.	292

DEMOCRACY AND GLOBALISATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION IN NIGERIA.

Oyelade, A.F.

Abstract

This paper attempts to examine the concepts of democracy, and globalization; and the implications of the concepts for education in a democratic society and particularly in the Nigerian society. It uses philosophical analysis in the examination of the concepts, and in considering the implications of the concepts for education in Nigeria. It was found that democracy is a socio-political ideology that is of immense value in the world, and that it has continuous global acceptability. It was also found that globalization involves a process whereby the world becomes increasingly interconnected in various human values and norms including: information, health, economy, education, politics, agriculture, sports, music, and so forth. Moreover it was found that education in Western democratic nations is becoming increasingly acceptable in other parts of the world, including Nigeria. Finally the advantages of democracy are found to be immense, and therefore it is recommended that Nigeria pursues more vigorously the education of democratic nature that is already present in its educational system.

Introduction

Democracy and globalisation are concepts that attract attention in contemporary times for various reasons. One of the reasons is because most of the advanced nations in the world today are democratic nations and they are anxiously pursuing their socio-political ideology of democracy in various spheres of their endeavors in the world today. These spheres of endeavor include education, agriculture, health, sports, economy, politics and so forth. Thus democracy is becoming increasingly a global affair in various dimensions. But is this supposed to be so? Should the Western democratic nations impress their democratic values upon the rest of the world as rigorously as they are doing in the areas of information and technology, education, health, politics, economy and so forth? Should there not be other equally vigorously pursued alternatives by other people? (e.g. socialism) Should our education manifest democratic features or features of socialism or some other socio-political ideology? What socio-political ideology

is best for globalization? What socio-political ideology is best for implementation in education? And what are the implications of these for education in Nigeria?

Thus this paper is interested in examining the concepts of democracy, globalization, socialism, and education in a democracy. It is also interested in examining the implications of the pursuit of democratic education in Nigeria. Finally, it would then make recommendations based on the findings.

Democracy

The concept of democracy involves a political ideology wherein political authority and responsibility rest finally with the whole people; that is, all the citizens in a democratic society have equal and ultimate worth. There is political equality and individual freedom, such that each citizen is considered to be the best judge of what is in his interest (Pennock, 1971). But since democracy cannot involve all the people in governance at the same time, modern democracy manifests representative democracy, wherein political authority and responsibility rest with the representatives of the people (Brubacher, 1962). However it should be noted that democracy does not comprise only a form of government; rather it is a mode of associated living, a mode of conjoint communicated experience (Dewey, 1916). So it comprises primarily of a way of life which maximizes consciously shared interests among members of the society, and with other societies, such that it gives to each member a responsible share in proportion to his capacity to shape the policies of the group to which he belongs (Dewey, 1916). It follows that channels of communication among the groups have to be kept open (for instance, among teachers and students, religious groups, the family and business groups) such that there can be free exchange of opinions, regular consultation, and mutual criticism, for continuous reconstruction of the shared experiences among the people (Dewey, 1903).

The features of democracy stated above are found *with some modifications* in various democratic settings in modern times. For instance, political equality and authority of the citizens commence when a citizen has attained the age of political maturity, which is eighteen years in some countries. So before that age a citizen does not have the right to be voted for nor to vote in the election of representatives. However, every citizen has freedom of speech and association, and government does not have monopoly of channels of communication..

In education, modern democratic settings (particularly Western democracies) provide free and compulsory education for children up to the ages of sixteen or eighteen years, whereby the children would acquire appreciable amount of education at the age of political maturity, and as such be able to engage in reflective thinking, and participate with maturity in socio-economic and political

functions (Crittenden, 1973). Such education therefore encourages *real* political equality, and authority; it also encourages *real freedom* in terms of reflective thinking, and socio-economic participation. Such education, which is mostly carried out in comprehensive schools, also encourages community sharing of experiences, whereby the individuals share various human experiences (artistic, scientific, commercial, technical, academic, and so forth) and mutually participate in the continuous reconstruction of their shared experiences, and consequently their societies. The schools also encourage academic freedom for staff, students, and the public to acquire information, process it, and publish it. So the schools discourage monopoly in channels of information and communication.

In the foregoing discussion of the concept of democracy; the issues of political equality, authority of the citizens, and freedom of the individual to be the best judge of what is in his interest, as well as community sharing of experiences for continuous reconstruction of the society, and keeping channels of communication open, have been noted. The mode of implementation of some of the features of democracy in Western democracies have also been highlighted. Some of the Western Democracies that feature prominently in this connection are: the United States of America, Britain, France and Switzerland. In these countries there is free and compulsory education for the citizens up to the ages of political maturity according to the various countries – the compulsory education is financed by the governments. Nigeria also lays claim to democracy. This can be found in our National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004, p.6). So it is expected that some implementation of the concept of democracy would be found in our socio-political business.

The age of political maturity in this country is eighteen years. But free education in Nigeria is up to the end of Junior Secondary education only – which is about fourteen years. At the national level we have free Primary and Secondary education (Junior Secondary) now - with the launching of Universal Basic Education in 1999 by President Olusegun Obasanjo. In effect free education in this country does not last up to the age of political maturity and authority – which is eighteen years. It also does not last long enough to ensure mature reflective thinking on the part of the recipient. It does not ensure political equality; it does not ensure freedom of the individual to make reflective decision about what is in his best interest. However since most of the schools are comprehensive schools, it encourages sharing of community experiences for continuous reconstruction of our societal experiences. Freedom of speech and association are encouraged to certain extent. The Government does not constitute monopoly in channels of communication.

In *reality*, the free education in Nigeria can not be said to be free. It is *not free*, it is *not compulsory* either. In the Primary schools the pupils still buy a lot of

books and materials, they buy uniforms too. Actually only tuition can be said to be free. In the Secondary schools, students buy books, materials and uniforms - only tuition can be said to be free. So in reality primary and secondary education in Nigeria do not manifest great implementation of the concept of democracy.

But is democracy supposed to be regarded as a good socio-political ideology when compared with the philosophy of socialism, or communism, or Military rule? Its advantages of political equality, freedom of the individual to be the best judge of what is in his interest, community sharing whereby each member is given a responsible share in proportion to his capacity to shape the policies of the group, and keeping channels of communication open to all (government and the people) are enormous. But are they enormous enough to warrant the adoption and implementation of democracy at the expense of socialism, communism, or military rule? Should the world prefer democracy to socialism, or to communism or to military rule?

The question is therefore whether democracy has the qualities that beat those of Socialism, or Communism, or Military rule, to the extent that it should be adopted as world socio-political ideology. To answer this question properly we should take a look at the concepts of Socialism, Communism, and Military rule.

Socialism

Socialism is a philosophy enunciated by Karl Marx and Engels. The philosophy claims that historical materialism is the basis of man's processes rather than abstract reasoning, ideas, mysterious or divine forces. Material needs of man have to be met before man could be able to think. So material needs of man like food, water, and shelter come before abstract reasoning, ideas, and metaphysical ideologies (Ilitskaya, 1965). The method of historical materialism is known as dialectical materialism. This involves analysis of local conditions of production in wider national, international and historical contexts. Investigations are carried out into new experiences generated from the old; it is appreciated that the old co-exists with the new for some time, and then withers away. But the new also becomes the old soon, and the process is repeated as history moves on. Man (particularly the working people, the producers of material needs) is the maker of history in particular environments (Ilitskaya, 1965).

Scientific Socialism makes historical materialism the basis of man's processes; it rejects divine basis; it also discourages *free market economy*, and multi-party elections. Thus it discourages the individual from making reflective decisions about what is best for him in terms of economic ventures, and political pursuits. It also discourages freedom of the individual in terms of spiritual development, and religious development.

It follows that socialism is a philosophy that denies the individual rights of equality, authority, freedom of reflective thinking, association, community sharing for the purpose of mutual reconstruction of experiences, and openness in channels of communication.

Little wonder then, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) ran into trouble that eventually led to its disintegration in 1991. In the process, its philosophy of Socialism had to change to recognise democracy; thus socialism had to change to democratic socialism – whereby embracing elements of freedom and equality of the individual in religion, economy, politics and other social endeavours.

Communism

Communism involves a rule by a minority political party whose rulership is attainable by force. It is however claimed that the rule by a minority political party is only a temporary phase of communism designed only to secure the ideology of communism, after which the proletariat who constitute the majority would be given the sovereignty (Brubacher, 1962; Communist Revolution, 2003). The ultimate goal of communism is the same as that of marxism or of socialism (Communist Revolution, 2003).

Communism can then be seen as a dictatorship. It disrecognises the right of the majority; it discourages freedom of the individual in political participation, and reflective thinking about what is best for himself. It discourages individual equality, and authority; it also discourages openness in channels of communication. It is therefore as bad as socialism. It is not to be aspired to, just as Socialism. No wonder, it has been giving way to democracy in its homeland (China) for quite some time (Glassman, 1991). Socialism, communism and military rule are all of a kind. They are various kinds of dictatorship. They are not to be desired when compared to democracy.

Military Rule

Military rule also perpetrates disrecognition of political equality and authority of the individual. It disrecognises the right and freedom of the individual to be the best judge of what is in his interest. It discourages freedom of association and encourages monopoly of channels of communication. The features of military rule are features of dictatorship; they are an antithesis of democracy. No wonder military rule continues to suffer disrecognition by various peoples in the world - Nigeria inclusive. From the foregoing, it can be seen that the ideology of democracy is better than the philosophy of socialism, philosophy of communism, and features of military rule. Thus democracy deserves to be an ideology for global promotion than Socialism, Communism or Military rule.

Global promotion, or promotion in a global dimension is the impression one has about globalisation of an idea, a thing or a subject of discussion. What then exactly is globalisation?

The Concept of Globalisation

Globalisation is conceived to involve a process whereby the world becomes increasingly interconnected, and whereby values are becoming more oriented to a global context (Programme on International Policy Attitudes PIPA, 1999). It takes into consideration the roles played by International institutions - in various spheres of value, (political, economic, health, education, sports, and so forth). Thus the roles played by the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA), and so forth, are recognised in the process of making the world increasingly interconnected in various realms of value (Programme on International Policy Attitudes PIPA, 1999; Golubovic, 1999). Globalisation refers to the process of the intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across international boundaries. (Akindele, Gidado and Olaopo, 2002).

Ohuabunwa (1999) states that globalisation involves an evolution, which is systematically restructuring interactive phases among nations by breaking down barriers in the areas of culture, commerce, communication and several other fields of endeavour (p.20)..

Thus globalisation involves a process whereby the world becomes increasingly interconnected in various human values and norms. The areas of increasing interconnection in values in the world otherwise known as globalisation include: information, health, economy, education, politics, agriculture, sports, dressing, music, and so forth.

Indications of increasing interconnectedness of the world in values and norms (globalisation) can be found in economy (in terms of free-market economy, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund), in politics (in terms of democracy), in health (in terms of Western medical health care practice), in education (in terms of Western system of education), in information and technology (in terms of information technology), in culture generally (in terms of Western democratic oriented culture).

Democracy and Globalisation

It follows that the Western world particularly the Western democracies like the United States of America, Britain, France, and Switzerland are making more progress in increasing interconnectedness of the world in values (globalisation) than

the other nations of the world. To be sure, the Socialists (former Soviet Socialist Republics the USSR) have lost out, the Communist Republic of China has also moved gradually in the direction of democracy (Glassman, 1991), and African States which are still ruled in some places by the Military are becoming increasingly conscious of the values of democracy and globalisation.

Thus, the direction of globalisation which is from the Western democratic countries to the former Soviet Socialist Republics, China, Africa and the rest of the world is very glaring. The direction does not appear to be pleasing to some people who do not belong to Western democratic nations: For instance Golubovic, (1999) and Akindele et.al (2002) claim that it involves imposing Western democratic culture on the rest of the world gradually. They even claim that it involves imperialism of the Western democratic nations and some sort of neo-colonisation. Such people therefore claim that increasing manifestation of free market economics, democracy, Western education, Western science and technology, and so forth should be suspected as increasing manifestation of Western imperialism and neo-colonisation.

Democracy and Globalisation: Implications for Education generally and for Nigerian Education in particular.

It has been observed from the foregoing, that the globalization process from the Western democratic nations to the rest of the world has various advantages. The advantages of democracy over Socialism, Communism, and Military rule that have been found to constitute alternatives to democracy in most other parts of the world, include: promotion of individual equality and authority, freedom of the individual to be the best judge of what is in his interest, community sharing for mutual reconstruction of the society, and openness in channels of communication. Definitely democracy and its integral values (in education, economy, politics, communication, freedom, spiritual and religious development, and so forth) fare better than Socialism, Communism, Military rule and their integral values.

Thus if the world should be progressively influenced by better values and norms, democracy should be globalised rather than Socialism, Communism and Military rule. It follows that education of Western democratic nature should be globalised. The implication of this for Nigerian education, is that Nigerian government should continue to pursue democratic system of education – but the nation should be more realistic and thorough in the pursuit of the democratic education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that globalization involves increasing interconnectedness of the world in human values. Also democracy should be allowed to continue in its influence on globalization: because of its aforementioned advantages which include; promotion of individual equality and authority, freedom of the

individual to be the best judge of what is in his interest, community sharing for ~~mutual~~ reconstruction of the society, and openness in channels of communication.

The education given in a democratic political system will certainly be of benefit to all, locally and internationally. So Nigeria should continue to embrace democracy and promote democratic education.

Recommendations

- 1 It is therefore recommended that Nigeria pursues democratic education more rigorously in its educational system.
- 2 Specifically the free education should be really free than it is now at the Primary and Junior Secondary school levels.
- 3 Moreover the free education should be extended to Senior Secondary education level too, whereby the free education would have been extended to the age of political maturity of the Nigerian child – as it is in the Western democratic nations.

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