

EFFECTIVE POLITICAL STABILITY IN NIGERIA THROUGH RESPONSIVE DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION PROCESSES: SOME PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

By

Imo M. Obot *PhD*

Department of Educational Foundations

University of Calabar, Calabar

Abstract

Political stability arising from individual and collective actions are some of Nigeria's current challenges. The researcher set out to study possible philosophical means of enhancing in learners the skills to contribute to political stability in Nigeria. The researcher speculated that related ineffectiveness of our education arises from exclusive democratic approaches to curriculum implementations in attempt to be learner centered. Research questions were raised. Multiple philosophical research methods of speculation, analyses and prescription were used in the study. A philosophical study of possible exclusive democratic approaches in classroom practices revealed the need to complement our education processes with appropriate level of content centered approaches to enhance learners' skills to perform action that bring about political stability. The study gave some guides for inclusive democratic education theory formulation and classroom practices. Conclusions were drawn and consequent recommendations were made.

Key words: Learner centered curriculum, classroom practices, education and political stability

Introduction

The researcher believes that stability is important for the development and growth of any nation. Since the independence of Nigeria in 1960, she has been in labour to attain stability. Much of the hindrances to Nigerian stability arise from the sphere of her political experiences. According to the national policy of education in Nigeria, the bases of our education policy hinges on the overall philosophy of our nation. Particularly, education is expected to assist in the building of democratic and free society towards one united nation. The need for one united nation is the need for political stability. It is expected therefore that education must commit itself to inculcating in our learners among other things skills for ensuring political stability in our nation (FGN, 2013).

However, In spite of the many years and huge resources put into formal education in Nigeria, many events unfold everyday to suggest ineffectiveness of our education in preparing our young ones for responsible citizenship to actualize our dream of political stability as can be seen in abundant irresponsible behaviours in our society. Many scholars have blamed this situation on factors such as poor moral education, poor civic education, ineffective school curriculum, poor teacher education (Essien, Akpan.,& Obot, 2015) , poor political education, poor school management and administration. In addition to these, the researcher suspects exclusive individualists' democratic philosophical bases in our curriculum formulation and classroom practices.

It is true that exclusive democratic principles even in education process which is so much emphasized today equally emphasizes exclusive individualism at the expense of social consciousness and solidarity which lies at the core of the principles for political stability. The research then set out to answer the following research questions that were formulated to guide the study: How do we understand the concepts of political stability and democracy as related to education? What are the necessary features

of political stability which education should pursue? Can learner centered or content centered education assist learners to acquire skills for political stability exclusive of each other? If they are integrated, will the later destroy the tenets of the former? What are the proper philosophical approaches to the effective integration of these teaching and learning approaches through for civic competence towards political stability?

The concept of political stability

Politics from its Greek derivative “polis” has to do with the public life of the individual. It primarily concerns itself with the conduct of public life and affairs. On the other hand stability has to do with one’s ability to put a condition or situation under positive control for the purpose for which it was meant for. It involves the proper functioning of all organs of the system towards the set goals. In terms of politics, it is primarily a function of the consent of the people, cooperation and the conduct of needful activities of related persons or groups towards the desired public life.

According to Asogwa (2014.), political stability then may refer to the length of the period and consent of the people towards a particular government or regime. This involves the responsible functionality of the government, government’s ability to manage public challenges and corresponding acceptance of the government in power by the people as against the tendency towards revolution and extreme individualism. It can be said to be a condition of the absence in the polity of negative social features such as: communal violence, rural or religious insurgence, urban riots, coup d’etat, civil war, disagreements on sources of living and power (Raji&Wahab,2016).

Political instability manifest as political violence, lack of free and fair elections, ethnic violence, religious violence, ethnic, religious, tribal and communal discrimination, poor communication and understanding between the government and the people, perceived social injustice and discrimination in decision making, poor leadership technique and government’s inability to be problem solving in approaches (Raji&Wahab,2016). Basically, political stability is a social phenomenon which hinges around social solidarity as against exclusive individualism.

Factors against political stability

Political stability is always a function of many factors such as social context and ideological interpretations in combination with other related factors. According to United Nations education, scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2014.) factors of political instability include: exclusive approach to decision making in public life, poor level of involvement and participation of citizens in political activities, intolerance among the people, inability for effective analysis and synthesis of alternative opinions and actions, lack of capacity for holistic and individualistic approach to social challenges, inability for clear and effective identification of social needs and possible solutions in order of importance. Consequently factors of political stability include: Inclusive approach to decision making in public life, level of involvement of citizens in political activities, tolerance among the people, ability for effective analysis and synthesis of alternative opinions and actions, capacity for holistic and individualistic approaches to social and individual challenges, ability for clear and effective identification of social and individual needs and possible solutions in order of importance. Effective education for political stability should have the ability to build in learners the skills for these factors.

The concept of Democracy in education

The word democracy derives from Greek words ‘Demos’ and ‘Kratias’. These mean ‘People’ and ‘Power’ respectively. Literally democracy means peoples’ power or power of the people. For the Greeks, it originally means a system of public life where individuals are the supreme laws to themselves for their individual benefits. It promotes primarily the principles of individuation in the society. In democracy, the society is seen as an aggregate of the individuals and so promotes principles of individuation as against the idea of a single people. Thus at its extreme, it can be exclusive of society ideals (Oreoluwa, 2015; Locke, 1690).

Democracy today is an important concept in education. From the behaviourists’ approach to education as expressed in pragmatism, the personal experiences of individuals have come to be seen as an important feature of effective learning Dewey (2012.). Based on this, it seems that education of late emphasizes individuals more than society in its processes through learner centered education as against content centered education. The later primarily emphasizes the ideals of the society (Schofield, 1974). Is it possible for such education to build skills for political stability which is society oriented?

Content Centered Curriculum (CCC)

The idealist, realists, neo-scholastics, essentialist and perennialists philosophers of education subscribe to content centered curriculum. The CCC places values on the subject matter of learning. In place of the individual learners, the institutions or the society that is responsible for the education is emphasized. Thus objectives of CCC are derived primarily from the needs of related institutions or societies. Philosophically such objectives emphasize perennialism and essentialism more than reconstructionism and progressivism. According to the idealists for example, there are subject matters and ideas that are universally very important for man’s life. Together with the perennialist they hold that some body of knowledge are always consistent and remain the same and should always form the content for learning. Together with the idealists, some realists, the perennialists and the essentialists emphasize the development of the mind as the main function of curriculum where contents are consistently presented as structured. Some realists emphasized that the curriculum should lead to knowledge that can be measured by an established standard set for all. For CCC formulation principle, the curriculum should place emphasis on the study of subjects such as writing, reading, arithmetic, history, literature, mathematics, humanities. and religions especially at the early stage. They also emphasize that curriculum places less emphasis on the individual and more on the society.

CCC Classroom Practices

For CCC, the teachers are the society’s representatives who interpret the curriculum. They determine what the learners are to learn, when and how. Sequences are observed in lesson presentation with attention on learners’ discipline. Learning experiences are basically segmented into subjects and bodies of discipline.

CCC classroom practices also emphasize learning methods such as memorizing, drilling, computation, lecture, deductive reasoning, with attention on censoring experiences and the use of the library as important learning activities. The use of the library emphasizes the importance of authority as a source of knowledge in CCC above learners’ experiences and individual freedom of knowledge construction.

The Learner Centered Curriculum Approach (LCCA)

The pragmatist, existentialist, humanist and naturalist subscribe to the learner centered curriculum approach. For the LCCA, the values, needs and social challenges of the learners are at the basis of the choice of contents and other features of the curriculum. Being that human needs are always changing, the curriculum should be dynamic, progressive, open and flexible to respond to the dynamics of learners' lives. The philosophical ideals of such curriculum theory and practice should include individual growth, integrity, autonomy, freedom, development and self-actualization (Obot, 2015, Dewey (2012)). Thus the philosophical bases of the curriculum should prioritize the individual and his personal experiences.

The learner centered curriculum approach (LCCA) classroom practices

The LCCA classroom practices also emphasize the importance of the individual learners' experiences and abilities in the actual classroom practices. Firstly, the classroom is seen as a laboratory for testing individual ideas (Obot & Essien, 2014). Thus the teachers remain facilitators with primary duties of assisting and coordinating individual learners to actualize the curriculum content in their practical lives. Teaching involves various methods such as inquiry, discovery, experimental methods and team learning strategies to meet the various challenges and experiences of individual learners. At the same time, classroom activities in a LCCA classroom practices aim primarily at problems identification and solving taking into consideration the learners' individual needs (Akpan, Essien, & Obot, 2008).. Emphasis is also laid on learning autonomy and freedom. The learning environment are expected to have a democratic atmosphere as any democratic society or group where individual with their needs receive adequate attention (Dewey, 2012). Some of these individualists such as Rousseau (1979) go even to the extent of seeing society influence on learners, curriculum and classroom practices as a form of infringement on learners' right and freedom.

Democracy, Philosophy, skill, educational approach and political stability

Behind these two approaches are two assumptions respectively that are related to democratic principles and the concept of political stability: 1) Education process can be democratic and human freedom is inclusive of influences from the society. 2) Education process should be democratic and human freedom is exclusive of external influences including that from the society. Which of these approaches has the capacity to ensure the cultivation of skills for political stability in learners? Let us look at different skills that are needed for political stability in a table form and also see which of the two approaches is required.

S/n	Democratic principle	Philosophy	Skill for political stability	Required educational approach
1	Culture base	Idealism, Realism and naturalism	Problem and possible solution articulation	Content and learner centered
2	Law unto self	Idealism and realism	application of existing norms	Content and learner centered
3	Capacity for effective decision making	Idealism, realism and pragmatism	Critical thinking and creativity	Content and learner centered
4	Good attitude	Idealism and realism	Capacity for responsible actions and relationship in the society	Content and learner centered

5	Participation in decision making and consideration for opinion of others	Idealism, realism and pragmatism	Tolerance, recognition of others as important individuals, critical thinking and creativity	Content and learner centered
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Table showing the relationship between Democracy, Philosophy, skill, educational approach and political stability

Source: Adapted from Hoskins, Barber, Nijlen, & Villalba, 2011.

Education, democracy, civic competence theory and political stability

From the study above, it is clear that the development of required features and characteristic in learners for political stability require both the CCC and LCCA approaches. The table shows that the two approaches are required for the various skills needed for democratic education towards political stability in the society. It can then be said that both approaches are important for the cultivation of skills in learners for political stability. How then do we manage democracy with freedom and rights in education processes to avoid its tendencies to exclusion and individualism if both CCC and LCCA approaches are useful in cultivating skills for political stability,? This will clear the doubt from those who totally reject CCC approach in education process on grounds of being a negation of learners' rights and freedom because of its emphasis on social values.

Theories of learner's rights as features of individuating democratic influences against social influences

There are two relevant theories of rights that relate to social influence on learners: 1) The choice theory of rights. 2) The interest theory of right. The former states that any human being capable of choosing: (a) has the rights to forbearances from others from the use of coercion or restrain against him save to undo coercion or restrain (b) he is at liberty to act against it except that he is not designed to coerce or restrain others. The later states that x can be said to have rights if and only if x can have right and other things being equal it is for x's wellbeing which is a sufficient reason for holding some other person to be under duty (Bailey, 2014). The former can be said to imply that the society has no rights to impose ideas on learners even through curriculum and classroom practices since every one holds the right to decide what happens to him. With this theory education cannot justifiably interfere in learners 'individual's development even for the purpose of political stability. The later while accenting to rights of individuals to decide what happens to them is not exclusive of contributions from the society if it be for the wellbeing of the learners (Bailey, 2014). It can be observed that the former theory is not quick to recognize that learners most often are vulnerable and lack the competences for effective choices. They are dependent on supports from society for their wellbeing. According to Bailey (2014) based on this defect scholars lean more on the interest theory of choice for effective education for social purposes such as political stability.

It is true that learners at the process of learning are vulnerable. They need social support. At the same time they owe the society some duties and responsibilities in return for the wellbeing safeguarded by the society. This includes their duties and responsibilities in participating freely in maintaining political stability in the society. To contribute to learners' education is not an infringement on learners' right to

freedom. Rather it assists the learners to cultivate skills that can assist in safeguarding his freedom through the society (Obot, Essien, & Akpan, 2014). Consequently PROPER integration of CCC in the democratic LCCA is not a destruction of learners' freedom in the education process. How do we do this properly in Nigeria?

CCC integration for civic competence education for political stability in the society through LCCA

Preparing learners for political stability very importantly demands that they build up civic competences. Civic competence education focus on four domain of learners' experiences: 1) citizenship values 2) social justice values and attitudes 3) participatory attitude and 4) cognitive abilities on democratic institutions (Hoskins, Barber, Nijlen, & Villalba, 2011). These are possible domains of curriculum and classroom interest that can act as antidotes to features of political instability listed above. Using Bloom's taxonomy, such education will focus on: (A): Cognition- develop cognitive abilities on political and legal system, democratic processes, activities of the media, the role of voluntary associations, history, culture and current affairs. (B): Psychomotor- competence in critical reflection, communication, persuasion, building alliances, active participation in group decision making, conflict resolution and intercultural skills. (C): Attitude- develop positive attitude towards social responsibility, self efficacy, trust, openness to change, believe in democratic ideals, rule of law, equality, social justice, respect for others and their opinions, human right, freedom, fairness, sustainable development and respect for differences (Adapted from Hoskins, Barber, Nijlen, & Villalba, 2011).

1) Learners will need to be conversant with important concepts that are useful for political stability in their environment. Thus learners will articulately be able to construct personal ideas on the social expectations putting into use critical skills of thinking. He will also be able to assess and develop himself on his capacity to respond responsibly to the society's expectations through personal creativity. Furthermore he will be motivated to seek for further abilities on social expectations towards political stability from his individual experiences. Very importantly the curriculum should assist the learners to be conversant with the historical development of these relevant concepts so as to be equipped for creative construction of ideas for unfamiliar circumstances from knowledge of the past. The curriculum will need to be integral having features of perennial, essential, progressive and reconstructive curriculum where necessary to ensure both learners democratic and social ideals.

2) At the same time, learners will need to be conversant with the ideals of democracy as a process of personal disposition and ability for responsible social interactions for one's good within the society. This will assist the learners to understand, appreciate and leave as individuals who can achieve their self actualization only within the society with other individuals. Thus they will see the need to use their individual abilities to protect their interest through society's common interest and ideals.

3) The curriculum should be based on the culture of the people. In this case, the curriculum and classroom activities will address questions that really boarder the minds of the learners, involve their local norms and customs and dispose the learners for social solidarity by always seeking for solutions to their questions within their environment.

4) The curriculum should be a plan programme of socialization and social reconstruction. At the same time it should be motivating enough to respond to learners' needs as individuals and as members of a community (O'Connor, (1957).

5)The curriculum should represent as much phases of the understanding of the concept of a curriculum as possible. Thus an effective curriculum should serve all as a content or subject matter, a programme of planned activities, intended learning outcome, experiences, cultural reproduction, discrete tasks and concepts, agenda of social reconstruction and currere (Fry, Ketteridge, & Marshallis, .2009). The curriculum should not be exclusive of what will respond to political stability.

Teachers should also pay adequate attention to the following important principles of an LCCA curriculum and classroom practices that can enhance learners' critical thinking and creative skills for political stability through proper integration of CCC:

- All learners should be given the opportunity to learn to their full potential on social issues
- Educators have the responsibility of creating learning environments that are challenging, inviting and motivating for all learners to contribute to political stability in their environment.
- Learners should be allowed to demonstrate their competence as it relates to their abilities or to their levels of development and functioning in taking social responsibilities.
- Learners must be allowed to develop at their own cognitive, psychomotor and affective pace to reflect their cultural role.
- It is necessary for teachers to make learning open to encourage learners assume emerging social roles for political stability (O'Connor, 1957, Akpan, Essien, & Obot, 2008).
- The method of teaching should be challenging enough to reflect the nature of social challenges and negative experiences (Essien, Okon, & Obot, 2016).

Conclusion

Democracy as an education principle needs to be applied carefully and inclusively. This is most important when the object of the process is to attain social goods such as political stability as against purely individuals' interests. Exclusive application of any of the two main approaches in education (CCC and LCCA) can go a long way to mare the possibility of effectively using education to build political stability skills in learners.. Rather integral application allows each of the approaches to complement themselves effectively. At the same time, education for political stability needs to address learners' domain rather than emphasize exclusive and dichotomized subjects which does not reflect the integral nature of human life. Integration of the two approaches should not be possibly allowed to infringe on learners' freedom from the perspective of the CCC approach. Teachers' professional skills are effective means of making integrated education approach effective in building in learners' ability to contribute to political stability in our nation.

Recommendations

1. Teacher education should ensure that teachers have ability for eclectic approach to their roles.
2. Government should ensure effective curriculum to enable teachers' effective implementation.

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