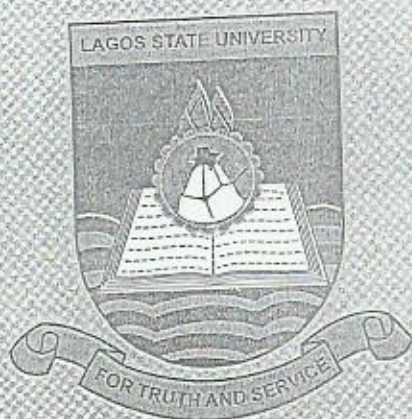


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CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

► **THEME** ◀

**DEMOCRATIZATION,
GOOD GOVERNANCE
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Dr. Remade, Oluwatobi

***THEME: DEMOCRATIZATION, GOOD GOVERNANCE
AND EDUCATION***

PRAGMATIC CONVOCATION OF NIGERIANS FOR A GENERIC VISION: THE
DESIRABILITY OF EDUCATION AS A CATALYST

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Abstract

We cannot blame a river for being sluggish and tardy in midstream without looking at its origin. If the end of all struggles is the struggle to end well, leaders must avoid ancient banana peels and new land mines that put Nigeria in a current state of ebullition. The crisis of the Nigerian post-colonial state is also a crisis of the intellectual class leading to a progressive debility of the thinking and critical faculty. The writers opine that without the intellect, there can be no illumination. It is needful to tap into heterogeneous cultures of entities that make Nigeria and leverage it into political nationalism. The political nationalism must be honed on virile reforms in the Education sector as suggested in this paper.

Introduction

Nigeria's history has been a long nightmare punctuated by sleep walking. Dawodu (2004) commented that the British amalgamation of Nigeria was not intended to create a nation in the sense of forging the over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups into a people with a common vision to see themselves as one. They did not even imagine the possibility. The far northerners made their stand clear from the beginning, by insisting that they were not going into a union to surrender their identity as Islamic Hausas and Fulanis to people that had not conquered them in war. They saw the country as a north-south patchwork, keeping the minorities in their midst tightly under their wings. Nigeria is a big country, and so are her many problems. Some of these problems have been identified as bribery and corruption, unemployment, poor infrastructural development, over dependence in the oil sector for federal income and revenue, poor work ethics, increasing citizens dissatisfaction and disaffection with the government, political structures and politicians, corporate and large scale organizational irresponsibility, inadequate funding of the educational, health and other key sectors, neglect of the agricultural and other non-oil productive/manufacturing sectors, continued manufacture of poor quality, fake and substandard goods and services, over dependence on imported goods, poorly regulated capital and financial market, tribal, ethnic and religious squabbles, homelessness, poverty and hunger, poor maintenance culture, poor planning, lack of security and disregard for human life and property, armed and pen robbery and others (Achebe, 1984). In order to avoid ancient banana peels and new land mines, tangible changes must be witnessed in the polity.

Gramsci's consensus culture: A recipe for change in Nigeria

According to Dante (1990) Antonio Gramsci (January 22, 1891 – April 27, 1937) was an Italian writer, politician, political philosopher and linguist. He was a founding member and onetime leader of the Communist Party of Italy and was imprisoned by Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime. Owen (2008) corroborated Dante's view that Gramsci was one of the most important Marxist thinkers in the 20th century, and his writings are heavily concerned with the analysis of culture and political leadership; he is notable as a highly original thinker within modern European thought. He is renowned for his concept of cultural hegemony as a means of maintaining the state in a capitalist society.

Boggs (1984) explained that in Gramsci's view, any class that wishes to dominate in modern conditions has to move beyond its own narrow 'economic-corporate' interests, to exert intellectual and moral leadership, and to make alliances and compromises with a variety of forces; for Gramsci it was fundamental to the attainment of power that cultural hegemony be achieved first. Gramsci calls this union of social forces a 'historic bloc', taking a term from Georges Sorel. This bloc forms the basis of consent to a certain social order, which produces and re-produces the (Bottomore, 1992). Hegemony of the dominant class through a nexus of institutions, social relations and ideas. In this manner, Gramsci developed a theory that emphasized the importance of the superstructure in both maintaining and fracturing relations of the base.

Deductive from Gramsci's postulations is the inevitability of optimism in a nation state. When he was asked why he remained defiantly at all odds with the Italian state and cheerfully hopeful about the future despite bitter defeats, stunning reversals of gains, persistent harassments, incarcerations, he retorted that it was due to optimism of the will and pessimism of the intellect. Optimism of the will is the act to dare and dream; the capacity for continuous exertion and permanent struggle for a better society even when the intellect tells you

that it will be an end in itself. It simply means that despite an odds, visionary imagining is inevitable at every sphere of leadership. Without dreams, nations and people must perish; without hope, life is a sour and surly joke. To start with, analytical integrity may have to be discarded, hard facts on the ground may have to be ignored and the logic of events will have to be sacrificed. It is not the failure of nations that we must fear; it is the failure of national will.

The need for Social Engineering

Social engineering means returning the country to the path of sanity and rationality. There are issues in the polity that must be urgently, meticulously and thoroughly addressed. It must be noted that a wound does not heal by merely clearing the pus of dereliction. It is just the beginning of the healing process. Nigeria needs brilliant statesmanship and extra-ordinary creative and political social engineering.

Nigeria and Nigerians need to change their thinking as well as their ways of doing things, especially in this modern era. Adopting the principles of modernism may be a good starting point (Dosunmu & Oni 2010). The modern movement known as modernism began in the late 19th century and was originally rooted in the idea that 'traditional' forms of art, literature, social organization and daily life had become outdated, and that it was necessary to sweep them aside and re-invent 'culture'. This description cannot be any truer if applied to the current Nigerian situation. As encouraged by the modern movement, it is time for Nigerians to examine every aspect of their existence, from commerce and government to philosophy, the goal will be to find that which is 'holding back' progress and replace them with new and therefore better ways of reaching the same goals. Nigerians should begin to reject and challenge tradition both in the society, government, organizations and at work. The driving philosophies in this process will be those of freedom of expression, experimentation, radicalism and revolution in all aspects of our lives: family, business, schools, work, churches, government, thinking, relationships, beliefs and culture. Although modernism in other parts of the world have now entered a new era (post-modernism/post-modernist era), starting the movement in Nigeria at this point should not be seen to be too late, Nigerians should therefore shun the criticisms that may surface from the anti-modernists camps, they have variously described modernism as an exaggerated love of what is modern and also as an infatuation for modern ideas, these criticisms have always been borne out of mediocrity, fear of change and selfishness, in Nigeria, the potential critics of modernism are likely to be the oligarchs, politicians and the other opinion leaders and beneficiaries of a backward and highly corrupt economy. These negative views have also always been challenged by the modernists with their basic world view that what is new can also be good and beautiful.

There is the need to set the pace for fantastic but realizable dreams. Without dreams, nations and people must perish without hope life is a sour and surly joke. It is not the failure of nations and state collapse that we must fear, but the failure of national will.

There is a tripartite relationship between education, national rebirth, and democracy. Since good education is a prerequisite for national development, it is a pre-condition for national rebirth, which, in turn, is a catalyst for sustainable democracy. Education is to liberate man from congenital and environmental ignorance, so that man is able to achieve authentic solution to his day-to-day problems and to attain self-actualization or self-fulfillment in life.

The Place of Education in National Rebirth

Politics and Education operate in close interaction in a number of ways. Since politics deals with power play for the governance of human societies, educational systems tend to reflect the politics of the nations they are designed to serve. In serving the course of national building, political actors evolve policies, which determine the practice of Education. Political development in most African countries have been hindered by a number of factors already mentioned before and this explains in large part the inappropriateness and failure of educational policies over the years (Obanya, 1999) Internal crisis and military regimes (non-democratic regimes) have prevented many countries from settling down to think of development activities, including educational development and also prevented the thriving of ideas which could have led to creativity. The overall climate of political instability led to lack of conformity in education policies and projects including frequent changes in education sector personnel. Political instability also led to the depletion of the resources available for or allocated to education investments by non-governmental sectors in education could not have flourished in situation of instability.

Children and youths are the best nation builders because they carry no ancestral baggage of resentment, no evil memory of ancestral tribal feuds. Youths have a better capacity to dream and will into existence a new society. We are to guide and guard jealously that our youths are not sucked into a vortex of fear and trembling and these romantic well of national wellbeing are not poisoned.

Despite bitter setbacks, stunning reversals of gains, persistent bloodletting, incarcerations we can still resort to the optimism of the will which is the ability to dare, to dream despite the pessimism of the intellect.

The Tasks: Welding together the heterogeneous forces in the nation. Forging an organic community from disparate nationalities thereby turning a nation in itself to a nation for itself. Let us all dream for Nigeria. A dream for Nigeria is a dream for Africa and for the entire Black race. The alternative is a nightmare that is too catadysmic to imagine. The answer to the practical question, "how do we begin getting to this point pragmatically," leads to a need to enumerate the principles and practices that will lead to this result. To my find, there are four such principles, each with wide-ranging and practical implications.

allies. Teachers alone cannot change the textbooks, install more sensible testing policies than are now in place, create administrative support systems, get the public to understand where reform is headed and why it takes time to get there, and raise the funds needed to pay for reform. Thus, school administrators and education policymakers need to support teachers. Teachers also need academic colleagues—scholars who are experts on relevant subject matter, child development, learning, and the educational potential of modern technologies. And they need the help and support of community leaders, business and labor leaders, and parents—for in the final analysis, educational reform is a shared responsibility. It is time for teachers to take more responsibility for the reform of education, but that in no way reduces the responsibility of others to do their parts too.

Comprehensive Approaches Are Needed

Piecemeal reform measures beget piecemeal effects, if any. At the school level, reform efforts should be inclusive: all levels, all subject domains, all streams. Without a more sweeping approach, change will be constrained by having to fit within the boundaries of class periods, school subjects, sequences, and tracks that themselves may be a large part of the problem. Nationwide, reform needs to be comprehensive in the sense of addressing all aspects of the system. Reform in science education depends on changing existing curricula from kindergarten to Secondary school; but to make new curricula work, changes must also occur in the preparation of teachers, the content of textbooks and other learning materials, the use of technologies, the nature of testing, and the organization of schools. Furthermore, the changes need to be compatible, lest they cancel each other out. Comprehensive reform does not imply going off in all directions at once. Rather, it demands that some steps occur before others, that some problems take precedence, and that resources be deployed strategically. Careful system-wide planning should precede action, and no aspect of planning is more crucial than setting priorities. Failure to set priorities can result in only a little change; setting the wrong priorities may leave the students worse off than before reform was undertaken.

Reform Must Focus on the Science Learning Needs of All Children

When demographic realities, national needs, and democratic values are taken into account, it becomes clear that the nation can no longer ignore the science education of any students. Ethnicities, language, sex, or economic circumstances must no longer be permitted to be factors in determining who does and who does not receive a good education in science, mathematics, and technology. To neglect the science education of any (as has happened too often to girls) is to deprive them of a basic education, handicap them for life, and deprive the nation of talented workers and informed citizens—a loss the nation can ill afford.

To reach all students means reforming the education of every strand of the student body—vocational, general, and college preparatory. For students who expect to go right to work after junior secondary school stage, a narrow focus on trade skills will no longer do; they need to acquire a strong base of scientific knowledge and of reasoning, communication, and learning skills. They need to enter their vocations with an understanding of science, mathematics, and technology that they can build on and that will make it possible for them to elect a technical field and undecided students need the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable them to move in any direction. The recommendations in this report, therefore, apply equally to all students.

Meeting the science learning needs of all children requires that society as a whole recognize that learning is, in a sense, the chief occupation of childhood. Play is important for its own sake and because it often leads to learning, and work for money can be instructive for children, but neither play nor employment can substitute for systematic study. Parents and citizens in general, therefore, must understand that a substantial portion of the energies of childhood have to be devoted to the task of learning.

Without such leadership, community support for educational reform will fade away long before lasting results can be achieved.

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