

Engaging Young Adults to Birth Ideological Democracy in Nigeria: Social Media as Civic Education Compass

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Abstract

The Nigeria is endowed with 44 different mineral types amidst increasing poverty in the land. The commonwealth of the country was not equitably and adequately utilized for the common good of the ordinary Ahmed et al. [1]. Things are as bad as the nation been declared The World's Poverty Capital Dahlgren [8], while a negligible fraction of the citizens lives in mega affluence. The unconscionable lopsided state of the country is borne out of a nil-ideological democracy. Civic education that exposes young adults to the concept of political ideology to install ideological democratic practice is the peaceful way out for the nation, therefore, to prevent the palpable calamities that can befall the country in the continuing practice of plutocracy, extensive literature was reviewed and presented in advocacy for the potentials of social media as charitable tool of civic education that are urgently required in the country.

Keywords: Civic education, Ideological democracy, Nigeria, Social media, Young adults.

1. Introduction

In Nigeria has been in a state of negative flux for a while, and she is dangerously close to the endpoint of citizen's endurance. The structure of socio-economic inequality in the country is so warped that the known tri-level of its division has practically consumed the middle-class, thereby configuring the population to upper and low-class status. World Economic Forum [34] bulletin claims "about 90 million people - roughly half Nigeria's population - live in extreme poverty, according to estimates from the World Data Lab's Poverty Clock. Around June 2018, Nigeria overtook India, a country with seven times its population, at the bottom of the table. Put in another context, if poor Nigerians were a country, it would be more populous than Germany. Almost six people in Nigeria fall into this trap every minute". The socio-economic implications of this state are clear "as the inequality in a country increase, the loss

in human development also increases" (UNDP2018).

The above scenario obtains in spite of the fact that organized mining in the country started in 1903. By the 1940s, Nigeria has started production of these resources with tin, columbite, and coal. Other mineral deposits found and explored at varied rates include salt, iron ore, lignite, coke, gold, bitumen, and uranium among others. Nigeria is ranked 6th in world's bitumen deposit and 9th in natural gas reserves and 11th in oil reserves.

Ahmed et al. [1] states that Nigeria is endowed with abundant mineral resources including gold, iron, lead, zinc, rare metals (SnNbTa), coal and gemstones which could be harnessed for its development. Presently, the sector contributes less than 1% to the nation's annual [1]. The economic development. Government's posture has affected the exploitation and utilization of strategic solid minerals with the potential of bringing about socio-economic development in Nigeria.

A number of experts and researchers have offered suggestions in this regard. Ahmed et al. [1] believe that "this abnormality can be attributed to overdependence on oil, political instability, poor legal, regulatory and institutional framework and lack of up-to-date geosciences data that can facilitate investment decision making". Ihom [19] submits "these solid minerals when value is added to them are veritable tools for socio-economic development. Government's posture has affected the exploitation and utilization of strategic solid minerals with the potential of bringing about socio-economic development in Nigeria". Damulak [9] avers that "the growth in Nigeria's economy since independence in 1960 has not significantly affected the lives and the general well-being of its citizens. Nigeria has dependent on crude oil resources for a very long time, yet, what it offers the economy is a disarticulated and directionless economy, be-queiting nothing than misery and poverty of every kind on the people. Nigeria is richly endowed with 44 different mineral types scattered in more than 450 different locations across the country. This means that the

development of the solid mineral sector implies even development of the entire region of the country”.

The United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report [33] on Nigeria affirms that when the Inequality-Adjusted is factored, Nigeria’s HDI for 2019 is 0.539. However, when the value is discounted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.348, a loss of 35.4 percent due to inequality in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices. Thus, the attendant effects of over 60% living below the poverty line in the midst of stupendous deposit of natural minerals include the commonplace sentiments of angst and depression being expressed by quite a large fraction of the citizen. The educated and civilized few outside the 1% ruling elite are also understandably bothered when confronted with the fact that the best that Nigeria’s Plutocrats has attracted is to be referred as the world’s poverty capital Greenhow et al. [16] and an abysmal ranking of 158 out of 188 countries in terms of Human Development Index. It would seem as if the facts of a fiercely fought civil war are lost on the ruling elite. Time is therefore of the essence if peaceful reversals of this deliberate inhumane status of the nation is to be achieved.

The World Economic Forum [34] proposed three item agenda for Nigeria as a starting point moving towards resolving her present socio-economic misfortune, which are: (1) Invest in girls’ education, (2) Invest in health and well-being, and (3) Expand economic opportunities and embrace technology. Therefore, a robust citizenship education, rich in the history, strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of her natural endowments and human resources is a considered panacea.

Banaji [2] asserts that “in much academic and policy literature about civic engagement, regardless of their political or social circumstances, youth across the globe are enjoined to engage in all the activities thought good for them in order to qualify for the moral label ‘good citizens’. Voting, watching the news, party activism, sending emails to government websites, attending meetings in the town hall, volunteering, or addressing envelopes for civic organisations are examples of the kinds of activities most often highlighted. In this discourse, distrust and dissatisfaction, however legitimate, as well as group anger, cynicism and unsanctioned protest, are seen as being in conflict with proper ‘civic pathways’. The ‘political’ is primarily configured as pertaining to elections and government, and civic is the implicitly pro-social and conformist field within which future citizens are educated for political engagement. By the same token, when it is not straightforwardly about a ‘passport’ which represents a set of rights and duties, citizenship appears to become a kind of etiquette, whereby ‘members’ communicate with their ‘elected representatives’ and regardless of the

outcome of their interest and action, continue to be motivated and interested in the actions of ‘their’ government”.

2. Citizen and Citizenship Education

Dominique [12] posits that “a citizen is a member of a political community who enjoys the rights and assumes the duties of membership”. The chief of the duties of membership is exercising the voting right at the turn of the legal age. However, voting is inadequate to help birth an ideologically laden democracy. Perhaps this was one of the reasons that led to Morlino [25] to stand on Dahl’s [8] proposition, that there is a minimum for the definition of democracy which suggests that such a regime has at least universal, adult suffrage; recurring, free, competitive and fair elections; more than one political party; and more than one source of information. In addition, democratic intuitions, existing rights and also the decision-making process should not be constrained by non-elected elites or external powers [25]. To achieve democratic practices that satisfy the enumerated criteria above is a regime of civic education targeting the budding generation, to usher in a new, selfless and giving attitude that can change the current trajectory of Nigeria to the path of good governance.

Finkel [24] report that “civic education has significant and substantively meaningful effects on local-level political participation in four of the seven programmes studied in South Africa and the Dominican Republic and that the results hold after controlling for potential biases related to the individual’s self-selection into the programmes. The effects of civic education on participation are largely conditional in nature, dependent on the frequency and nature of the civic education “treatment,” and the individual’s store of prior political and participatory resources. The results suggest that civic education and other group mobilization processes are highly complementary as seen in other kinds of secondary group activities”. Put another way, they attempt to transfer the tools necessary for participation in a democratic polity and to induce individuals to engage in civic acts.

3. The need for Ideological Democracy

Martin [23] perceives ideology as “a generalization of social relations; it is the ideal form of the actual relations, seen from the perspective of one position in this set of relations, but universalized, idealized and abstracted”. It was for this that Aristotle, according to Olivera [26], is of the firm opinion that the state exists for the common good, thereby classified authority in the form of two main parts: the correct authority and moose authority. The

state for him is the union of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honourable life. Political society exists, for the sake of noble actions, and not mere companionship.

The desire to engineer a nation that offers a perfect and self-sufficing life thereby imposes the continuing engagement of governments by the people and more importantly the educated in climes with acceptable democratic practices otherwise referred to as “good” democracy if only to maintain the momentum, and vehemently so, in communities with unacceptable or “bad” democratic practices for the needed change in the ruling elite. This much-sought change informs the search for ideological democracy to ensure the sustainability of such national orientation and attitude when found.

Lister and Pia [22] reviewed classical theories of citizenship and submit that “the relationship between individuals and the political community has been conceptualized in several different ways. The first is the liberal conception, which, unsurprisingly, takes the individual as the main focus. “A liberal theory of citizenship emphasizes the equality of rights which each citizen holds, and how these rights enable the individual to pursue their aims and goals. The second theory, communitarianism, is critical of this position. For communitarians, the individual does not exist before the community. As such, it argues that the liberal theory fails to consider duty or loyalty to the community ignores the social nature of individuals and, in emphasizing rights, ignores responsibilities and duties owed to the community. The third theory of citizenship is the republican tradition. It emphasizes participation in government as the foundation for the promotion of the civic good. It is critical of both the liberal perspective, which it sees as too fragmentary and also, the communitarian view, as it is wary of local identities being placed above wider civic goals” [22].

From the standpoint of the citizenship theories as espoused above, it is instructive to note that according to Dominique [12] treatise ended with a poser, that “...if being a citizen in a liberal-democratic political community is to mean something more than the status of the legal *subject*, we must be ready to state what this “more” entails. “This stubborn blind-spot of theories of citizenship leads us to some of the most difficult issues about the very possibility of democracy in the contemporary world” [12]. This more therefore in the context of this article, is to situate the individual member of the society piously into one of either the liberal or republican theories of citizenship without necessarily emphasizing the differences in outlook or macro expectations but its influence on governance and vice versa. Thus, the main contention of this article, which is, that Nigeria prides itself as a federal

republic with an unmatched ‘dominated’ democracy/plutocracy, is a misnomer, unhelpful and unacceptable.

Lister and Pia [22] state that the republican tradition emphasizes participation in government as the foundation for the promotion of the civic good. In other words, the republican community appreciates, enables, and ensure the individual’s right to participate freely in her electoral process. This participation is the minimum of the civic duties expected of a responsible citizen at the attainment of certain age by the constitution. But it is not as simple as stated because the type of democracy being practised facilitates or inhibits citizens’ satisfaction with these basic civil rights.

4. Types of Nil-Ideological Democracy

Morlino [25] submits that the analysis of a ‘good democracy’ should be theoretically set alongside those regimes that are to varying degrees deficient in principal democratic features. Amongst them are hybrid regimes according to Diamond [11] whose failure to ensure free and fair electoral competition and a minimum level of civil rights keeps them below the minimum threshold to be classified democratic. Likewise, the defective democracies according to Merkel and Croissant [24] should not feature in the analysis. This category includes ‘exclusive’ democracies, which offer only limited guarantees for political rights; ‘dominated’ democracies, in which powerful groups use their influence to condition and limit the autonomy of elected leaders; and ‘illiberal’ democracies, which offer only partial guarantees of civil rights. In reality, the last three models should be regarded as institutional hybrids, and thus fall short of the minimum threshold specified above.”

Glaring to the legally blind is the fact that what obtains in the fourth republic Nigeria is one of the defective hybrids described as dominated democracy; elsewhere referred to as a plutocracy. At present, no honest public servant can participate in the highest bidders’ politics. Therefore, to state that Nigeria is adrift is to be economical with the truth, although, a preferred hideout to scandalizing the state by a detailed review of its present reclining state. A concrete instance is taken from the features by Osipitan [27] on the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) with the ignoble proviso regarding educational qualification to contest election into elected offices. Section 131 (d), considered alongside Section 318 (1) of the Constitution, provides that a candidate need not possess a Secondary School Certificate but its equivalent (Persons with Primary Six School Leaving Certificate or its equivalent, provided they satisfy the other requirements listed under Paragraph

(c)(i), (ii), and (iii) of the definition of “School Certificate or its equivalent” in Section 318 (1), are also qualified to contest election into elective offices, including that of the President. Finally, persons with “any other qualification acceptable to the Independent National Electoral Commission [27].

5. Ideologies and facets of Nations

John Fonte of the Hudson Institute avers that Ideologies have consequences. Facchini and Melki [13] conclude that the main channel through which political ideology has impacted economic performance all along the French democratic experience is the budgetary tool (i.e. fiscal and redistributive policies) which influenced employment and income inequalities. Hung-Yu [18] avers that while state support for sport may be superficially an ‘apolitical’ issue, the political difference is evident. Lightcap [21] submits that “in types of cases where the justices are more likely to make crucial decisions, it is more likely that ideology will affect decision making”. Kaestle [20] wonders why historians of American education are often most readily identified by ideological labels such as “Radical” or “Whig”. Thus, it seems incongruous to me that members of this subfield have paid so little systematic attention to the ideology of the people we write about, and in particular, to the ideology of the school reformers” (Kaestle [20], Prinja [29]) confirms that “ideas determine the frame in which one perceives a given problem. Policymaking in health is largely thought to be driven by three ‘I’s namely ideas, interests and institutions” In the same vein, Busol [5] reports that within the EU, although we can classify the health systems per certain factors, and find several similarities, we shall not find two identical systems. All of them have been modeled and influenced by the political parties governing these countries [5].

The evidence from the above is presented in the words of Stimson [32], the eminent student of public opinion, who puts it succinctly, “Ideology won’t go away. It is too important” So, if ideology will not go away, we should help propagate it in civic education forms in our schools with the modern and effective aid of social media.

6. Social Media as a Tool for Civic Education

Chikezie and Uzuegbunam [6] found that the level of awareness, exposure, and use of Facebook among Nigerian youth is quite high. Pulse.ng [30] indicated that WhatsApp is the most active social media platform in the country with 85% of users. The second is Facebook at 78%, Instagram is third at

57%, followed by FB Messenger at 54% and Youtube at 53%. The youth, with reasons, have never used Facebook or indeed any other social media to advocate or win support for a cause geared towards social change or social development of the society [6]. It is concluded that Nigerian youth should be challenged to embrace serious online activism through the positive, prudent, informed, literate, and better-appropriated use of social media as both socialization and an empowering tool [6]. Research has found that youth are shifting away from traditional means of democratic citizenship, such as voting, trust in political leaders, and joining formal socio-political organizations, towards individually expressing socio-political issues via personal lifestyles, mistrusting political leaders, and joining loose networks for social action, predominantly via digital technology [3]. In the same breadth, youth use digital technology to discuss events, ideas, and interests [8], [28], and raise socio-political awareness [7].

Davies [10] exemplifies the role of digital technology (social media) in developing democratic citizens. Digital technology specifically aids educators and students in investigating community issues as it “allows/empowers citizens to access, research, disseminate/share, and broker information” [17]. The ease of access to vast information online enables social studies students to develop tools of critical inquiry [4]. Similarly, the large extent of different online communities encourages students to acquire different perspectives, while also challenging and strengthening perspectives [31]. This distribution of information and varying perspectives fundamentally enhances opportunities to solve community problems [15].

7. Conclusions

Civic education is the key to laying a solid foundation in children and young adults for robust political engagement in later years. The internet too is the main tool of the 21st century, otherwise described as the computer age. The combination of these variables is therefore essential to navigating a peaceful path out of Nigeria’s deliberate and peculiar mess foisted on the majority by a few greedy, unprincipled opportunists that found themselves in the ruling elite of the nation. The curriculum developers are invited to explore this path while government at all tiers should facilitate access to the internet through Facebook and another medium in vogue with the Nigerian youth to install a worthy sense of responsibility and commitment to the nation as a matter of national emergency.

8. References

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