EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY:
IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Many values mark out democracy as a universal norm: democracy affords both the majority and the minority opportunities to assert themselves, it is relative to cultures, it prioritizes the well being of every individual, has internal mechanisms and dynamics for self correction, preserves and respects the rights, freedom and privilege of individuals, upholds accountability, makes a case for justice and egalitarianism as well as works out through compromises. Regrettably, democracy in most states operates without democrats as most people, especially in developing states who claim to be practicing democracy are autocrats who lack the rudiments of democracy. As education is central in bringing about positive changes and guiding man to embrace behaviours that are conducive for sustainable human development, this paper makes a case that educational provision that is deep-rooted in democracy and fosters the mastering, knowledge and dynamics of democracy can provide thresholds and safe landing platforms for national reconstruction especially in Nigeria where ethnic rivalry, multi-religious, and multi-cultural and multi-linguistic composition disastrously threaten national unity and national integration. The paper recommends that innovations in education for national reconstruction targeted through democracy must make provisions where justice, respect for human rights, tolerance, diversity, peace constructive criticism etc occupy enviable positions in such educational arrangement.

Keywords: Education, Democracy, National Reconstruction, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Humans have a long and diversified history in the sense that there are certain behaviours and developments which his environment has directly bequeathed and imposed on him. Diversified in the sense that certain behaviours he has internalized were products of learning, experience and interactions with other cultures. In all these, any aspect of his history that he wants to preserve, explore, prioritize and sustain are held sacred and are highly valued so much that he improves and passes on or transmits to his succeeding and future generations. In all these endeavours, a basic truth that remains constant is that man adopt education as an instrument for success in his historical evolution and development.
Many reasons account for man’s favourable disposition to education. Education plays key roles in the general transformation of man and his society. Education specifically provides opportunities through which man, individually and collectively, can realize his potentials. These are in the forms of providing man basic creative thoughts for advancement through the dissemination of knowledge and adjustment mechanisms. In the history of man, education has been relied upon by states and their leaders to introduce modern behaviours and policies for the transformation of the quality of the lives of their citizens and will continue to be a powerful instrument and institution in directing and redirecting the sociological, axiological and metaphysical outlooks of citizens across cultures.

Many societies have relied on education in radically rethinking themselves in line with contemporary global issues in the form of raising mass awareness targeted at challenging issues which are unhealthy to the political, economic and moral health of their states. A well articulated and well defined educational provision that is guided by a well articulated and well defined national philosophy can sensitize a people on issues of social justice, social injustice, human rights and then human rights abuses, democracy, basic human freedom, environmental justice, environmental degradation and many other issues whose compromise can harm individuals and national development and whose recognition can advance a state. True, educational provisions that focus on human rights, justice, social justice etc can be helpful for the emancipation and transformation of a people but more importantly a frame that can contain all these and other humane and moral concepts that make for harmonious human existence is education that is focused on democracy. The expositions of the ideals of democracy through education have towering implications for national reconstruction, which 21st century Nigeria seriously needs.

A revelation which the foregoing exposes is that education, in addition to being a veritable institution for molding and remolding citizens and institutions is also a foundation upon which societies can overhaul their old practices, instill new values, new orientations and beliefs supportive of progressive and sustainable human development. This may have accounted for why Nwaokugha (2011) pointed out that there is hardly any society which dreams of innovations that does not appeal to the powers of education in any of its forms for the realization of such predetermined goals.

These pass marks on education and what education is capable of doing can in the best interest of humanity, specifically be extended to providing education for democracy, which globally has been acknowledged to have an edge over other forms of government, but whose regrettable absence in many states can disastrously affect the quality of the lives of people in such states. It is no exaggeration that lack of knowledge of the principles and workings of democracy can dwarf states both at the local, national and international levels and the knowledge of the principles and workings of democracy can have implications for national reconstruction and national development especially in those states which have experienced colonialism, internal colonialism prolonged military rule and its associated bad governance. In multi ethnic and multi religious states like Nigeria, democracy can be beneficial in bringing about stability and development that can bring about reconstruction and the promotion of national development. The need for educational provision that is deep rooted in democracy, democratic norms and principles has become serious and urgent because the footprint of undemocratic behaviours and practices in one state has disastrous global implications for humanity generally. In this paper a case will be made for a deep rooted educational provision in democracy with emphasis on its implications for national reconstruction in Nigeria.
1.1 Background Information

What is known today as Nigeria is a creation of western imperialism (Orji 2011). Prior to the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates in 1914 by the British colonial administration, there were nations which were autonomous and independent of one another in both the Southern and Northern protectorates. This amalgamation brought about the entity called Nigeria. The reason why Nigeria is a multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic state derives from this amalgamation and a worrisome development which has resulted from this is that instead of this amalgamation and its associated multi-linguistic and multi-cultural fallouts to be sources of unity, it has turned out to make Nigeria a boiling theatre for social conflicts and crises. So many mutually unintelligent linguistic groups, different cultures, different religious sects and recent awareness especially by the minorities of the institutionalization of the culture of violence on one hand and government’s and individual’s acts of militancy and the militarization of the environment easily fans and propels the embers of political and religious crises in Nigeria. These also increase the formation of movements which consistently agitate for social, economic and environmental justice. All these combine to heat up the polity and pose social and security challenges to individuals and the Nigerian state.

It is important one notes that the British was armed and guided by a philosophy of hegemony and economic exploitation in their colonial mission in Nigeria. As a way of achieving this ulterior motive, the British colonial masters neutralized whatever political and administrative instruments developed by the peoples of Nigeria and imposed upon them an entirely foreign and alien political and administrative system which, the peoples have not mastered up till today. True, that the British in their colonial mission in Nigeria exclusively focused attention on the economic exploration of the people implies that the British did not bequeath to Nigerians any sustainable political culture for nation building and national reconstruction nor did they develop the political cultures they met, which conveniently served the peoples of Nigeria. The meaning of this is that at independence in 1960, Nigeria simply inherited and sustained a not-too-well or not-too-orderly and not-too-well articulated political culture. The truth about this can be seen in the incidents that led to the first coup of January 15, 1966, which up till the present democratic dispensation has not left Nigeria.

True to itself the political class which succeeded the British colonial administration reproduced and replicated the philosophy which guided the British in their colonial mission in Nigeria namely economic exploration and amassment of the wealth of the people in more draconian ways so much that many Nigerians regretted independence. What was very much visible was a new brand of colonialism, this time indigenous colonialism initiated and spearheaded by the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the West and the Igbo in the East over other Nigerians.

The foregoing state of affairs, in addition to promoting ethnic consciousness and religious bigotry skyrockets value systems which undermine national unity and national reconstruction. These behaviours threaten national unity and propel the embers of national disintegration, coupled with the fact that a sustainable political culture that is a trademark for reckoning on global development as well as a necessary foundation for economic prosperity can elude Nigeria if Nigerians do not attempt to reappraise the situation. In fact at every moment in the history of Nigeria, ethnic consciousness is usually projected among ethnic groups so much that the ethnic group from where the president, the governor and a local government area chairman comes from enjoys unlimited access in the appointment of persons of his own ethnic extraction into key government positions and similarly siting of government project maintain similar outlooks. This ethnic biased mindset is responsible for the building of such infrastructure as bridges on lands when riverine and delta communities

that naturally need bridges are without them. Ethnicity is also a determinant factor in the sitting of public institutions and provision of social amenities by the government.

One glaring case that shows the instrumentality of ethnicity in the body polity of Nigeria is in the area of creation of states, local government areas and wards. In Nigeria ethnicity has given rise to the creation of some non-viable states that solely depend on federal allocations for survival when some geopolitical zones which naturally ought to have been divided into more states in view of the abundance of human and material resources in them are denied opportunities of becoming states simply because those resident or located in such geopolitical zones do not have people of their own ethnic extraction in government. Again it is only in Nigeria that two states with almost the same population will drastically differ and vary in the number of local government areas in the two states. Every Nigerian knows that ethnicity is at the root of the monumental difference in the number of local government areas in Kano and Lagos States. Kano State has 44 local government areas while Lagos State has 20 even when the two states have almost the same population (Nwaokuhga 2006, Aboluwodi 2001). Ethnicity is also responsible for Bayelsa State having the least number of local government areas, (eight in all) when states which has almost the same population as it has have more local government areas. The underlined reason or motivation for leader in Nigeria to favour their ethnic groups in terms of number of states, local government areas and wards is that the more states, local government areas and wards one gives to his ethnic homeland, the more federal revenues he injects into his own ethnic zone.

Nigerians are aware and are witnesses to the trickle-down effect of ethnicity in the activities of every public office holder as every public office holder capitalizes and harps on ethnicity to circumvent the normal process of running public institutions. This in a way has introduced into the Nigerian political process such lexicon as “this is the turn of this and that ethnic group or zone”. A fallout of this is ugly trend is that public office holders from such zones or ethnic groups are seen as having been licensed, authorized and empowered to loot the state treasury and are taken as failures should they not loot (Nwaokuhga, Nyewusira and Nyewusira 2013), because it is the turn of their ethnic group or zone. In this permutation, every ethnic group or zone is on a red alert not to be outwitted in the orgy of economic and political criminality in Nigeria and it is on this note that Fashina (1998) writes that ethnic, linguistic or cultural groups compete for power and resources in Nigeria.

A contradictory feature in Nigeria’s ethnicity dominated national life is that whereas commoners or ordinary citizens in the various ethnic groups get drunk and intoxicated in the euphoria of having someone of their own ethnic extraction in power, it is those persons in power, their direct relations and friends that rule, enjoy and corruptly enrich themselves from the public treasury. Yet these commoners who are oppressed and exploited by members of their own ethnic groups are according to Fashina (1998) “called upon to line behind their exploiters, against other oppressed people who have never come into conflict with them”.

These manipulative skills of the various ethnic and national leaders in Nigeria help to plant seeds of discord, which make conflict in the Nigerian environment a constant and a reoccurring variable that both the super and average Nigerian cannot do without. A worrisome trend which emerges out of this is that these conflicts are those that cannot move a state forward, rather they are those that stagnate states and their people and more disastrously lead to violence. That people in leadership positions in Nigeria understand conflict and violence as articles of faith for their success in government suggests that the Nigerian state, far from being a bystander (Alanamu 2004) and a watcher in issues of conflict and violence that have been adequately entrenched in the psyche of Nigerians – be they political, religious and social are partisan.

Because conflicts and violence have unfortunately become legitimate ways of expressing grievances, many cities in Nigeria have become theatres of war with attendant reprisal attacks by ethnic groups that suspect they were targets of earlier attacks. The
implication of this is that the security of Nigerians in Nigeria has become suspect and the loss of persons in these violence and conflict situations predict doom for Nigeria’s national development and the reputation of Nigeria in the eyes of the international community can be grossly dwarfed.

These retrogressive values bequeathed to Nigeria by both her military and civilian leaders presently prompt what has come to be known as the “national question” in Nigeria’s national life as a way of avoiding further problems and solving the numerous self inflicted wounds it is presently facing. National question according to Fashina (1998) is usually understood as a question about how it is possible for “ethnic group” or “nations” to associate or coexist in a political union. This means at the heart of national question are such fundamental issues as sharing of power and privileges among the federating units that make up a state, distribution of resources among the various tiers of government, best practices for accommodating issues arising out of burdens due to resource exploitation on one hand and effective mechanism for compensation, human rights issues and ethnic and religious issues among others. This means that national question incorporates arrangement of society in ways that afford opportunity for discussing how the various ethnic groups that make up a state can come to a round table for resolving critical issues and forging workable strategies for the harmonious and sustainable development of a state and its people.

Any patriotic and sincere Nigerian who is committed to helping Nigeria overcome her problem presently and in the future can quickly initiate a platform for a national reconciliation as the best alternative for addressing problems in Nigeria. By national reconstruction we simply mean consciously mapped out strategies through which a people or a state attempts to rebuild or recreate itself in readiness for achieving greater and higher political, economic and human capacity development potentials.

In a way, national reconstruction is usually a post conflict phase in the history of a people and by post-conflict phase we mean that national reconstruction follows a crisis regime where a people or a state tries to struggle to evolve new economic, social and political behaviours upon which a state or a people can fast track development in all ramifications. This attempt tries to show sharp departure from the events of the past and targets to reposition a people or a state for better conditions than they were prior to the conflict and crisis regime. In other words a people or a state that are desirous of national reconstruction may have passed through phases which have stagnated their development so much they become laughing stock to themselves and to their neighbours. The urge for a national reconstruction is therefore a wake up call for such a state or people to jettison their old practice and embrace new ways of thinking that can bring transformation to them.

A culture which the emerging political behaviour as characterised by ethnicity has introduced and sustained in Nigeria ranged from one of corruption, tribalism to nepotism which has helped to make, caricature of Nigeria in comity of disciplined and civilized states. The “ideal Nigerian” is one who has been neck deep in the culture of vice and shows interests in the celebration of mediocrity and total abhorrence of the virtues of hard work, honesty, truthfulness, equity and justice. The absence of such virtues can be demonstrated in the fact that Nigeria has produced leaders after leaders since independence who claims to have the interests of the poor masses at heart but who turn out to be worse than the persons they succeeded in office. What has been the aftermath of these have been Nigeria’s prominence in rankings that have to do with vice and evil. As recent as the year 2000, Nigeria was ranked the most corrupt nation in the world and recently ranked number fifteen among the failed nations of the world (Abogunrin 2012). Bad governance coupled with the hardship that comes with it has caused Nigerians to indulge and be notorious in high profile crimes like drug pushing, human trafficking, internet fraud, business fraud, importation of fake drugs, smuggling etc (Abogunrin 2012).
These embarrassing behaviours are contrary to the fact that Nigeria is practically self sufficient in mineral resources (Joseph 1995) so much that that it can sufficiently and comfortably survive on natural resources that Almighty God generously bequeathed to the country, yet corruption and bad leadership have rendered the Nigerian economy useless so much that Nigeria’s teeming population is forced to live below standard (Magstadt 2003).

It has become self evident that crises, conflicts, instability and formation of social movements which presently characterize Nigeria in recent times derive from the awareness and realization that Nigeria is structured on a frame that is devoid of justice in any of its forms. The result of this awareness has been the acceptance of ethnic nationalism and ethnic consciousness as acceptable norms in Nigeria. Generally, these behaviours are great threats to national unity and national development. True, in Nigeria internal suspicion is high among citizens of its federating units and because of this attitude, conflicting assessments are easily passed on Nigeria.

Those who see Nigeria from a positive angle maintain that Nigeria is a colossus and by all known yardsticks remains a force to be reckoned with in the third world and the global community generally (Emenyonu 1994). Those who maintain this augment hold absolute faith in Nigeria as a country that is divinely bestowed with greatness and repeatedly point and echo in unionism that the clutches in which Nigeria limps in presently can become history if Nigeria embarks on a radical process of exploiting the ideals of democracy.

The exploration of the ideals of democracy has implications for national reconstruction in 21st century Nigeria. What has made national reconstruction a topmost priority in 21st century Nigeria is that sentiments which promote regionalism, tribalism, ethnic and tribal wars and other behaviours that are capable of fanning the embers of disintegration presently find their ways into Nigeria’s official state policies. These unhealthy developments have the possibilities of dividing or sinking Nigeria as well as lowering the towering status of Nigeria in comity of states. On the other hand some highly respected critics and personalities observe that Nigeria is a good example of a state that is at war against itself. Achebe (1983) describes Nigeria as one of the most disastrously corrupt, insensitive, inefficient and disorderly nations under the sun. A closer examination of Achebe’s (1983) portrayal of Nigeria can be in the same realm with that of Prof. Patrick Wilmot, a Jamaican born sociologist who was a one time lecturer at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, (Ekwueme and Nsirim 2010) who sees Nigeria especially its policies as a bundle of contradictions, hence Nigeria according to him travels in reverse gear, in addition to being so virulent, cancerous and contagious so much that if Nigeria is a scrap, scrap dealers will never have anything to do with Nigeria because Nigeria is fundamentally flawed. This suggests that many Nigerians lack the nationalistic flavor which a country of its composition needs for survival. Supporters of this position strongly maintain that Nigeria is a unilateral colonial creation. To justify the above, a state of hopelessness, anger and pessimism dominate the Nigerian environment and are so entrenched in the faces of Nigerians so visible that virtually all regions and ethnic nationalities sponsor militant and militia groups that speak for them (Aminigo and Nwaokugha 2010). In all these, one thing is sure. Practices in Nigeria have consistently and persistently supported the legacies and philosophies of colonialism. This claim is self-evident because the various peoples of Nigeria live under a siege mentality which the powers that be have fostered on the people and sustained same by force of arms. (Achebe, 1983, Joseph, 1995 and Udoidem, 2006).

As no people takes life threatening issues with ease (Johnston 1994), Nigerians have developed corresponding behaviour to Nigeria. Many persons within Nigeria and in Diaspora content that the unpatriotic behaviour of Nigerians to Nigeria derives from the attitudes of Nigeria to Nigerians. Thinkers in this frame of mind maintain that most Nigerians are unpatriotic simply because leaders in Nigeria have failed to live above board (Achebe 1983). This is where those who claim that the unfortunate and avoidable pains
Nigeria suffers are self inflicted can be right. Regrettably where the leadership mess in Nigeria is most worrisome is that Nigeria betrays not only itself but those who see it as a mouth piece for Africa and the Black race (Emenyonu 1994). However, there is a direction for surmounting Nigeria’s general problems and through that way bequeaths a sustainable future to unborn generations of Nigerians. That direction is providing education in democracy. An educational provision that focuses on democracy promises a radical transformative and regenerative process of reconstruction in Nigeria.

1.2 The Concept of Democracy

Etymologically democracy is derived from two Greek words *demos* meaning people and *kratia* meaning power, which simply translates as sovereignty belongs to the people or power belongs to the people. The above has popularized democracy as “government of the people, by the people and for the people”. In recent times scholars define democracy in different ways. Berge (1994) defines democracy as some legitimate and orderly ways of placing and replacing the people making the laws and wielding the powers of the state. Eboh (2001) defines democracy as a system of government which upholds self rule, in addition to recognizing the rights and duties of a people who collectively and willingly take the responsibility to control their own institutions for their maximum benefit. A democracy according to Shively (2005) is a state in which all fully qualified citizens vote at intervals to choose from among the candidates, the people who will be in charge of setting the policies of the state while Almond, Powell (Jr), Strom and Dalton (2006) define democracy as a political system in which citizens enjoy several basic civil and political rights and which their important political leaders are elected in a free and fair election and are accountable under the law. According to Oyekan (2009) democracy from a Lockean view can be seen as a contract between a people and the government.

In addition to the above, there are scholars whose attempts at defining democracy involve an identification of different contexts in which the term democracy can be used. One of such scholars is Bassiouni (1998). According to him the term democracy can be used in three different ways namely; democracy as a process, democracy as a state or condition and democracy as an outcome.

According to him democracy as a process revolves around all stages, strategies and permutations involved in the practice of politics which is the livewire of democracy from political organizations to elections. Democracy as a state or condition focuses on the availability of enabling norms and environments for the smooth practice of democracy. It is self evident that environments which support activities of civil societies, equality, free press and formation of opinion is a fertile ground for democracy while democracy as outcome is the extent in which human needs are met in a democracy. The point here is that there is a consensus that the motivation for any democracy is development and democracy as outcome is simply the developmental expectations of a people in a democracy.

In his own words Villoro (1998) contends that democracy is used in two ways namely democracy as an ideal of political association and democracy as a system of government. A meaning embedded in his first classification of democracy is power of a people in an association, community or state to evolve and execute decisions reached by them. A feature of an association, community or state where democracy is the norm is the absence of marginalization or domination by any group of persons over others. Every member of the association, community or state must contribute and participate in the decision making process and governance of the state or community while his second classification of democracy focuses on institutions and rules upon which a system of power rests. In other words democracy as a system of government recognizes fundamental features which make the practice of a democracy in a state possible and such fundamental features
which enhance the practice of democracy include equality of citizens before the law, ability of citizens to elect their leaders, relying on the majority to arrive at decisions, separation of power and respecting and according civic rights to citizens.

Fundamentally, democracy is a universal ideal but in practical terms it is context specific. This is why democracy admits such nomenclatures as Greek democracy, western capitalist or socialist democracy, western liberal or majority rule democracy and African consensus democracy (Eboh 1996, 2001). However in all these democracies, freedom for the people who claim to be practising democracy is one single thread that unites all cultures where democracy is practised. In all these cultures, democracy can operate directly or indirectly through representatives of the people. That democracy admits this mode of operation leaves rooms for people who practice it to marry it with their own cultural institutions and the meaning here is that democracy anywhere it is practised must reflect the way of life of the people who practice it.

A thing of interest about democracy especially as “government of the people by the people and for the people” is an implied acknowledgement that all persons cannot rule at the same time hence it becomes reasonable that the masses collectively and voluntarily give their united consent and support in the form of transferring and mandating a few chosen individuals to periodically rule over them in accordance with the collective vision and aspiration of the people. The above shows that for the wishes of the people to be communicated to the few, whom they have given their consent and mandate, there must be constant dialogue between the leaders and the led and both the leaders and the led must have a reasonable level of education or enlightenment. Education or enlightenment is particularly important for the masses to enable them to critically produce ideas that can help all and sundry to radically and revolutionarily reposition the state. Providing this enlightenment for the masses can provide a strong base for sustaining a sustainable bottom up paradigm which is always healthy for a democracy.

It can be said that the above embodies moral principles which account for the success of democracy and it is on account of the dividends of these moral principles of democracy that democracy has become synonym for civilized polity (Eboh 2001) and a universally recognized practice (Massub 1998), the principle upon which to build the new world order (Eboh 1996), an autonomous value and an important component of several ideologies (Kubiak 1998), offering opportunities for free debates and informed choices (Mor 1998) and the most popular form of government today in the world, which projects states as being good and admissible into comity of nations (Oyekan 2009).

In keeping with the above values which are considered to be humane for human development, democracy promotes development and economic growth. The reason why this is so is that the environment democracy creates challenges individuals and institutions to harness their potentials by creating and exploiting opportunities and the more opportunities and the willingness of individuals and their institutions to exploit them, the better for man and his institutions in terms of development. Again investors are always attracted to invest in states with durable and stable democratic history due to the openness which individuals and institutions enjoy in their dealings. That these results due to democracy means that unemployment and youth restiveness which are threats to democracy and human development can be effectively and systematically checked in a democracy and democratic regime.

Again people are favourably disposed to democracy because it is deep-rooted in moral rationality especially its ability to promote and accommodate equality and plurality. The twin moral terms of equality and plurality can be taken as the nucleus or heart beat of democracy especially in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious states. In the moral frame of equality and plurality, democracy projects what humanity shares in common (Touraine 1998), and respectfully and honourably makes cases for individuals to be
different. In a democracy civil societies and non governmental organizations wield so much influence without eroding the supremacy of the state and its institutions.

What is imperative about democracy is that its success hinges on its ability to provide opportunities for the fulfillment and self actualization of all humanity in the forms of granting fundamental freedoms and rights but such fundamental freedoms and rights must have limits. The essence of limiting the fundamental freedoms and rights guaranteed by democracy is to institutionalize a culture where consideration can be for one and all in issues of common concern to all humanity.

Democracy in all its ramifications survives through the involvement and participation of all the people who identify with it and its values and these democratic processes unfold through politics and the votes of the people. This is why scholars contend that people are the engine block of democracy. Whatever norms, ideas or institutions that democracy is identified with cannot on their own become any thing without people, implying that democracy in all its ramifications is a term that focuses on people and any sustainable survival of democracy must hold people in high esteem. It is in recognition of the high priority which democracy has for people that it has been established that the dividends of democracy are not fundamentally the building of roads, schools, hospitals or any other social infrastructure but the participation and contribution of a people in their governance. It is the exploration and projection of these that makes democracy unique both as a system of government and as a way of life of a people and gives credit to the saying that in a true democracy power to decide the direction and policies of governments lies with the citizens and the power for the implementation of such decisions resides with the leaders.

We have stated above that universally freedom is a core value in a democracy but the freedom which democracy tolerates according to Dienye and Nwaokugha (2011) frowns at all forms of morbid radicalism, irrationality and irresponsibility. The meaning here is that whoever aspires to enjoy the freedom that is tolerated and guaranteed by democracy must be respectful and responsible to the highest degree of the word. Becoming respectful and responsible in this sense implies that one must be highly polite and moral in claiming and safeguarding his rights and privileges and at the same time leave space for others to claim and safeguard their own rights and privileges. One will be denied his freedom in a democracy if one hides under the cover of the freedom which democracy provides to make slanderous and libelous remarks against people and institutions (Dienye and Nwaokugha 2011). Such behavior amounts to abuse of freedom and is what Ebo (2001) condemns when she writes that democracy is not excessive freedom and it is not do-as- you-like, suggesting that democracy demands from its practitioners and advocates standards which uphold the demonstration of high moral rationality and acceptable conducts in all dealings and endeavours.

Other moral principles which win for democracy the admiration of the global community are that it develops and equips its practitioners with the capacity to tolerate self criticisms and the ability to reform itself from such self criticism and democracy adequately and maximally protects the interests and rights of the minority. Democracy accommodates compromises from its practitioners as well as creates rooms for correction of any observed abnormality in the political machinery of the state. Democracy as a political system develops in citizens the capacity to showcase their leadership potentials, in addition to winning honour and dignity for the electors and their elected representatives (Dienye and Nwaokugha 2011).

In fact the beauty of democracy lies in the fact that it allows people with different cultural dispositions to harmoniously live together. Why this is so is that democracy restricts the powers of powerful individuals or those of the state, makes provisions for institutions and social order for addressing any issue of injustice or marginalization and creates awareness in citizens on how to exploit those institutions and social order in addition to empowering those who practice it to continuously exert control over their government. This control which
people enjoy in a democracy is in the form of participating in choosing, forming and deciding the trends and policies of a government. This means power in a democracy is rooted and derives from the people. That power is rooted and derives from the people implies that democracy respects the worth and dignity of the individual person. Respect for the individual person is hinged on core and basic foundations of democracy namely the supremacy of the rule of law, separation of power, promotion of human rights and basic freedom for all and upholds the tenets of equality. In fact respect for the wishes of the majority without unduly compromising the rights of the minority constitutes the livewire of any democracy and democratic experiment.

Again democracy survives through periodic free and fair elections as well as through conflicts it generates. Because democracy generates conflicts, it also has in-built internal mechanisms for resolving such conflicts. In the same way as it has internal mechanisms for addressing internally generated conflicts, democracy has manifest and latent abilities for the self destruction of a people or state without employing or appealing to any form of hostility. This basically arises because of its absolute reliance on the majority.

The above suggests that democracy is not a bed of roses. It has long been acknowledged that democracy as a system of government is the most difficult and the most problematic form of government (Massuh 1998, Oyekan 2009). The problem and difficulty in democracy derives from the fact that as a system of government which principally upholds the wishes of the majority, democracy easily accepts and accommodates wrongs and vices resulting from the ignorance of the mob, who in most cases usually constitute the majority. From a different perspective majority rule promotes the tyranny of the majority especially when the majority is principally constituted by a dominant class, religion or political persuasion (Magstadt 2003), whose activities can be a threat to the interests of the minorities in the state. The universal acceptance that democracy is relative (Eboh 2001) creates confusion which makes the promotion of democracy from one state to another difficult. This is what Rouke and Boyer (2004) pointed out when they write that “it is not always clear what is democratic and what is not”. It is on account of this confusion that Dienye and Nwaokugha (2011) write that among states practising democracy, there is always unnecessary antagonism among them which results in one accusing the other of not practising pure democracy just because what one prioritizes in his conception of democracy is missing in what the other prioritizes.

Democracy in states which do not have properly defined and established state structures is easily turned into a force for weakening and destroying the necessary foundations for nation building, first by the given few who are opportune to be at the helm of affairs and secondly by the opposition elements whose activities very seriously and disastrously pose security threats to the authority of the state. Common sense especially in developing democracies shows that tribes and regions which have elites that constitute the majority and are more politically conscious than the others often use their privileged political positions to advance their tribe or region by marginalizing and dominating the other tribes and regions. Too many cases of marginalization and domination of the minorities (especially in Nigeria) have in most cases raised agitations that provoked the minorities to withdraw their loyalty to the state by seeking alternative basis for their own nationhood (Beetham 1998). Consequently practices which are unhealthy for the growth of democracy – corruption, abuse of human rights, lawlessness, ethnicity and tribalism easily become norms in such states. This is in addition to citizens manifesting acts of indifference and authoritarianism at the same time.

Democracy as a system of government is capital intensive and suffers hardships and setbacks in states where poverty and illiteracy are norms. The implications of poverty and illiteracy for democracy are that the development of democratic institutions for the sustainable growth and development of democracy are rarely given priority attention in the
budgetary provisions of the state. That this is the case gives rise to the manipulation of the poor by the rich and the educated class in which the poor uphold the ideas of the rich and the educated class as against their own. In present democracies the poor and the illiterate are manipulated through adverts, guided opinion polls, commercials and this makes non-senses of the idea of freedom of the people which is a cardinal value in a democracy and democratic regime.

True, democracy opens up a state for investments but the penetration of multinational corporations into a state vanishes the voices of the citizens in political and economic decisions which have direct bearing on the quality of lives of the citizens but shifts such decisions to multinational corporations and their home government (Johnston 1994) whose modus operandi least considers the interests of ordinary citizens of the state, suggesting that democracy creates rooms for fraud, domination and other unethical behaviours. In fact contrary to it being “government of the people by the people and for the people”, those who rule in a democracy according to Oyekan (2009) are the government and the bureaucracies and not the people. This results in state induced poverty and powerlessness of the people and this powerlessness heavily rears its ugly head during the emergence of candidates for elections and elections proper so much that the powers that be, through their financial strengths manipulate the entire process against the wishes of the people.

As political parties are the vectors of democracy, political parties are also the Achilles of democracy in most states (Boye, 1998). This is because activities of political parties are capable of derailing and truncating any democracy. In most democracies especially in developing countries political parties are formed along ethnic and tribal lines and most of these political parties lack what it takes to form a national government in addition to lacking finances with which to fund their activities and find their rhythms in the state. The result is that political parties as determinant forces in sustaining democracy are also instrumental forces in destroying and destabilizing democracy. This principally occurs when one political party wins and in Africa and other developing democracies where unholy and unrighteous dispositions to dominate, marginalize and silent opposition political parties quickly produce corresponding response, which, produces alliance of opposition political parties whose targets are always to derail, truncate and cut short democracies and democratic regimes by violent means or direct invitation of the military.

The activities of political parties in sustaining and destroying democracy is a serious case especially in Nigeria and other African countries where mainly one political party despite claims of multi-party system seems to be active and super from the grassroot to the national level. The domination of one political party in a polity introduces undemocratic and unholy elements which kill and stifle internal democracy in political parties and party politics. Recent political developments in Nigeria where five governors, members of both national and state assemblies, commissioners and local government chairmen of the ruling party defected to opposition political parties speak volume of problems of internal democracy in political parties in Africa and the near autocracy and undemocratically super human behaviours which certain elements in the parties introduce. The recent political developments in Nigeria are instructive as they demonstrate how the activities of political parties can stabilize or destroy democracy.

Developments of this nature may not be bad entirely as they can result in the sustenance of democracy and democratic culture especially where the players of the game are sincerely and genuinely committed to making lasting sustainable and innovative democratic progress. On the other hand such developments can spell doom where such party politics is only targeted at the selfish and greedy ends of the players and awareness of this on the part of the masses who had submitted to the state on contractual terms and who having patiently waited in vain for the dividends of democracy may resort to rebellion and other forms of lawlessness as legitimate ways of registering their anger and the extent of betrayal
the players in the political arena and the state had shown to them. This seems to be the root cause of the instability and retrogression that characterize most African states.

Developmentally, the unfolding of these political drama can serve as wake up calls to institutions of the state that are interested in uplifting, defending and sustaining party democracy to enviable heights to re-strategize in their efforts to sensitize and conscientize the masses in readiness to proffering solutions and addressing challenges that may arise in the course of a state practising democratic politics.

The foregoing revelations about democracy are particularly instructive especially in the context of the background earlier provided about Nigeria. Hence any keen and curious observer can correspond the above by asking questions bordering on the extent in which the diverse ethnic nationalities that constitute Nigeria dialogue on key national issues on how to reconstruct Nigeria, the sincerity or otherwise of Nigerians in participating in politics which is the heartbeat of democracy, the ability of politicians and the brand of democracy practised in Nigeria to admit self corrections that could lead to the resolution of mountain of problems in Nigeria whose resolution can bring about the much talked about development that comes with democracy, the relationship between powerful and majority ethnic groups in Nigeria and the minority ethnic groups and most importantly whether democracy in Nigeria makes allowance for addressing injustices and marginalization which presently threatens the unity and sovereignty of the Nigerian state. Attempts to provide answers to all the above can be in the negative. In all honesty, the fraud on democracy in Nigeria is so visible so much that a blind man can notice it.

Anya (2008) fearlessly states after examining the 2007 general elections in Nigeria that no government in Nigeria has legitimacy on the basis of the people’s mandate and Almond et al (2006) write that in Nigeria, a democratic leaning regime installed in 1979 was overthrown by a military coup in 1983 and a precarious civilian regime was only reestablished in 1999 but Dienye and Nwaokugha (2011) write that even a careless observer can observe that all is still not well because according to Magstadt (2003) Nigeria’s fragile new experiment with democratic rule remains in grave jeopardy due to a recurring circle of internal, ethnic and religious conflicts. The totality of it all is that democracy and democratic regime in Nigeria, following Fagbadebo (2007) suffers from vicious circle of instability that threatens her existence.

However all the foregoing expositions on democracy reveal that democracy is unique and the uniqueness of democracy is that it survives on paradoxes and a people can achieve the best for themselves out of democracy when they consciously learn and master the modes of operation of a democracy. Learning and mastering the modes of operation of democracy can enhance and facilitate a people’s desire for national reconstruction which democracy has capabilities to bring to fruition. This is where refocusing education and continuous education for a people are necessary conditions for exploring the emancipatory, developmental and right asserting potentials that are usually associated with democracy.

3. DISCUSSIONS

There are numerous environmental conditions which enhance a people’s enjoyment of the dividends of democracy and the democratic life and the extent in which a people masters how to create the necessary environments that promote democracy and democratic life the better for them. Democracy and democratic life is best promoted in an environment where opportunities for education, social integration, mass mobilization and mass awareness are created. Environments where these have become norms can easily adjust and handle major and minor conflicts, which are basic features of man and his society. Common sense shows that conflicts are inevitable and no society can advance without open conflicts (Boye 1998), because conflicts arise due to the presence of two or more persons and society and
human nature being what they are, two or more persons must have opposing interests over a particular thing. It follows that the extent in which a people generates conflicts, the better for their democracy and the extent in which they resolve such conflicts are indicative of the quality of education, mobilization and awareness among the citizens. In a way the more positive conflicts a people have, the more they are able to explore mechanisms in democracy especially the ability of democracy to correct and address its own internal inconsistencies and conflicts. The degree and quality of conflicts a people has have implications for their democracy and the sustenance of democratic life among a people. In all honesty, these and the enabling environments that accompany them can be traced to the quality of education and training available to a people.

Democracy survives where there are political parties and indeed the existence of political parties serve both as litmus and vectors for measuring democracy and the durability of any political and representative democracy. The reasons why political parties serve as egghead in democracy and representative democracy are that in addition to being the fundamental instrument and vehicle upon which individuals and groups wrestle themselves into public office through elections which must be transparent, free and fair, political parties serve as springboards for generating and promoting ideas which governments, present and future can sustainably rely on for overseeing the complex act of statecraft. These are in the forms of providing platforms upon which groups or individuals can make their inputs in the smooth and effective governance of the state, express their general enchantment or disenchantment with government policies, actions and inactions. Again political parties afford opportunities for assembly or army of like-minded people whose influence and ideas on political issues can be healthy assets and legacies for any democracy and democratic regime.

In the same way as political parties are the heartbeats of democracy, democracy survives and makes in-roads in societies where Non-Governmental Organizations have stronghold. This is so because Non-Governmental Organizations give democracy a mission and a vision by prioritizing and revolving round universal issues which uphold the dignity of man such as the promotion of human rights and protection of humanitarian law (Boye 1998) as well as sensitizing and conscientizing mankind on issues which are of common interests to humanity, promoting the lawful interests of groups and spearheading cases that target the protection of the fundamental freedoms of people especially the down trodden and the voiceless in the society. That Non-Governmental Organization help to sensitize people on issues which have positive implications for democracy helps to make an environment conducive for the promotion and survival of democracy.

It is necessary to state that Non-Governmental Organizations whose activities are conducive to promoting democracy are those that are institutionalized, autonomous and independent of the powers that be of states. Non-Governmental Organizations that are linked to the state can be disastrously disabled in mission and vision in the discharge of their legitimate duties so much that their participation in issues of common interests to humanity can be seriously impaired.

Again any vibrant democracy and robust democratic regime must have a press that is free from unnecessary intimidation and harassment. This is essential in informing and reforming citizens of the trends of global and national politics and political events which are the livewire of a democracy. A free and un intimidated press stands both as a mouthpiece of the government and the governed as well as a link upon which the ideas of the political heavy weights and those of the light weights are disseminated. This is why it is always acknowledged that a free and unbiased press in a democracy expands choices and ideas and through this way brings awareness and mobilization which are fundamental for success in a democracy and a democratic regime.
Furthermore the success and vibrancy of any democracy and democratic regime hinges on the pool or cream of intellectuals or elites which a society practising democracy has. It is important we emphasize that for meaningful and sustainable development to be entrenched in any society such must depend on the sacrifice and perseverance of the intellectuals and elites of that given society to lay the necessary foundations for democracy, for it is upon those democratic foundations that other institutional developments that are conducive for democracy can depend. This is because it is the intellectuals and elites of any given society who generate ideas and conflicts and it is their dispositions towards translating these ideas and conflicts into workable actions and the ways they are resolved that advance democracy and put a state and its people on the radar of development. One must not ignore the fact that the path to developing these democratic values in the citizenry is good and responsive education that is capable of making the intellectuals assume a space from where they can intervene or operate so as to construct, reconstruct smoothen, repair or realign any broken chain in the democratic process of the state.

3.1 Education in democracy for achieving national reconstruction

It is no longer news that Nigeria is diverse in language, culture and religious practices which when appropriately utilized can be Nigeria’s sources of strength and greatness and it is no longer news that Nigeria is looked upon for leadership roles both in Africa and in the entire world. Unfortunately, rather than be a blessing, the multi ethnic, multi religious and multi linguistic composition of Nigeria has become sources of social and political upheavals that continuously harm the image of Nigeria. Common sense shows that ethnic and religious upheavals in Nigeria presently influence the mind-set of many Nigerians so much that majority of Nigerians think first of themselves and their ethnic nationality rather than thinking first of Nigeria. Because Nigerians have internalized this mindset, there is hardly any major ethnic nationality in Nigeria that does not have a militia group (Aminigo and Nwaokugha 2010) that claims to be the mouth of the people. Following this it may be correct to say that all the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria have lost confidence in the project called Nigeria and at the same time are suspicious of Nigeria. A signal for national unity and national cohesion in Nigeria therefore is a rigorous drive for national reconstruction through education in democracy. Curricular and pedagogical innovations can be sure ways of re-branding, rebuilding and reconstructing Nigeria.

A well focused education in democracy for achieving national reconstruction can focus on initiating and promoting dialogue among the diverse ethnic nationalities and make provisions for compromise as a way of resolving complex and delicate national issues. Dialogue among the various religious and ethnic nationalities suggests participation by the people which can help sensitize Nigerians on issues that are always considered to be sacred and “no-go” areas but are serious and focal in causing disunity and threatening the stability of the Nigerian state. Presenting and discussing such issues can provoke reflections on how best to approach and address such issues for Nigeria’s growth and development and provide ethnic nationalities the justifications for actions that seem to favour one ethnic group and disfavour the other but which are made in the best interest of all citizens of the state. Knowledge of those turbulent national issues through dialogue can promote peace and unity. The implications of the foregoing for national reconstruction is that possible suggestions from the various ethnic and religious group can beam searchlights on possible areas or actions that can promote national reconstruction.

To appreciate the values of dialogue and compromise especially when the majority has decided, an education in democracy for achieving national reconstruction can prioritize the learning and teaching of politics and political science. Not so many persons may know the powers of politics and political science in determining their fate and the fate of others
and their role in determining the political structure of the state (Aminigo and Nwaokugha 2009). Citizens should understand that the political structure of a state determines what happens in the state including the relationships between one ethnic group and the other, the relationship between the environment and the state and sharing of positions and resources. This knowledge, where appropriately internalized can create awareness where people can rest assured that their votes and the extent in which they mobilize members of their ethnic nationality can go a long way in influencing state policies in their favour without the barrel of the gun or any physical force. The implication here is that political awareness and show of political enthusiasm can be ready made mechanisms for determining the choice of a particular form of government that can bring or accelerate a people’s desire for national reconstruction.

The government can mount awareness campaign through education to sensitize and conscientize Nigerians on the need for Nigeria to claim her rightful and destined place in the global community. To this end, citizenship education can be packaged in a manner that it emphasizes accountability, honesty, truthfulness, justice, equity, social justice, patriotism, equality, diversity, rule of law, pursuit of happiness etc on one hand and the development of ethical obligations that make for enlightened and meaningful participation in the national life of one’s father land. Common sense shows that patterns of distribution, absence of accountability and show of total disregard and disrespect for the minority ethnic groups in Nigeria are focal areas that presently ignite problems in Nigeria. So the earlier they occupy centre stage in educational provision in Nigeria the better and brighter for Nigeria’s desire for national reconstruction. Again where citizenship education sensitizes citizens into participating in political and civil matters in Nigeria the more the wishes and aspiration of Nigerians find expressions in the policy objectives of Nigeria. As no one wishes himself evil, efforts at reconstructing Nigeria can become fruitful through the efforts of Nigerians.

Deriving from this, adequate educational provision for democracy with its concomitant reforms, sense of justice, equity and aura of positivity can ultimately have implications for national reconstruction, which on its own can be taken as a conscious and radical move for the evolution of sustainable policies and programmes for reforms in moral, political, economic, distributive and social reorganization of the body and structure of a state. An orientation towards national reconstruction must fundamentally be reformative and transformative so much that it incorporates both short and long term measures that can address and limit the occurrences of past threats and problems that brought about calls for national reconstruction. This means that a framework for national reconstruction must accommodate values targeted at sustainable moral, social, economic, political reorganization and rejuvenation where equity, justice, social security, productivity and mass participation of the citizenry shall be a state policy.

Consequently, education for democracy has direct and indirect implications for national reconstruction. Education for democracy can conscientize a people into recognizing that power belongs to them. This conscientization of a people can peacefully result in the reconstruction of a state “without the barrel of the gun or any physical force” (Nwaokugha, 2006) rather, through voting, courtesy of the ballot paper. This means that a show of interest and participation as against a show of apathy to the political process is a key to national reconstruction, where a people can determine for themselves what they want.

Education for democracy can prioritize comparative study of politics across state especially those states which have had political upheavals which resulted in their engineering frameworks for national reconstruction. While this is necessary, a state can compare its past and present political processes and developments with a view to establishing rates of successes or failures over such periods. In this way comparisons can provide frameworks and directions for national reconstruction. Education for democracy can create awareness on issues of political change and improvements in the quality of life of a people and how they
could occur can enable a people provide explanations and theories upon which to base their ideas for national reconstruction. Here education for democracy can enlighten a people on core issues that can constitute the cardinal focus of this new political arrangement, concepts and theories to guide state’s and individual’s relationships, individuals’ and individuals’ relationship, individual/state and institutions relationships with the environment which in recent times have been a major source of conflict and misunderstanding across states so as to sustainably institute peace, justice, fairness, equity and fraternity in the reconstructed state.

Education for democracy that is targeted at national reconstruction can in addition to identifying all the deep-seated inequalities and injustices laying siege on Nigeria develop curricular innovations and pedagogical strategies for proffering solutions on how to solve such problems. The implications of this for national reconstruction are that Nigerians can work towards building a better state by avoiding a repeat of past practices.

Above all, education for democracy must stress investments in human beings who will turn out to be the carriers of the genes of national reconstruction by prioritizing the development of informed and educated citizenry with sufficient strategies for the general empowerment of the people for the sustenance of democracy, democratic culture and the spirit of continuous national reconstruction. The implication of this is that only an enlightened and informed citizenry with sufficient economic powers, and not poverty stricken citizens can challenge the status quo and launch a revolution to contribute to the development of moral frameworks conducive for the sustenance of reforms inherent in the philosophy of democracy and national reconstruction.

4. CONCLUSION

Nigeria is battling with the disabilities which confronted her founding fathers so much that visible cracks have developed all over her body structure with Nigerians opting for reforms and reorganizations, which can only come about through national reconstruction. Like most modern states, Nigeria has faith in education as an instrument for solving her national problems. Nigeria’s aspirations to using education to solving her problems can be in two forms: as a tool for democratic perpetuation which can bring about national reconstruction and as an instrument par excellence for affecting national development. Any keen observer can observe that the mechanism for national development of any state is contained in the democratic process which boils down to leadership of the state, for it is only where there is a political will for national development that national development can come to fruition. To this end, education for democracy and its implications for national reconstruction has become a necessary prerequisite for solving Nigeria’s problems.

This paper therefore, has made a case that awareness on democracy, establishment of democratic institutions and mastery of democratic norms and values by citizens through conscious educational provisions rooted in democracy can equip citizens with the capacity to engineer national reconstruction and sustain it. Such education can among other things conscientize a people that in a democracy power resides with the people through the ballot paper. Such educational provisions can equip the people with the capacity for reflections on intra- and inter-comparative political and democratic analysis as potent raw materials and radar for progress and reforms and education for democracy targeted at national reconstruction must stress investments in human beings whose radical and revolutionary actions can contribute to sustaining reforms inherent in the philosophy of national reconstruction.
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