

Education and political restructuring in Nigeria: Perception of academics

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Abstract

The outcry for reorganization of state power in Nigeria has lingered over the decades. It experiences disagreement between advocates and those against this noble intent. This paper argued that political ignorance and private interests stand between the contending powers, as a stumbling block, for a consensus and considers political education as vital ingredient for compromise. The study investigated the perception of academics on the nexus between education and political restructuring of Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. The population of the study comprised 7,444 university lecturers in the South East geo-political zone. The sample was 125 lecturers selected through multi-stage sampling. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection while mean and standard deviation served for data analysis. Finding include that relevant education is needed for a successful political restructuring of Nigeria. Result also showed some differences in perceptions among academics on political restructuring. Political education is recommended as a workable option that needs to be extended to all citizens to make them contribute meaningfully to the political process, their development and that of Nigeria in general. Nigeria should be re-federalized to ensure the entrenchment of federal principles and practices among the existing six geo-political zones.

Keywords: Education, political restructuring, Nigerian education, perception of academics

Introduction

Education is the best legacy a nation can give to her citizens. It ensures all round development as an agent of change. The National Policy on Education (NPE) stipulates that Nigeria philosophy of education is based on the integration of an individual into a sound and effective citizen of Federal Republic of Nigeria (federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013). Education therefore, is the skillful process of bringing out the innate potentialities in an individual. It develops human endowments and aims at the development of the entire personality of an individual (Isichei and Olufowabi, 2003). It equips an individual to participate in the socio-political processes and contributions to the development of his society. Hence, in a democratic society, education is seen as a catalyst for change and an instrument for economic, technological and political development. The importance of education can thus, never be over emphasized.

For Forum (2007), education is important because it provides all knowledge to do any work in a systematic way. It is the milestone of every type of development. With education, a country can develop its economy and society. Well educated and informed populace often live contented and cultured lives, in harmony and calm. Education develops the personality of the youths of a nation. It makes people functional by providing a large number of skills. Education creates awareness in the population that makes them self-reliance and self-dependent. It also has the power to create stability and equality in different religions and peoples. Knowledge produced and acquired through education is the most vital and sustainable basis for

national and political development. Education can be worthwhile when it leads to all round development which makes one to contribute meaningfully to the development of oneself, the family, the society and the entire nation.

One pertinent question to ask is, “Does education of the 21st century guarantee all round development? Jegede (2002) observed that our nation is definitely at the crossroads. Nigeria has never been resourced as it is to solve all its educational needs and concerns with relative ease. Yet, the more we search for answers the more elusive the attainment of goals become. How can it be said that a nation which produces and sends its best brains to other countries struggle with how to find the road map to its educational Eldorado? Nigeria has more medical practitioners in the United Kingdom and the United States of America than all the medical doctors registered and practicing in Nigeria. Nigeria boasts of the best brains in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the world with 90 percent of them residing outside the country. Why do we perform so well outside the Nigerian environment? In Nigeria, the physical structures for education and the learning environment are far from being adequate. Shortage of suitable reading and instructional materials has been a perennial obstacle. There are shortage of teachers. The teachers form the fulcrum of the educational system and unless the educational system boasts of high quality teachers, the future of the system and indeed the country is t jeopardy. Education in Nigeria is underfunded as a result; facilities are grossly inadequate; projects are abandoned and salaries are not often paid. The hostels are not conducive for living, admission system is poor, quality of teaching is poor, and standard of discipline and sanctity of examinations are far from adequate (Eke, 2002). However, only a few individuals and non-

government organizations, may shout themselves hoarse, but policy makers and programme managers who are paid to take care of the public seem not sufficiently interested in what is going on in the education sector. Also, those elected by the people to manage the common good are not asking important questions. They are glossing over a creeping tragedy because they are somewhat immunized to the dangers of the present crisis. They have their children schooling in the best schools in Europe and the US, therefore the crisis of the millions who are denied quality education do not get to their ears (Amadi, 2002). There is a strong relationship between education and politics. Education trains political leaders and political leaders formulate policies for education; therefore, the two are inseparable. That is to say that a well structured political system will invariably lead to success in education as sound educational policies are likely to result from the strong and adequately informed political structure.

Efforts at restructuring Nigerian political system would be in vain if relevant education in all its ramification is excluded. The fact remains that no nation ever made its mark in the world map without relevant education as the fulcrum on which every other development hinges. Therefore political restructure without relevant education undoubtedly poses a lot of challenges to the society. Effective political restructuring of the society depends, to a large extent, on the relevance education gives to the citizens as political participants and leaders. The Nigerian nation has had a history in terms of political development, since she attained political independence. Expectations are high at this stage and age of nationhood. In the regime of Sir Arthur Richards as Governor General of colonial Nigeria (1946 – 1948), the Nigerian nation was split into three major regions politically. This political division was based mainly on the dominance of ethnic groups. In

1963, the then Western Region, dominated by Yoruba was further split into two, creating room for Mid-western Region. Each of the existing four regions (Northern, Eastern, Western and Mid-western) became the engine house for regional development especially in education, agriculture and politics. The crisis associated that with regional and federal elections in 1965 culminated in the military coup of January, 1966. Military governments lasted for thirty-three years (1966 – 1999) with a brief period of interregnum for four years (1979 – 1983) when the Shagari/Ekwueme civilian regime intervened.

Following the military take-over in 1966, the four existing regions were broken into twelve states. The major aim of the state creation by the army was essentially to break the strong powers of the regions and strengthen that of the federal government. Before the army formerly handed over power to the civilian government in 1999, many more states got created. Today, we have a total of 36 states accompanied by endless national crisis, problems and complexes traceable to religious, ethnic, political and economic issues. A retrospective appraisal of the nation's past sharply reveals that by what we have in Nigeria at present, the nation is fast heading towards chaotic abyss. The clarion call by informed Nigerians today for 'Restructuring' is, no doubt, predicated on this scenario. Nigeria should not be a paper giant of Africa, but an economic, political, stable, dynamic and development-driven nation.

Contrary to expectations, Nigeria's experiences so far have been quite traumatic, excruciating and challenging: and riddled with coups-de-tat and counter coups, a civil war, annulment of the most free and fair June 12 Presidential elections, social and economic strangulating policies and bad leadership, endemic corruption and grinding poverty, acute unemployment, religious

intolerance, hostage taking, militancy, terrorist attacks on innocent citizens by either Boko Haram or Fulani Herdsmen (Nwafor, 2011). There is no doubt that Nigeria seems to have not been having it good since the end of civil war in 1970. The country has moved from one problem to the other giving room for the citizens to live in fear. Insecurity has become the order of the day. Military politics in Nigeria began shortly after the end of the civil war. The excuse for military incursion into Nigeria's political arena was tied to General Yakubu Gowon's unwillingness to relinquish state power after the end of the civil war. Indeed, these political problems and many others have not only impacted negatively on Nigeria's developmental strides but have also dented the image of Nigeria abroad. Her citizens are subjected to thorough scrutiny, humiliating and embarrassing experiences outside the shores of Nigeria. Based on the foregoing, there is an urgent need for a radical restructuring in all spheres of our national life. In fact, a need for political reconstructing is inevitable at this critical stage. It seems that the political leaders are not versed with the relevant education needed for political restructuring.

Political Restructuring refers to an attempt to reorganize power structure for the component political unit and the country to serve the people better. In Nigerian instance, it aims at devolving political power from federal to state government or federating units so as to allow these units the opportunities for self-development and at the same time reduce the pressure on the federating authority and make it more effective by reducing its responsibilities. Nigeria is a multinational society coupled together by Britain as part of colonial and imperial rampart in the 19th century. The various communities coupled together in Nigeria were at various levels of societal development before

western invasion. Some of them were entrenched empires such as Kanem Borno. Most of the other Nigerian pre-colonial societies, on the other hand were in historical studies, dubbed as a cephalous entities, which were non-centralized and lacking in any serious statecraft appurtances. Among these were the Igbo segmental society, the Tiv, the Ebira and the other less centrally organized and smaller communities where kinship relations were important factors.

The issue of ethnic politics started with the 1964 elections in Nigeria when Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo man through his party NCNC won the election into Western Nigeria's house as the premier, but was denied of occupying the position because of the environment where this happened was predominantly Yoruba (Omotola, 2009). The subsequent developments led to crises which eventually ushered in the first military coup and counter coup of 1967 (Ayeni & Adeleye, 2013). Ethnic consciousness became intensified with the death of Major General Aguiyi Ironsi. The military administration of Gowon rode into limelight through an appeal to national sentiment that saw the northern elements leading the nation with claim that they were championing the corporate interest in Nigeria. The north was favoured in everything including developmental projects, giving room for Kano State to have 44 local governments while Lagos State has 20 even though the two states have nearly the same population. In demographic terms, the communities that came to comprise what is now known as Nigeria varied and are still varied in size; the big ones numbering in tens of millions of citizens such as the Hausa/Fulani (with not less than 67 million people) Yoruba (with not less than 40 million) and Igbo (with not less than 32 million people). In addition, some of these awkward practices (the killing of Ken Saro Wiwa and the eight Ogoni activists later

fueled the spate of ethnic groupings in Nigeria. This has led to the emergence of such groups as Odua People's Congress, Igbo Youth Council, Arewa People's Congress, Bakassi Boys, Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta and others. Kwaja (2012) posits that the post-colonial Nigerian State has become so entangled in ethnic and religious issues to the extent that its neutrality may not be easy to come by. Different challenges in the entire political and economic landscape in Nigeria began to rear their heads during the military era shortly after Aguiyi Ironsi was accused of introducing unitary system into the nation's political field. The succeeding military civilian administrations faked a federal system while in practice, they actually adopted unitary system. The unitary structure is reflected in the agitations that have come to accompany different policies of governments in the past and the present. At the core of the crisis of federalism is the acute poverty of consensus on how the deferral polity should be structured, power definition, contestation for power, revenue generated, right protection, mode of co-habitation and the larger democratic constitution. The Nigerian situation is not far from the crisis: a situation of social insecurity, engendered by youth restiveness political unrest, bad leadership, high rate of unemployment among others. Based on the foregoing, there is an urgent need for a radical political restructuring in all spheres of our national life. In fact, a need for political restructuring is inevitable at this critical stage hence the study.

Research questions

- (1) What are the relevant educational structures needed for political restructuring in Nigeria?

- (2) What are the perceptions of Academics concerning political restructuring in Nigeria?

Methodology

This is a descriptive survey carried out in all the universities in the South East Zone, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all the 7,444 university lecturers in the south east geopolitical zone (Okeke, 2018). The sample size was 125 lecturers. To compose the sample of the study, simple random sampling was used to select *five universities* out of private and state universities. In each of the five universities, five faculties were randomly selected. From each of the selected faculties, five departments were randomly selected. From each of the departments selected, simple random sampling was used to select five lecturers only. The instrument used in collecting data for the study was a researcher-constructed structured questionnaire, titled, education and political restructuring in Nigeria questionnaire (EPRNQ). The questionnaire had two parts, A and B. Part A sought information on selected aspects of personal data of the respondents. Part B had two sections, 1 and 2 which sought information on the structure of education needed for political restructuring in Nigeria. Section 1 contains 12 items while section 2 contained 10 items. The four-point Likert Scale response of Strongly Agree – SA, Agree – A, Disagree – D and Strongly Disagree – SD was adopted. The questionnaire was validated by three experts, two in the area of sociology of education at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and the other in measurement and Evaluation, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. They were requested to assess the items with regard to clarity and relevance, and their inputs were reflected in the final production of the questionnaire. The reliability of the questionnaire was

established through a test retest method on data obtained from 50 lecturers in a University in the South South geopolitical Zone. The reliability was calculated for each of the two sub sections to be 0.9 for the structure of Education and 0.8 for the perceptions of academics. These were considered as acceptable reliability indices. The administration of the questionnaire was done during the second semester, 2017/2018 academic session by the researchers with the help of fifteen (15) research assistants as it was considered that on the spot administration and collection of the questionnaire would enhance high return rate of the instrument from subjects. This paid off because all copies of the questionnaire distributed were retrieved. Analysis of data was done using mean and standard deviation. They were used to answer research questions. Based on the four point scale used in the study, the cut-off point for regarding mean scores as positive or negative was put at 2.50, with the decision rule that items with mean score of 2.50 and above should be regarded as having attracted positive responses or acceptance of proposed structure while items with mean scores below 2.50 would be regarded as having negative responses.

Results

Research question one:

What are the relevant education needed for political restructuring in Nigeria?

S/N	ITEMS	N	\bar{X}	SD	REMARK
1	Patriotism education	125	3.05	0.80	Agreed
2	Political education	125	3.17	0.66	Agreed
3	Morality education	125	3.10	0.70	Agreed
4	Self-reliance education	125	2.34	0.87	Disagreed

5	Peace education	125	3.03	0.76	Agreed
6	Science and technology education	125	2.37	0.98	Disagreed
7	Entrepreneurial education	125	2.71	0.86	Agreed
8	Social skill training education	125	2.95	0.89	Agreed
9	Vocational education	125	2.54	0.92	Agreed
10	Education for national values	125	3.19	0.67	Agreed
11	Education for social integration	125	2.98	0.85	Agreed
12	Education for national development	125	3.03	0.78	Agreed
	Cluster Total		34.46	9.44	
	Cluster Mean		2.87	0.81	

Keys: N = No of Respondents, X = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

The results in table I shows that the respondents reacted positively to ten items with mean scores very well above 2.50 and reacted negatively to items 4 and 6 which state as follows: ‘self-reliance education and science and technology education’. However, the cluster mean of 2.87 show that relevant structures in re-engineering education efforts are recognized and needed for political restructuring.

Research question two:

What are the perceptions of Academics concerning political restructuring in Nigeria?

S/N	ITEMS	N	\bar{X}	SD	REMARK
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13.	I see political restructuring in Nigeria as deceptive, violent and cosmetic.	125	2.30	0.88	Disagreed
14.	I see it as a core response to the prolonged unacceptable economic and political conditions of Nigerian citizens across the country.	125	3.15	0.75	Agreed
15.	I see political restructuring as the aspect of restructuring that involves devolution of political power.	125	3.36	0.62	Agreed
16.	I see it as an agitation that has persistently clamoured for the re-organisation of economic and political structures.	125	3.22	0.65	Agreed
17.	I see it as that, which allows self-determination and the attainment of self-determination, as ways of tackling poverty, conflict, insecurity and other undesirable conditions confronting Nigerian citizens.	125	2.80	0.89	Agreed
18.	I see it as a solution to revenue allocation problems Nigeria is experiencing.	125	2.82	0.97	Agreed
19.	I see it as helping to put a stop to the current	125	2.73	0.93	Agreed

	derivational formula that seems to favour a part of the country above the others.					
20.	I see political restructuring as feasible in Nigeria.	125	2.92	0.90	Agreed	
21.	I see political restructuring as synonymous to resource control.	125	3.19	0.67	Agreed	
22.	I see political restructuring as a determinant of the development of Education, Economy, Political and Infrastructural sectors.	125	3.11	0.82	Agreed	
	Cluster Total		29.6	8.08		
	Cluster Mean		2.96	0.8		

Keys: N = No of Respondents, X = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

The results in table II show that the respondents reacted positively to eleven items with mean scores well above 2.50 and reacted negatively to item 9 only which states as follows: “I see political restructuring in Nigeria as deceptive, violent and cosmetic”. The cluster mean of 2.96 indicate the perception of the respondents, in respite of political restructuring in Nigeria.

Discussion

The results as presented in table I showed that apart from the disagreement indicated in items 4 and 6 which has the following statements, self-reliance education and science and technology education; all the respondents agreed to all the other items, indicating that relevant education structure needed for political restructuring in Nigeria are recognized. The finding of the study

that portrays acceptance of some proposed structure in educational efforts for political restructuring shows that academics are agreed on the need to use political education, patriotism education, morality education, peace education, entrepreneurial education, social skill training education, vocational education as steps in effective political restructuring. Education for national values, Education for social integration and education for national development are also needed by the political leaders and indeed, the led as well, in order to enhance political restructuring in Nigeria. This is in line with (Orikpe 2013) who posits that it is no longer news that liberal education alone has failed to equip recipients/youths with requisite skills and attitudes for leading a productive life. It is heart breaking that graduates of our institutions of higher learning have been populating the crime world due to their inability to secure meaningful employment upon graduation in a country adjudged blessed and productive. This falls In line with (Amadi, 2012) who observed that the reforms in education so far seem to have failed to provide broad based education in the development of the mind, in comprehending the environment and development of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies to co-exist with and contribute to the development of the society. The need to reform the political structure to abate these cannot be overemphasized. Educational reform therefore, should have focus and direction. The infusing of specific content and structure must be painstakingly addressed.

Results as presented in table II showed that the respondents agreed to 11 items and disagreed to one which sees political restructuring in Nigeria as deceptive, violent and cosmetic. This is in line with (Agai, 2013) who states that political restructuring will be difficult to implement and even harder to sell because

there is hardly a consensus on the structure a decentralized Nigeria would take or the method such a move would adopt. Also constitutionally, the National Assembly and various state Houses of Assembly remain the only legal bodies empowered to alter the constitution. It would be indeed a task of herculean proportions to get these two parliamentary bodies to initiate and conclude a process that will effectively render them redundant. However, it is note worthy that some academics think that political restructuring is feasible. This finding has an implication of hope that it is still possible to salvage Nigeria in spite of all odds. It is thus clear that the view expressed by some academics that restructuring is feasible is anchored on the belief assertion of Onwughalu (2016) in which he specifically said that he sees it as something which allows self-determination and the attainment of self-determination, as ways of tackling poverty, conflict, insecurity and other undesirable conditions confronting Nigerian citizens (Onwughalu, 2016).

Conclusion

Education is the key to development and is capable of providing solution to the persistent challenges facing the country. Liberal Education has failed to equip the recipients with requisite skills and attitudes therefore inclusion of other relevant educational structures is needed for enhanced possibility of actually attaining political restructuring for the good of all her citizenry. The recognized and accepted structural dimensions should be infused as contents and courses for pre-primary, post-primary and tertiary institutions. It is believed that they will give the edge to for the achievement of political restructuring in Nigeria. This is because education and politics are interrelated and cannot be separated. Effective political restructuring of the society depends to a large

extent on the quality of education given to the citizens, who would not only be the political participants from afar but grow to take over the reins. The quality of human resources produced by the reformed education system could enable the society to take the tasks ahead, determinedly deal with them and work out ways of making people to cope with the resulting changes in the nearest future. The implication of all these is that education is the veritable tool for continuous change in the society. The education structure should not in itself be static if it should fulfill the change function. Necessary additions and improvements should be effected on it so that, the politicians who are seriously involved in policy decisions would be adequately equipped to do that which is considered best through deep rooted knowledge and upholding of the educated culture of moderation.

Recommendations

1. The Nigerian educational curricula should be redesigned so that skills possessed by the educated will reflect the needs of employers and society and the learners can be thus assured of gaining relevant and appropriate skills for life and living in their society.
2. All-round education should be emphasized which makes one to contribute meaningfully to the development of himself, his family, his society and the entire nation, this can only be done if the structure of education is improved upon.
3. There should be decentralization of the structure of powers by the federal government so that it meets identity at sub-national levels. This is because the curriculum used in the education system seem to be centrally developed at the apex

- level giving little or no room for state and professional input at implementation levels.
4. There should be further physical restructuring of the Nigerian federation so that each geo-political zone will have relatively equal number of state governments and local government areas. This is to avoid one section of the country holding the country to ransom.
 5. The current challenges bedeviling the country such as poverty, unemployment and insecurity should be checked and controlled because they persistently fuel growing agitations.

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