

EVOLUTION OF IDEOLOGICAL DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: SPORT AS TOOL FOR CIVIC EDUCATION AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

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Abstract

The deafening cacophony of calls for restructuring in Nigeria is understandable because Nigeria and Nigerians ought not to be poor as records indicate that Nigeria is richly endowed with 44 different mineral types scattered in more than 450 different locations across the country. The phenomenal growth in GDP amidst increasing poverty in Nigeria shows that the commonwealth of the country was not equitably and adequately utilized for the common good of ordinary Nigerians (Damulak, 2017). The inequality on the economic front is as bad as the nation been declared the World's Poverty Capital while less than 1% of the citizens live in mega affluence. The culprit for this unconscionable lopsided state of the country is nil-ideological democracy. Political corruption stands out as the most persuasive, compelling and primary explanation for the (causal) relationship(s) between Poverty, Corruption and Development {PCD} (Ikejiaku, 2009). Responsible, thoughtful and resilient citizens are therefore critical to create peaceful path(s) out of the political quagmire that Nigeria finds itself. Sports has been linked to teaching positive social behaviour, citizenship education and democratic values practices. Sports is therefore a considered tool of civic education that exposes children and young adults to ideological democratic practice in the nation on its path out of the looming violent change. Civic education propagated and sustained by sports to facilitate a new generation of Nigerians with principled orientations on how best to manage the polity is thereby advocated.

Key words: Civic education, Nigeria, Ideological democracy, Sports, Children and Young adults

Introduction

Is it a coincidence that this year's conference on the theme of peace is set at the centenary celebration of the 1st World War armistice? Whatever the answer to this rhetorical question, it is quite possible to forget when and where people gather to discuss the concept of peace that its opposite is war. To avoid as a nation, Bob Marley and the Wailers' (1976) prediction that "in the abundance of water, the fool is thirsty", time is thereby ripe for Nigerians to devise means of preventing the slide through the man-made slope of questionable governance foisted on the land in the nation's present circumstance.

Nigeria and Nigerians ought not to be poor. Organized mining in the country started in 1903. By the 1940s, Nigeria has started production of these resources

with tin, columbite, and coal. Other mineral deposits found and explored at varied rates include: salt, iron ore, lignite, coke, gold, bitumen and uranium among others. Nigeria is ranked 6th in world's bitumen deposit, 9th in natural gas reserves and 11th in oil reserves. Unchecked plundering of the Commonwealth of the nation became apparent with the advent of the military forceful control of the nation.

Hafizullah, et al (2017) submits that Nigeria is endowed with abundant mineral resources including gold, iron, lead, zinc, rare metals (SnNbTa), coal and gemstones which could be harnessed for its development. Presently, the sector contributes less than 1% to the nation's annual GDP. Paradoxically, the country is so much endowed yet so poor! This abnormality can be attributed to overdependence on oil, political instability, poor legal, regulatory and institutional framework and lack of up to date geosciences data that can facilitate investment decision making. In the same vein, Damulak (2017) avers that "the growth in Nigeria's economy since independence in 1960 has not significantly affected the lives and the general well-being of its citizens. Nigeria has dependent on crude oil resources for a very long time, yet, what it offers the economy is a disarticulated and directionless economy, be-quitting nothing than misery and poverty of every kind on the people. Nigeria is richly endowed with 44 different minerals types scattered in more than 450 different locations across the country. This means that development of the solid mineral sector implies even development of the entire region of the country".

Thus, the attendant effects of over 60% living below the poverty line in the midst of stupendous deposit of natural minerals include the commonplace sentiments of anger and depression being expressed by quite a large fraction of the citizen. The educated and civilized few outside the 1% ruling elite are also understandably bothered when confronted with the fact that the best that Nigeria's Plutocrats has attracted is to be referred as the world's poverty capital and an abysmal ranking of 158 out of 188 countries in terms of Human Development Index. It would seem as if the facts of a fiercely fought civil war are lost on the ruling elite. Time is therefore of essence if peaceful reversals of this deliberate inhumane status of the nation is to be achieved. Therefore a robust citizenship education, rich in the history, strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of her natural endowments and human resources is a considered panacea.

Citizen and Citizenship Education

Dominique (2017) posits that, "a citizen is a member of a political community who enjoys the rights and assumes the duties of membership". The chief of the duties of membership is exercising ones voting right at the turn of the legal age. However, just voting is apparently inadequate to help birth an ideological laden democracy. Perhaps this was one of the reasons that led Morlino (2004) to stand on Dahl (1971) proposition, that there is a minimal for the definition of democracy which suggests that such a regime has at least universal, adult suffrage; recurring, free, competitive and fair elections; more than one political party; and more than one source of information. In addition, democratic intuitions, existing rights and also the decision making process should not be constrained by non-elected elites or external powers (Schmitter& Karl, 1993). To achieve democratic practices that satisfy the enumerated criteria above, is a regime of civic education targeting

the budding generation, to usher in a new, selfless and giving attitude that can change the current trajectory of Nigeria to the path of good governance.

USAID (2000) report that civic education programmes seek to transmit knowledge, skills, and values to individuals and to promote political efficacy and participation by them. Put another way, they attempt to transfer the tools necessary for participation in a democratic polity, and to induce individuals to engage in civic acts. Civic education in a democracy implies education in self government. This means that citizens are not bystanders but active participants in the processes of governance. Civic education is concerned with the spread of the knowledge of the ideals of participatory government as well as an informed commitment to the ideals and principles of democratic government. Civic education looks up to the school system to refine its graduates to become effective citizens, by which he is a reasoned voter and fit member of the community

The need for Ideological Democracy

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary of English Language defines ideology as “a systematic body of concepts especially about human life or culture”. The key words in this definition are: systematic and culture which results to systematic culture should the conjunctive word is removed. It was for this that Aristotle, according to Keyt (1987) is of the firm opinion that the state exists for the sake of a good life, and not for the sake of life only. The state for him is the union of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honourable life. Political society exists, for the sake of noble actions, and not mere companionship.

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

Lister and Pia (2012) reviewed classical theories of citizenship and submit that:

“The relationship between individuals and the political community has been conceptualised in a number of different ways. The first is the liberal conception, which, unsurprisingly, takes the individual as the main focus. A liberal theory of citizenship emphasises the equality of rights which each citizen holds, and how these rights enable the individual to pursue their aims and goals. The second theory, communitarianism, is critical of this position. For communitarians, the individual does not exist prior to the community. As such, it argues that the liberal theory fails to consider duty or loyalty to the community, ignores the social nature of individuals and, in emphasising rights, ignores responsibilities and duties owed to the community. A third theory of citizenship is the republican tradition. It emphasises participation in government as the foundation for the promotion of the civic good. It is critical of both the liberal perspective, which it sees as too fragmentary, and also,

the communitarian view, as it is wary of local identities being placed above wider civic goals”.

From the standpoint of the citizenship theories as espoused above, it is instructive to note that Dominique’s (2017) treatise ended with a poser, that “...if being a citizen in a liberal-democratic political community is to mean something more than the status of the legal *subject*, we must be ready to state what this “more” entails. This stubborn blind-spot of theories of citizenship leads us to some of the most difficult issues pertaining to the very possibility of democracy in the contemporary world.”

This more therefore in the context of this article, is to situate the individual member of the society piously into one of either the liberal or republican theories of citizenship without necessarily emphasising the differences in outlook or macro expectations but its influence on governance and vice versa. Thus, the contention of this article is that democracy in practice in contemporary Nigeria is the ‘dominated’ hybrid or what is regarded as plutocracy. This has never been helpful and should be abolished.

Lister and Pia (2012) submits, that the republican tradition emphasises participation in government as the foundation for the promotion of the civic good. In other words, the republican community appreciates, enables, and ensure the individual’s right to participate freely in her electoral process. This participation being the minimum of the civic duties expected of a responsible citizen at the attainment of a certain age by the constitution. But it is not as simple as stated because the type of democracy being practiced facilitates or inhibits citizens’ satisfaction of this basic civil rights.

Types of Nil-Ideological Democracy

Morlino (2004) submits that the analysis of a ‘good democracy’ should be theoretically set alongside those regimes that are to varying degrees deficient in principal democratic features. Amongst them are hybrid regimes (Diamond, 2002), whose failure to ensure free and fair electoral competition and a minimum level of civil rights keeps them below the minimum threshold to be classified as democratic. Likewise, the defective democracies (Merkel & Croissant, 2000) should also be left out of the analysis. This category includes ‘exclusive’ democracies, which offer only limited guarantees for political rights; ‘dominated’ democracies, in which powerful groups use their influence to condition and limit the autonomy of elected leaders; and ‘illiberal’ democracies, which offer only partial guarantees of civil rights. In reality, the last three models may also be seen as institutional hybrids, and thus fall short of the minimum threshold specified above.”

What obtains in the fourth republic Nigeria is one of the defective hybrids described as dominated democracy; elsewhere referred as plutocracy. At present, no honest public servant can participate in the highest bidders’ politics. Therefore, to state that Nigeria is adrift is to be economical with the truth, although, a preferred hideout to scandalizing the state by a detailed review of its present reclining state. A concrete instance is taken from the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with the ignoble proviso regarding educational qualification to contest election into elected offices. Section 131 (d), considered alongside Section 318 (1) of the Constitution, provides that a candidate need not possess a Secondary School Certificate but its equivalent (Persons with

Primary Six School Leaving Certificate or its equivalent, provided they satisfy the other requirements listed under Paragraph (c)(i), (ii), and (iii) of the definition of “School Certificate or its equivalent” in Section 318 (1), are also qualified to contest election into elective offices, including that of the President. Finally, persons with “any other qualification acceptable to the Independent National Electoral Commission” (The Guardian, 2018).

Ideologies and facets of Nations

Ideologies definitely have consequences. Hahn (2013) at the wake of the United States of America shut down concludes that “evidently the emergence of ideology as a form of politicking has substantial consequences”.

Faccinni and Melki (2012) concludes that the main channel through which political ideology has impacted economic performance all along the French democratic experience is the budgetary tool (i.e. fiscal and redistributive policies) which influenced employment and income inequalities. Lightcap (2012) submits that “in types of cases where the justices are more likely to make crucial decisions, it is more likely that ideology will affect decision making”. Kaestle (1982), wonders why historians of American education are often most readily identified by ideological labels such like “Radical” or “Whig”. Prinja (2010) confirms that “Ideas determine the frame in which one perceives a given problem. Policymaking in health is largely thought to be driven by three ‘I’s namely ideas, interests and institutions” In the same vein. Busoi (2010) reports that within the EU, although we can classify the health systems in accordance with certain factors, and find several similarities, we shall not find two identical systems. All of them have been modelled and influenced by the political parties governing these countries.

The evidence from the above is presented in the words of Stimson (1991), the eminent student of public opinion, who puts it succinctly, “Ideology won’t go away. It is too important” So, if ideology will not go away, we should help propagate it in our schools with the age long and effective tool of sports.

Sports as tool of Civic Education

Hung-Yu (2005) avers that while state support for sport may be superficially an ‘apolitical’ issue, political difference are clearly evident. The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace highlights the important role sport and physical activity can play for social progress. Likewise, the recognition of the Olympic Truce by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council are significant milestones in mainstreaming Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) into policies, programmes and strategies around the world in pursuit of development and peace (UNOSDP, 2014). Circle (2006) posits that one of several reasons to offer sports in school is to teach young people values, skills, and habits that will make them more active, engaged, and responsible citizens. Past evidence on the civic effects of sports is mixed, but points to some potential positive civic effect, knowledge of civic rights and development of the skills and practice of peaceful social and political engagement form the core of civic education. Effective programming in civic education requires special focus on classroom techniques that models good civic

behaviour which can be imparted through sport skills for participating children and young adults. A sample template of adaptable civic core values and skills to be applied through the instrument of Physical Education and Sports is attached as appendix to this paper.

The Commonwealth (2013) examined sports as tool to achieve education and health goals and submits that “recognition of the contribution sport-based approaches can make to development and peace-building objectives have grown markedly over the last ten years. While new global poverty eradication goals for post-2015 are being developed, the Commonwealth will increase its focus on how sport and play can contribute to health and education targets in member countries”. Deutsche Zusammenarbeit (2018) reports that the integration of the ‘Sport for Development’-approach into municipal youth work in Togo is improving social and political participation and strengthening civil society at the local level. Democratic participation structures in the municipalities are being promoted in cooperation with the German development project ‘Good Governance and Decentralisation’ (ProDeG). By involving citizens in the selection of sports grounds and development of concepts for sporting activities, Sport for Development in Africa (S4DA) is encouraging strengthened collaboration between local authorities and civil society. The stakeholders involved are provided with training measures to hone skills required to develop sustainable and regular ‘Sport for Development’- activities. Subsequently, the project promotes the integration of disadvantaged groups – women and girls in particular – into social and political life in the municipality. Results thus far included the fact that together with local and international partners from the fields of policy-making, civil society, business and academia, German development cooperation has built up a sustainable sport portfolio that also helps strengthen civil society and promote democracy. In this way, sport serves as an innovative instrument that drives change and sustainable development – for each individual child and for society as a whole. Also, in collaboration with its partners, S4DA trains sports coaches to organise sports activities that promote social skills such as cooperation, tolerance, honesty and team spirit among children and young people.

Conclusion and recommendations

Evident as above, it is hereby concluded that sports milieu is not just a suggestive tool of civic education but tested and charitable in its delivery strategies when well studied, mastered and deployed. Therefore, it is hereby recommended that Nigeria revives the school sports programme and review its curriculum without further delay to be handled by trained kinesiologists who themselves have been taken through seminars/workshops on how sports can be used to deliver the contents of civic education and engagements. Also, the country should design, and activate flexible grassroots sports that recognise regional peculiarities to propagate and sustain principles of socially committed citizens.

Declaration of Interest

The author hereby states that there is no conflicting interest to be declared.

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Appendix

A sample template of adaptable civic core values and skills

1. Values	
Priorities to be placed in ranked order by PE teacher or the sports coach.	Attributes for each priority to be selected from the list of core values of civic education
Commitment to democracy	Participation, openness to differing opinions, equity, equality, non-discrimination, dialog, voting, etc.
Appreciation of diversity	Sex/gender, religion, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, age, culture, academic ability, athletic ability, artistic ability, economic status, language, rural/urban location, etc
Respect for Human Rights	Fairness, respect for diversity, personal and

	social responsibility, justice, equality, equity, respect for order/rules/law, appreciation of rights of others, willingness to defend rights of self and others
Appreciation of the best national traditions	Multiculturalism, orthodox church, tolerance of other religions, respect for neighbours, internationalism, love of sports, love of the arts,
Appreciation for religion	Faith in one's own religion, faith in and respect for other religions from one's own, acceptance and allowance for non religion, knowledge of other religions, relationship with God
Self –awareness	Valuing self-expression, individuality, autonomy, self-confidence, self-motivation, personal identity, group identity, dealing with unpleasant emotions in a healthy way, self-esteem, personal dignity
Constructive relationships	Valuing cooperation, respect for views of others, honesty, empathy, acceptance of individual differences, reduction of egocentrism.
Non-violence/peaceful problem solving:	collaborative decision-making, conflict resolution, conflict prevention, non-violent communication
2 . Skills and competencies	
Priorities to be placed in ranked order by PE teacher or the sports coach.	Attributes for each priority to be selected from the list of core values of civic education
Critical thinking	Ability to distinguish between fact and opinion, ability to detect bias, ability to seek alternative sources of information, ability to analyze conflicting information.
Tolerance	Ability to detect generalizations and stereotypes, ability to challenge prejudice, ability to empathize with those who are discriminated against, awareness of own prejudices
Conflict resolution	Ability to define a problem, ability to negotiate, ability to generate alternative solutions, decision-making skills, ability to anticipate consequences, consensus

	building, mediation skills.
Communication skills	Debating, listening, expressing views non-judgementally, expressing feelings, asking questions, assertiveness, ability to detect and correct misunderstandings
Citizenship skills	Ability to participate in school life, expressing opinions constructively (verbal, in writing), organizing local actions, conducting surveys
Information skills	Ability to identify appropriate sources of information, media literacy, basic research skills
Articles of personal faith	Knowledge of the faith of one is born into, knowledge of the faith one converts to, ability to make choices about the practice of religion, skill in carrying out the practices of one's religion,

Source: UNICEF (2002).