

TOWARDS A CRITICAL THINKING-BASED CURRICULAR AND PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATIONS FOR SUSTAINING DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Democracy, in addition to being a political system is also a way of life that is so admired that it has become a global model. Unfortunately those ingredients and flavour that make democracy the global ideal are terribly lacking in Nigeria, in addition to democracy not having any stronghold in Nigeria. Using the philosophical method, the paper raises sign posts on how critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations can be a relief in reinventing and sustaining democracy in Nigeria. The position of the paper is that there is no substitute to positive thinking and positive thinking especially at the evaluative, insightful and critical thinking levels, can proffer solutions for resolving the pessimism that surrounds democracy in Nigeria. The paper makes recommendations, part of which include developing learners' curiosity for participation in the democratic processes, the development of learners autonomous moral thinking as well as identifying live problems that threaten democracy and making such the subjects of arguments, dialogues and deliberations.*

KEYWORDS: *Critical thinking, curriculum, pedagogy, democracy, Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

Thinking as an abstract activity is one philosophical practice that can be applied across all academic disciplines and all areas of human endeavours. The ability of any human being to think constructively and logically singles him or her out as one who is rightly and constructively employing his God-given innate potentials and the inability of any human being – man or woman to think constructively or logically indicts him or her as not using his God given potentials maximally. Consequently ability of individuals to maximally exercise their innate creative thinking ability is a mark of being human in the right sense of the word so much so that opportunities can be denied any one when it is discovered that there is a level of diminishing return or impairment in his or her level of thinking. Some states constitutionally document it that any impairment in any one's level of thinking automatically disqualifies him or her from holding any public office and excellence in thinking can win honours and respect for individuals.

One interesting thing about thinking is that it is the foundation upon which man's ability to solve all his problems is deeply rooted. The implication of this is that no problem no matter the scale escapes the critical scrutiny of thinking or remains the same when currents that carry the right weight or proportion of thinking pass through it and as a creative human activity; thinking assumes an elevated and prominent status when it is qualified.

In this paper, a case will be made for a critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations with special focus on highlighting the implications of such curricular and pedagogical innovations for democracy in Nigeria. Justifications for this scholarly enterprise are deep rooted in the fact that products of Nigeria's education system across all levels in recent time are terribly shallow in critical thinking so obvious that they can hardly relate and correspond concepts they learnt in school with reality or think so as to solve their individual or collective problems and again the plethora of problems facing Nigeria had been linked to problems of poor knowledge of the workings of democracy its features and lack of appropriate knowledge to explore it. Poor knowledge of the mode of operation of democracy has led to numerous human misery and aberrations including the recycling of a superlatively self centre cabals who are disastrously shallow in terms of welfare and social justice issues for Nigerians, the results of which have been economic stagnation, political instability and criminality that the good people of Nigeria face and on the basis of these a case for a critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations is seriously needed in today's Nigeria.

The philosophical methods of speculation, analysis and prescription shall be used in this paper. Speculation as a method of philosophical research according to Aminigo (1999:4) attempts to "find logical coherence in an entire realm of thought". The foundation of this method of investigation according to Nwaokugha and Danladi (2016:421) "is that the soundness or reasonableness of any proposition can be established through its rootedness in the science of logic or the various orderly sequences that leads to a conclusion." Analysis as a philosophical method focuses on carefully and critically clarifying the numerous meanings and interpretations that may be associated with a word, term or concept and a fundamental tool that is employed here is language and logic where the focus is on establishing the correspondence between language and reality. As a philosophical research method, prescription focuses on developing and establishing criteria for making prescriptive value judgements. As a tradition in philosophical discourse is to start with the clarification of key concepts or terms under investigation, we start by looking at the concepts of critical thinking and democracy.

Critical Thinking

No doubt man is created with the innate abilities to think as every individual no matter his level of civility, sophistication or lack of it. Thinking as an innate ability possessed by everyone is hierarchical. Thinking that incorporates the ability to systematically subject ideas and propositions to systematic analysis, evaluation, build up and organize ideas including logically demonstrating how such ideas can be used in solving problems can be said to be critical thinking. This means any thinking that is non directional cannot be fixed within the frame of mind of critical thinking. This is the point highlighted by Bailin, Case, Coombs and Daniels (1999:286) when they write that thinking that revolves around "day dreaming, musing and wool- gathering" cannot qualify as critical thinking but that thinking that qualifies "as critical thinking must be directed towards some end or purpose, such as answering a question, making a decision, solving a problem, resolving an issue, devising a plan or carrying out a project". In other words to be excluded from critical thinking are thinking that are "sloppy, superficial, careless, rash or naïve" (p.286).

Thinking at the level that qualifies as critical thinking is crucial in the survival of man and his society. Because thinking at this level is absolutely important, every generation looks up to it for

directions in their affairs and one thing that has emerged as a result of this is the changing nature or outlook of critical thinking which scholars capture in their definitions and redefinitions of the concept. Critical thinking according to Ennis (1992) revolves around reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do. From the viewpoints maintained by Chance (1986), critical thinking is the ability to analyze facts, generate and organize ideas, defend opinions, make comparison, draw inferences, evaluate arguments and solve problems while Tama (1989) writes that critical thinking is a way or method of reasoning that demands adequate support for one's beliefs and an unwillingness to be persuaded unless support is forthcoming. Siegel (1988:23) sees critical thinking as involving two components namely "the ability to assess reasons properly" and "the willingness, desire and dispositions to base one's actions and belief on reasons". To Bailin, et al (1999:285) "critical thinking is a normative enterprise in which, to a greater or lesser degree, we apply appropriate criteria and standards to what we or others say, do or write". The above authorities maintain that "those who become critical thinkers acquire such intellectual resources as background knowledge, operational knowledge of appropriate standards, and knowledge of key concepts, possession of effective heuristics and of certain habits of the mind" (p.285). Background knowledge as it concerns critical thinking suggests that those who are desirous to be vast in it must possess certain cognitive and dispositional skills or habits of mind that can enable them to excel and such include what Lai (2011:2) calls "open and fair mindedness, inquisitiveness, flexibility, a propensity to seek reason, a desire to be well informed and a respect for and willingness to entertain diverse viewpoints"

In his own contribution Lai (2011:2) writes that "critical thinking includes skills of analysis arguments, making inferences using inductive and deductive reasoning, judging or evaluating and making decisions or solving problems".

A unique feature about critical thinking is the possibility of its employability or application across disciplines or all areas of human endeavours. In education, Bailin et al (1999:287) write that justifications why educators see critical thinking to be at the heart of their professional practice include:

- It is done for the purposes of making up one's mind about what to believe or do.
- The person engaging in critical thinking is trying to fulfill standards of adequacy and accuracy appropriate to thinking; and
- The thinking fulfils the relevant standards to some threshold level.

The ability of the meaning of critical thinking to change with time and the plethora of definitions of critical thinking have one thing in common namely the ability of man to use his natural thinking faculty in directions that can provide effective clues and remedies to the numerous problems of man and his society.

Democracy

Democracy is one concept in which institutions and scholars of different disciplines are favourably disposed to and one interesting feature that has emerged as a result of this is the ability of the different disciplines to proffer different meanings and interpretations of the concept of democracy. Ironically despite the ever emerging plethora of interpretations and meanings associated with democracy, democracy according to Dalton, Shin and Jou (2007:142) is in fact "a concept with a variety of potential meanings and it is not simple to grasp or define". This observation seems to suggest the likelihood of new definitions and interpretations of the concept of democracy in the

course of time. What seems to be responsible for this state of affairs about democracy is that the various institutions, scholars and disciplines tend to emphasize certain aspects of say social, economic, political, and cultural and value issues in their conceptions and definitions of democracy which may be lacking in the conception of democracy as provided by the other scholar or institution. In all these Dalton et al (2007:142) write that “the most widely employed scholarly definition of democracy focus on the institutions and procedures of democratic governance”. This harmonizes with the etymological root of democracy as a concept that derives from two Greek word *demos* meaning people and *Kratia* meaning power, which simply translates as sovereignty belongs to the people or power belongs to the people.

Within this frame of mind, democracy revolves round a system of representative system of government in which eligible citizens participate in choosing those who make laws upon which a state or a people is governed or ruled and such process must incorporate well spelt out processes that will lead to elections which must be free and fair. Definitions of democracy along this trajectory of citizens of a state participating in choosing those who rule over them include the following. Democracy according to Berge (1994) is some legitimate and orderly ways of placing and replacing the people who make laws and wield the power 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 state according to Shively (2005) is said to be democratic and practicing democracy when its 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.

In absolute recognition of the multiple approaches to defining democracy, Bassioni (1998) identifies the different contexts in which the term democracy can be used as including; democracy as a process, democracy as a state or condition and democracy as an outcome. Democracy as a process according to him involves all the practical and cognitive display of skills, manipulations, permutations and wizardry that accompany the practice of politics which is the platform and medium upon which democracy flourishes from political organizations or parties up to the periods of elections. Democracy as a state or condition beams search light or makes case for the availability of those fundamental requirements and necessities that safeguard and promote the practice of democracy. The flashpoint here is on the existence of the necessary environmental conditions that are conducive for a robust, vibrant and effective practice of democracy. Common sense shows that environments that support and promote the activities of civil societies, free press, equality etc can be fertile and enduring grounds for democracy unlike environments where these do not exist while democracy as outcome points in the direction of democracy meeting up the developmental expectations of the people. Globally people have higher expectations in terms of development and improvements in the quality of lives of citizens in a democracy and the extent in which this assumption and belief sees the light of the day gives them a sense of belonging that actually democracy is at work.

In other words a society or a state that claims to be practicing democracy must guarantee its citizens and the general public certain basic minimum standards, principal among which include freedom and liberty, right to participate in the social, cultural, political and economic affairs of the state, justice and equality of all the citizens before the law etc. Appeal to and the demand for the availability of these minimum standards are so paramount that Dalton et al (2007:144) write that “several developing states have found that references to freedom, liberties and rights were the most common answers in defining the meaning of democracy”. Citizens in states that claim to be practicing democracy expect their states to put in place certain right and privileges that can cater for the interests of the down-trodden and the general welfare of all the citizens of the state. This dimension in the conception of democracy is so vital and fundamental that all other conceptions of democracy, for instance, participation in politics and the political process can become useless and meaningless unless citizens meet up their individual and social needs. Consequently it could be correct to say that democracy as outcome focuses on the availability of dynamics that promote and support development, both in quantity and quality and other mechanisms for improving the quality of lives of a people. The position exposed above hinges on the premise that democracy connotes quality development and is synonymous with development.

It may not amount to any contradiction if one says that part of what democracy as a process means is the systematic, organized and orderly arrangements put in place by a society upon which a system of selecting those in power rests and democracy as a state or condition hinges on the vibrancy of a state to the point or effect of allowing institutions whose existence can strengthen democracy through their actions and activities of advising the state on such issues as constitutional and organizational reforms, the need for social re-engineering targeted at enhancing the democratic process in the forms of monitoring elections and creating awareness, which in addition to sensitizing the masses on the importance of their participation in the democratic process can conscientize them into changing their behaviour in ways that support and promote the growth democracy and democratic institutions.

What is conceived here hinges on institutional and procedural paradigms and fundamentally targets developing and promoting in the people behaviours and practices whose sustenance can bring about playing politics and participating in the democratic process base on the rules that govern the game, that is, making the process free and fair, encouraging multiparty political arrangements, respect and sustenance of the wishes of the majority, which in political and democratic circles is referred to as majority rule. These defining elements of democracy suggest that democracy in all ramifications and in all conceptions can be said to be any rule governed mechanism upon which a society, institution or a state uses to achieve order and harmony for its continued existence.

It is important one points out that any aspects of the meaning of democracy that a state prioritizes and identifies with has implications for the attitudes of the people especially how they react or work towards sustaining that conception of democracy. In most developing countries or states, the freedom, rights and civil liberties as well as the outcome or expectations dimensions of democracy do not receive adequate space or considerations in the democratic and political landscapes of the people and the aspects that involve choosing representatives that represent the people have terribly been abused so much that the wishes of the minority and not the majority prevail plus other sharp

practices that are fundamentally undemocratic. There are sufficient bodies of evidence to show that democratic experiments in Nigeria are disasters and cannot in any way measure up to standard prescriptions that democracy in the real world incorporates. Democracy in Nigeria is characterized by terrible lack of institutional norms that make democracy the ideal form of government in the western world. Democracy in Nigeria is terribly shallow in matters of welfare and improvements in the quality of lives of Nigerians but ranks among the most vibrant in the world in terms of welfare for elected and appointed representatives. Elected and appointed representatives in Nigeria swim in affluence. Democracy globally flourishes through elections but regrettably majority of Nigerians do not participate in the elections of their representative and do not know of the existence of any provision of the law upon which their representatives can be recalled back in the events of gross misconduct or inefficiency and correspondingly leaders in Nigeria are not accountable to Nigerians. The democratic and political system in Nigeria is manipulated and influenced by a few influential individuals in the Nigerian society.

Anya (2008) laments the hopelessness of Nigerian and the lack of credibility in the 2007 general election when he unambiguously says that no election in Nigeria has legitimacy on the basis of the peoples' mandate and Almond et al (2006) hint that a democratic leaning regime in Nigeria installed in 1979 was overthrown by a military Junta in a coup in 1983 and a feeble and precarious civilian regime was only established in 1999, which Dienye and Nwaokugha (2011) write that even a careless and casual observer can observe that all was not well with it because according to Magstadt (2003) Nigeria's fragile new experiment with democratic rule remains in grave jeopardy due to a vicious circle of internal, ethnic and religious conflicts. It is on record that Nigerian's experiment with democracy and democratic rule has sensitized inactive ethnic and religious groups into forming ethnic militias whose modus operandi include rape, thuggery, arson, terrorism and other forms of behaviours that are inimical to the moral health and stability of the Nigerian state. The prevalence of these undemocratic practices in most modern democracies can raise moral questions capable of making people to raise doubts, eye brows or suspicion on the moral principles that are inherent in a democracy including questioning the grounds upon which democracy is regarded as a synonym for civilized polity (Eboh, 2001), 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) 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). Nwaokugha and Kalu (2014:94) add to the numerous positive compliments democracy is globally associated with when they write that:

It (democracy) affords the majority and the minority opportunities to assert themselves, it is relative to culture, it prioritizes the well being of every individual, has internal mechanisms and dynamics for self correction, preserves and respects the rights, freedom and privileges of individuals, upholds accountability, makes case for justice and egalitarianism as well as works out through compromise.

Paradoxically all the positive compliments that are associated with democracy are counter balanced with equally heavy devastating knocks that attempt to discredit democracy. In fact Nwaokugha and Kalu (2014:103) write that "democracy is not a bed of roses" as it has been noted to be the most difficult and most problematic system of government (Massub, 1998, Kothari, 2007,

Oyekan, 2009). In other words, despite some positive compliments about democracy, democracy has some terrible faults and flaws, (Dalton et al 2007), so terribly faulted and flawed that Crowzier, Huntington and Watanuki (1975) say that democracy is shrowded in pessimism.

The faults, flaws and pessimism that ornament democracy can come from several sources. The levels of economic and political sophistications between and among states have potentials to present serious problems to the smooth and effective functioning of democracy and democratic regime in the global community. In the same way democracy suffers in states or localities where opportunities for rights and privileges as well as upward social mobility are concentrated in the hands of a few individuals. Democracy also faces retardation, impairment or irreparable damage in societies that are divided along ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious lines.

Equally, democracy has in-built potentials and mechanisms for its own destruction and this becomes reality when intellectuals and other key stakeholders who helped to ideologically build up democracies and democratic institutions become disgusted with the internal mechanisms of democracy and the democratic process. In virtually all democracies and democratic institutions globally, key stakeholders easily derail from the guiding philosophy upon which such democracies exists in the forms of the principal stakeholders becoming power drunk, excessively corrupt and undermining internal democracy and this development has been responsible for the emergence of opposing factions whose reactions disastrously crack the foundations of democracies and democratic institutions. This suggests that democracy is “conflict-ridden” (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005:227) and depending on the manner in which such crises are managed, they have potentials to wreck havoc capable of cracking the foundations of any democracy and democratic process. Concerning these Crozier et al (1975:8) say the mind of many when they write that: Democratic government does not necessarily function in a self-sustaining fashion. It may instead function so as to give rise to forces and tendencies which if not checked by outside agency will eventually lead to the undermining of democracy. This phenomenon in most democracies has prompted many to assert that democracy in most states operates without democrats and this is a living evidence of how the actions and activities of political parties can be a disaster to the growth and development of democracy and democratic institutions.

Again democracy seems to be a universal ideal that people of different cultural and religious backgrounds aspire to, (cultural relativism of democracy) where individual states can ventilate and navigate their democratic ship in forms and directions that are unique to them and this creates ideological confusion about the brand of democracy that some states practice. Deriving from the relativism of democracy, we have seen states accuse their fellow states who claim to be practicing democracy as being far from the real or ideal democracy.

In a democracy, people in their euphoria to enjoy democratic dividends guaranteed them by their state overdo them so much that their actions give impressions that democracy breed lawlessness, undermines and brings about what Crozier et al (1975:8) call “breakdown of traditional means of social control, a delegitimation of political and other forms of authority and an overload of demands on government exceeding its capacity to respond”. What this tries to suggest is that citizens in a democracy may be more prone to exhibiting acts of lawlessness, morbid radicalism, show of disrespect to constituted and traditional authorities and all these can be attributed to

inherent flaws and ineffectiveness associated with democracy. That democracy has these inherent flaws may account for why Theiss-Morse and Hibbing (2005:227) assert that democracy “is messy, inefficient and conflict-ridden”.

Lastly democracy as a system of government may be more prone to fraud, vice and other corrupt practices. In fact what democracy does is to sensitize a people by heightening their minds on great expectations which cannot see the light of the day in the forms of development and improvements in the quality of their lives but the truth remains that such aspirations for development and improvements in the quality of lives of the people leave them disappointed and frustrated and little developmental efforts go to multinational corporations, who are attracted by democracy for investments but the presence of multinational corporations according to Johnston (1994) Nwaokugha and Kalu (2014) vanishes the voices of the poor and ordinary citizens in political and economic decisions which may have direct bearing on the quality of lives of citizens of host states but shifts to multinational corporations and their home government. The point here is that in a democracy especially in developing and under-developed states, elites who constitute the government, influential individuals and bureaucrats rule but not the majority of the people.

Raising doubts or moral objections on the possibility of democracy delivering all the expected dividend expected from it can be natural as all the identified deficiencies inherent in democracy go to demonstrate that democracy any where it is practiced is not a perfect system of government yet it is preferred to any other system of government so much that globally people claim that the worst democracy any where is better than the best dictatorial or autocratic regime anywhere.

Because democracy is as presented above, it can be an ideal concept upon which critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations can make in-roads and how this can become possible is the focus of the next section of the paper.

Practical steps and directions for using critical thinking based curriculum and pedagogy for sustaining Nigeria’s democracy

Globally, any responsible people and society who aspires to move forward must embrace the provision of quality education with two hands and make quality and necessary investments in the sector and such action that a state initiates target leading the states and its citizens to many destinations that can make both individual citizens and the state beneficiaries. It is an open secret that education has in-built mechanisms for transforming a state and her citizens into fashioning out more enduring and durable routes and directions that can lead it and its people into achieving the dreams and desires of their hearts. Such dreams and desires of their hearts through education can translate into a state engineering the latest state of the art developments in science, technology, agriculture, business, marketing, economics, architecture, fashion, events management etc and these individually and collectively target adding value to the quality of lives of citizens of a state. Adding quality to the lives of citizens of a state invariably translates to quality development of the state. This is simple and possible because citizens carry the genes that blossom into the development of the state. Education achieves these lofty ideals through developing the innate potentials citizens are born with and at the same time equips citizens with skills to explore opportunities offered by their natural and social environment for their emancipation and development

Equally any innovations in a state that target sensitizing and mobilizing a people to introduce radical revolutionary and innovative practices to challenge deep seated assumptions and practices that constitute threats to the dignity of man and the moral health of a people either individually or collectively are addressed using education. A direction education employs in bringing these radical, revolutionary and emancipator ideals is to sensitize a people to be hopeful, optimistic and positive in approaches targeted at fashioning out the desires of their hearts and education at the same time raises instructional, axiological and pedagogical platforms that can lead to the emergence of new value system that must be better than the one before it.

The most important transformation that education brings for a state and her citizens is the development of the abilities to reflectively, autonomously, radically and critically rethink themselves in readiness to evaluating past experiences and catching up with present realities. This is in the form of developing in a people the curiosity for insightful, analytical and critical thinking skills whose potentials are capable of assisting a state and her citizens to resolve any puzzles or contradictions no matter how complex that may have potentials to threaten their national interests and national development. In fact Nwaokugha (2011) is correct when he writes that there is hardly any society which dreams of qualitative innovations that does not appeal to the powers of education in any of its forms for the realization of such predetermined objectives.

Education records successes in its efforts to response to the numerous responsibilities society places on it through internal overhaul, modification, repositioning and change of gear in its curriculum and pedagogy. As no concept under the sun escapes the reflective, analytical and insightful scrutiny of education, a critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations can be an answer to fixing and sustaining Nigeria's wobbling and unstable democracy.

The beauty and sustenance of any democracy lies in the ability of the people to participate in all the democratic processes and election is key to this. The school curriculum can prioritize the teaching of democratic processes that culminate into elections, the processes of elections, the consequences of participating in elections, as well as the consequences of not participating in elections. It can pedagogically be harped into the ears of learners that the ballot paper is powerful so powerful that it can be explored by citizens for them to have the society of their dreams. In this frame of mind, curricular and pedagogical innovations for sustaining democracy can sensitize learners that the survival of democracy in any state depends on the existence of political parties to operate within the ambits of morality and provisions established by the laws of the state. In other words, political parties should exist as their existence is a litmus and standard for measuring democracy and consequently persuade learners to strive to play the democratic game according to the rules that govern it, just as excesses of political parties have also been found to be detrimental to the sustainable growth of democracy globally. Whereas the existence of political parties are important for the survival of democracy, critical thinking can be applied or appealed to in order to establish the problems of political parties in Nigeria with a view to introducing new and favourable behaviours for repositioning the political parties for greater efficiency and productivity. Underlying instructional innovations can point in the direction of producing morally behaved citizens that can protect and defend democracy.

A critical thinking based curriculum and pedagogy for sustaining democracy in Nigeria can endeavour to instill in learners who will turn out to become potential players of the game of politics the ability to make morality and accountability their watch word as well as sensitize them on the consequences of any compromise of morality and accountability in any democracy. Politicians in Nigeria are noted for their ability to capitalize on any observed political immorality to derail and truncate the course of democracy and democratic governance. Consequently what constitute anti-social behaviours capable of truncating democracy can become flashpoints for critical thinking and focus of instruction so that people recognize and avoid them.

A critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations for sustaining democracy in Nigeria can strive to develop in learners the ability to strengthen and prioritize how to ensure that environmental conditions that give democracy a mission and a vision are adequately entrenched in the school syllabus and communicated to learners in manners that learners can put into practice. Learners can be sensitized in ways that through critical thinking, they can reflect on possible effects that strong institutions and nongovernmental organizations can have on Nigeria's democracy and through this way evolve strategies on how to explore such advantages. The earlier learners are sensitized on the role of nongovernmental organizations in sustaining democracy at their tender age, the better and stronger for Nigeria's democracy.

Critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations for the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria can prioritize the development of autonomous moral thinking skills in learners. The development of autonomous moral thinking skills can help equip learners with skills for the defense of democracy. It is self evident that learners' responses and approaches to democracy and democratic institutions can only be meaningful if learners can reason and take decisions on their own. When autonomous moral thinking is adequately emphasized and developed, youths who constitute the majority of Nigeria's population but are terribly marginalized can capitalize on their majority to launch a challenge on the political landscape that has been dominated by elders and through this way introduce new ideas and make their voices and aspirations felt in the political landscape of Nigeria. The prospect this has in sustaining democracy is that youths can rethink themselves and this rethinking results in their active participation in the democratic process, a practice that cumulatively has positive potentials for democracy.

Curricular and pedagogical innovations for sustaining and promoting democracy in Nigeria through critical thinking can strive to make provisions for learners to converge or gather together so as think certain issues through by means of discussion, debate and dialogue. Ability of learners to engage in discussions, arguments and reasonable deliberations can challenge them to critically think and through that way reach compromise upon which they can resolve political puzzles. It has to be noted and emphasized that developing learners' critical thinking skills and resorting to quality creative dialogue can be elixir and antidote for reconciling certain paradoxical features that are inherent in democracies. Equally, any creative dialogue for sustaining democracy in Nigeria can focus on educating citizens on empowerment strategies for improving the quality of their lives, bearing in mind that people are the livewire and engine block of any democracy. In this direction, critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations for sustaining democracy in Nigeria should build bridges upon which the various tribal and ethnic nationalities in Nigeria can

harmoniously co-exist. This is where the conscious introduction of civic and citizenship education devoid of parochial religious, cultural, ethnic and political bias should be reinvented.

In fact a critical thinking based curriculum and pedagogy can provoke learners into deep critical and creative thoughts on how to explore and turn around their general dissatisfaction and disenchantment with a political or democratic regime so much that their general dissatisfaction and disenchantment with a democratic and political regime becomes a source of motivation for their active participation in politics and democratic process and through this way work for the sustenance of democracy. Aspects of live problems that have resulted in upsurge in participation in democracy and democratic practice especially by minorities in Nigeria is their awareness that the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria has relied and capitalized on their participating in democracy and the democratic process to appropriate to themselves the resources of the state. The benefits of this to the survival and sustenance of democracy is that awareness on the root causes of the marginalization of the minorities in the Nigerian state has resulted in sensitizing the minorities for higher participation in politics, a development that is favourable to the sustenance of democracy.

The point is that a consciously thought out curriculum and pedagogy can stimulate learners into deep reflections whose targets can be how best to redress issues in a democracy or political regime which originally impaired their interests and satisfaction in democracy into better directions. Deeply rooting this approach into the curriculum and pedagogically carrying it out can correspond with standard methods of developing critical thinking skills in learners that focus on identifying live problems and making such live problems flashpoints and the focus upon which learners can think and resolve such live problems. In other words focusing critical thinking on Nigeria's fragile and wobbling democracy and democratic institutions can be a wake-up call for proffering solutions on ways of strengthening and salvaging democracy in Nigeria.

Democracy in practice survives through manipulative skills so much that an answer that was right in one context can be wrong in another context. To have skills for manipulation means that a player in the democratic game must be vibrant, robust and well grounded in critical thinking skills. Upon this a critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations must strive to develop the learners' abilities to use language and use language convincingly in addition to being knowledgeable in those key concepts in which democracy and democratic institutions preoccupy themselves with. It is only when learners are developed along the lines of manipulating the audience that one can have edge over others in convincing the public on his abilities to achieve the predetermined objectives of the state as well as the skills to manage intrigues, limitations and paradoxes in democracy and democratic institutions. In fact, the extent in which one can be rationally and cognitively articulate in issues of critical thinking especially about political matters could single him out as one who may have something to offer the masses.

Guided by this frame of mind, a critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations for sustaining democracy can strive to create sufficient awareness in learners that democracy is more of a theoretical rather than a practical ideal. What this in practice means is that education should create awareness in citizens to bear with the "disappointments" and "frustrations" resulting from unfulfilled promises and expectations that accompany every democracy and democratic regimes.

All the same, an attitude of mind education should develop in citizens in a democracy therefore is one of patience, understanding, tolerance, and perseverance and above all the spirit of hard work, which when guided by critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations can provide the masses routes and opportunities upon which they can sustain democracy and positively explore possibilities in democracy and democratic politics for the emancipation of man and his society.

CONCLUSION

This paper has made a passionate case for critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations for sustaining and salvaging democracy in Nigeria. Every keen observer in Nigeria and outside Nigeria can notice that the practice of democracy in Nigeria faces severe and terrible threats that result in bad governance and the lowering of the quality of lives of Nigerians so much that there are heightened threats to lives, property and the general security of Nigerians. In fact life assuring guarantees and safeguards usually associated with democracy in other climes are in downward trends in Nigeria so much that one can unambiguously conclude that Nigerians are more on exploring the negative and contradictory features associated with democracy.

True, democracy as a human creation may not be perfect as it has potentials to be messy, more fragile than any other system of government and may be the most difficult system of government to operate and establish, very unpredictable and whose promises and assurance of equality, justice and egalitarianism never sees the light of the day or comes to fruition, rather in place of its promises and safeguards, democracy turns out to produce disappointments and frustrations among the majority of those who longed for it. However, one relief and heartwarming thing about democracy is that it is adjudged globally to have edge above all other systems of governments. The edge democracy has above other systems of government, coupled with its global recognition and acceptance is what this paper wants humanity in general and Nigerians in particular to explore through a critical thinking based curriculum and pedagogy. The paper takes this position on the premise that there is no substitute to positive thinking and positive thinking especially at the evaluative, insightful and critical thinking levels can be a platform upon which man can resolve all his political, cultural, economic, moral, scientific and technological problems.

We have basically argued and maintained that critical thinking based curricular and pedagogical innovations can among other things achieve this task by prioritizing the creation of instructional opportunities for dialogues, arguments and deliberations on one hand as well as developing in learners the cognitive abilities to identify live situations from the vast arrays of the undemocratic, obnoxious and not-too-orderly practices that are fast becoming norms in Nigeria and consequently make such dialogues, arguments and deliberations to centre on such discoveries. Developing learners along these lines can create opportunities whereby learners can put into practice all the abstract theoretical concepts, permutations and formulations they have learnt about democracy and through this way reinvent democracy in Nigeria like it is in other climes to the point where its inherent contradictions, paradoxes and puzzles can be effectively explored for the advancement of man not only in Nigeria but globally.

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