Strengthening Nigeria's Democracy through Education

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Abstract*: The paper examined the concept of democracy, its principles and basic implication. It contends that while it deals with individual freedom to choose leaders the bottom-line is the ability of the government to meet the basic necessities of life and guarantee fundamental human rights, peace, unity, security and prosperity of the nation. It further analyzed both democracy and education as cultural concepts pointing out that democracy is basically culture and education is a cultural institution best designed to transmit all forms of culture from one generation to another. In this context, the role of education in nurturing democratic governance is indispensable. The paper also discussed the national, continental and global philosophies of education which assigned education the responsibility of nurturing democracy and nation-building. Finally, it highlighted critical issues in education that must be addressed to move democracy in Nigeria forward. These include the persistent 13 million out-of-school children syndrome and "almajiri" system, raising the quality of teaching and learning in schools, filling the teacher gap and improving teacher quality, eradicating illiteracy, reducing poverty, and promoting civil and religious education, social inclusion, multiculturalism in curriculum, self-reliance and entrepreneurship among others.*

Keywords*: Democracy, Education, Freedom, Prosperity, Unity.*

I.   Introduction

This paper was written at the invitation of the Association of Sociologists of Education of Nigeria (ASEN) and presented and delivered as a Keynote at its 13th Annual National Conference in 2019. The theme of the conference was "*Education and Enduring Democracy in Nigeria*". Therefore, the paper looked at the concepts of democracy and education and implications for deepening the democratic culture of Nigeria. More specifically, the paper analysed the global, continental and national philosophies of education, the challenges and measures that must be taken to move democracy forward in Nigeria.

Indeed, democracy is an important focus at this time when there is a heightened concern about how best to build the Nigerian nation. It is one thing to have a country and another to have a nation. There are many entities existing as a country but lacking the ingredients of nationhood. Nigerian have got a country, but they also need to build a nation. A country is a geographical entity with political administration, but a nation is an enduring community of people with strong social bonds, unity, caring, sharing and progress. A nation is expected to have "unity in diversity and diversity in unity" [1]. A nation creates genuine brotherhood (and sisterhood) and forges a feeling of common destiny and egalitarianism. There is no doubt that Nigeria is steadily matching towards nationhood, but there is much work to do.

Sociologists are scientists of society – they devote their time studying the workings of societies across the globe. They understudy the social institutions, laws, theories, principles, and practices that promote social harmony and progress in the society. For this reason, it is wise to listen to sociologists in any discourse about nation-building. It is even more imperative to listen to sociologists of education when there is need to understand how society and education interact. Such interaction may be reciprocal, mutual, and symbiotic in the sense that education strengthens society while in turn society creates the type of education system that reflects its realities. But on a more serious note, education is inseparable from society; it is rather the engine and pivot of society because it is the primary mechanism for generating and imparting the philosophy, vision, mission, knowledge, competences, and values of society from one generation to another. Therefore, the strength, character and prosperity of a society are intricately linked with its education system. In these respects, sociologists of education have much to contribute to the discourse about the right political philosophy, principles, and practices towards nurturing the mind of the citizens, empowering their skills and competences, and developing appropriate value system to drive a globally competitive and prosperous democratic nation.

II. The Concept Of Democracy

Democracy may conjure different meanings to different people in various linguistic, political, and cultural contexts and this is why for an academic exercise, it is important to define the key terms involved in a discourse. Democracy may, therefore, refer to "an abstract ideal, a political procedure, a set of political outcomes, or a specific regime" [2]. The term, however, consists of two Greek words, *demos* (meaning people) and *kratos* (power or rule). It originated in the fifth century within the city-state of Athens in Greece [3].

One of the earliest and elementary definition of democracy is, "Government of the people, by the people and for the people". This expression was contained in what became known as one of the most famous addresses delivered in the history of the United States. That address was given by America's former, renowned President, Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War as he dedicated the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on 19th November 1863 - Gettysburg was the place of the bloodiest battle during the American Civil War [4, 5].
He said:

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate - we can not consecrate - we can not hallow -this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us - that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion - that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain - that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom - and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth. [6]

In the book titled, "*Abraham Lincoln: A Legacy of Freedom*" published in 2009 by the U.S. Department of State to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Lincoln, he (Lincoln) was again quoted to have said:

**"As I would not be a slave,
so I would not be a master.
This expresses my idea of democracy.
Whatever differs from this,
to the extent of the difference,
is no democracy." [7]**

Lincoln's speech and idea about democracy are still moving today as they were 156 years ago. **To him, democracy simply means freedom: no more, no less; no one should be a slave, neither should anyone be a master over the destinies of others**. Nigeria has fought battles, not just a Civil War, but also battles against hunger and abject poverty, against corruption and misrule by both military dictatorships and civilian cohorts; and against *tribalism* and religious bigotry; and the nation is still fighting these battles till this day. It is time to resolve to build a nation and to give a new lease of life to the citizens. Over the years, the grammars and esoteric languages used in the conferences have not translated into tangible benefits of democracy for the ordinary citizens. The benefits will be realized only when the individuals at the grassroots can be empowered to meet their basic necessities of life, enjoy the fundamental right to life, freedom of speech, and equal opportunities and life chances, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, political ideology and physical abilities or disabilities.

Democracy is about the how people are governed – the distribution of power and the consequences of that upon the fundamental human rights and welfare of the people. Therefore, the fulcrum of democracy is politics and Maitah [8] states that "politics, in the broad sense is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live". A more poignant and popular definition of politics was however given by Lasswell, as "**Who Gets What, When, How**" [9]. In the preface to his work, he stated that the working attitude and skill of practicing politicians are to calculate the "probable changes in influence and the influential". Here again, it means that democracy is about who gets what, when and how. It is about *power* and the distribution of the scare resources of a social group or nation. This underscores why democracy must be judged based on the well-being of the citizenry. Max Weber defines power as the "the ability of an individual or group to achieve their own goals or aims when others are trying to prevent them from realising them" [10]. Power, therefore, is about achieving one's will over others. This is why power must be legitimate and freely given by the citizens so that it is seen to be exercised in public interest and for the common good of the greatest number of citizens.

The United Nations 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* established the framework for the exercise of power in human society. Article 01 of the Declaration asserted that "all human beings are born free and equal

in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" [11]. There is a total of 30 Articles of the Declaration which defined and delineated the fundamental human rights and freedoms. These include right to life; freedom of opinion and expression; and "freedom of peaceful assembly and association", among others. Article 21 touched more specifically on what constitutes democratic ideals. It states:

(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
(2) Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.
(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures. [11]

The Constitutions of many democratic nations, including Nigeria, have also domesticated and contextualized the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thus, Nigeria's 1999 Constitution subscribed to the universal democratic tenets by declaring inter alia:

We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Having firmly and solemnly resolved, to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God, dedicated to the promotion of inter-African solidarity, world peace, international co-operation and understanding

And to provide for a Constitution for the purpose of promoting the good government and welfare of all persons in our country, on the principles of freedom, equality and justice, and for the purpose of consolidating the unity of our people

Do hereby make, enact and give to ourselves the following Constitution ... [12]

Constitutionalism as the foundation of the Nigerian nation expects that governance must be according to the terms and intents of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Constitution guarantees freedom and equality of all citizens and justice for all. It also empowers the citizens to democratically choose their leaders who shall represent their interests and protect and preserve the Constitution. For Nigeria, therefore, democracy entails the unfettered implementation and adherence of all persons to the provisions of the Constitution.

One of the most useful clarifications of the meaning of representative democracy was given by Sorensen [13]. This clarification has been copiously quoted and reviewed by authors and re-published in 2014 by the Cambridge University Press. Sorensen examined the wave of democratizations across the world and the generalizations about democracy in contemporary times and pointed out two conflicting definitions of democracy: "One defines democracy as limited government and competitive elections. The other focuses on the citizen's ability to determine social and economic structure and the accountability of the state to the public" [14]. He adopted the former definition because he believed it makes it easier to "identify democracy … as a form of government', and thus avoid the need to examine the social and economic system" [14]. Nevertheless, he pointed out that it is impossible to discuss democracy without ultimately delving into the socio-economic impact. This implied that Sorensen wanted to see democracy as being limited to the issues of government and limited elections, excluding issues about whether or not the people are having socio-economic benefits. However, he emphasized that his position is for analytical purpose only; and that democracy must ultimately be assessed based on how far it is able to meet the social and economic needs and empowerment the people at the grassroots. This clarification is important because some theoreticians may be primarily concerned with governance and its rules without much attention to the impact of governance. The impact of governance is as important as the question of the technical and theoretical definitions of democracy and the two must be examined jointly. This point has been stressed from the beginning of this paper. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung [3] also provided details of other core characteristics and principles of democratic governance. They include the exercise of power and responsibility by all eligible adult citizens; rule by the majority but with consideration to the opinions of the minority; guarding against an all-powerful central government; protection of basic human rights and freedoms; regular, free, and fair elections; and commitment to the values of tolerance, cooperation and compromise [3].

III. Nigeria's Democracy – The Journey So Far

Nigeria's democracy has a checkered history. The country was born on January 1, 1914 through the Amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by Lord Frederick Lugard, the then colonial Governor General [15]. From that point Nigeria evolved through years of agitation for constitutional reforms and eventually got independence on October 1. 1960. With independence, the indigenous elites took overpower from the colonial authorities and engaged in struggles that resulted in the political crises of the late 1960s and then the Civil War. From the time of the war till 1999, the military dominated the political landscape with a little breeding space for democratic governance in 1979-1983 (termed the Second Republic), 1985-1993 (Third Republic) and again 1999 till date (Fourth Republic). A spectacular case was the military junta's "fatal" annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections generally perceived throughout the world as the best and fairest election in the history of Nigeria. It was fatal because it reversed one of the most important democratic gains in the history of Nigeria which was a situation where the President and Vice President, both Muslims, received the generous votes of all parts of Nigeria irrespective of religious or ethnic background. If that success was allowed to thrive, perhaps Nigeria could have by now established an enduring democracy. It was therefore fatal because it did not only rob Nigeria of the opportunity to consolidate democracy but also intensified the divisive ethnic and religious politics in Nigeria. Even in 2014 as Nigeria clocked one hundred years since amalgamation, many commentators still described the country in various terms such as 'ethnic mosaic', mere 'geographical expression' and 'artificial creation' [15]. Some analysts outrightly declared that the Fourth Republic had failed [16].

In his study of the waves of democratization across the developing countries [13], arrived at four generalizations and this was summarized by Holm [14] as follows: (a) Powerful forces remain outside the control of the democratic institutions (e.g. the military); (b) most of the democratic openings are founded on a frail cultural base of ethnic conflict and patrimonialism; (c) the new democratic regimes lack the capacity to deal with the economic problems which caused the downfall of their predecessors; and (d) in all areas, civil society has been expanded through the popular mobilization, thus an improved social basis for consolidation of democracy. This schema proposed by Sorensen describes Nigeria's typical experience with democracy. The military elite and politicians with military background had remained powerful in the democratic dispensation; ethnicity and religion still threaten to erode the democratic dividends; and the successive civilian administrations have been grossly unable to lift the people out of poverty and other socio-economic woes. Nevertheless, the voice of the civil society and freedom of speech have been promoted in the civilian than military eras.

Political scientists and political sociologists have tried to explain the factors that determined the political developments of many nations. The enquiries gave birth to several theories one of which is the *elite theory*. This theory posits that the political development of most nations is determined by the struggle for power among the elites. Nwokeocha [17] analyzed the elite theory citing various sources (e.g. Bloomsbury, 2004; Khan, 2012; Vergara, 2013). According to him, elites are "a small group of people in a group or society who have high status, power and special advantages" [18]. They are individuals "with vastly disproportionate control over or access to resources" such that the study of elites is actually a study of power and inequality [19]. They are also "a selected and small group of citizens and/or organizations that controls a large amount of power [20]. Vergara described elites as a group constantly seeking differentiation or distinction from the rest of the people in a group or society. The elites are also of different types and include the political, economic, military, and religious elites.

The elite theory helps significantly to understand the history of democracy in Nigeria. The political and military gladiators of Nigeria more than any other group have been responsible for what Nigeria is today – still a fledgling democracy 59 years after independence [1, 16, 21, 22]. The political development has been basically shaped by the struggle among the elites to control power and scarce resources of the nation. In doing so, they evoke ethnic and religious sentiments to divide the people while they plunder the resources and commonwealth. Babatola [21] described ethnicity and religion as the key propellers of the politics in post-colonial Nigeria, and for most of the post-colonial Africa. He cited the post-colonial crises in Africa such as the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970, Belgian Congo crisis, the Rwandan genocide, Liberian civil war and many others as the direct consequences of ethnic politicization in Africa. In his words, "since Nigeria has demonstrated a very high propensity for ethnic and religious violence in the past three decades (1960-1990), the hardening of ethno-regional positions and proliferation of ethnic militias has unleashed varying degrees of violence on Nigerian State and the citizenry [21]. Similarly, Brown [15] described the one hundred years of Nigeria's centenary history as being characterized by "ethnicity, corruption, violent military intervention, civil war and electoral malfeasance".

A stock-taking of Nigeria's socio-economic and political down-turns shows that countries which were once poorer than Nigeria (e.g. Singapore, South Korea and Brazil) have now become advanced while Nigeria is still home to the poorest of the poor in the world [23] – Nigeria now has higher number of the poor than India

which has a population of over one billion people. Nigeria used to give aid to South Korea but it now gives aid to Nigeria [24]. According to Oxfam [25], 69% or more of Nigerians live below poverty line, that is, about 100 million Nigerians earn less than one US Dollar a day. India used to hold this unenviable "title", but Nigeria has taken it over. From the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Nigeria report, Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.532 which placed it among the group of countries with low human development, and Nigeria ranked 157 out of 189 countries and territories in terms of human development [26]. Focusing specifically on the on-going war again terrorism in the North East, the Report of the UNDP Nigeria in part states thus:

In terms of the political and governance systems, the report is unequivocal that the Boko Haram insurgency is in a significant sense, a response to the consequences of progressive failure of governance; particularly in so far as Nigeria's North East is concerned. A key failure cited is the persistence of governance deficits that appear to torpedo or frustrate the freedom of political choice. But the report has also made reference to the ideological underpinning of Boko Haram in particular; the spirited effort to render it as a potent counter-argument and rebellion against pervasive governance deficit and resultant low levels of development. When the perception of bad governance is coupled with widespread poverty, the youth have become highly skeptical about a democratic system that has brought them little benefit and only serve the interests of a small political elite. Hopelessness and frustrations as a result of unemployment and widespread poverty have therefore lured the largely youthful population to embrace resistance. [26]

Based on the foregoing, we dare to say that the poverty of Nigeria, in the midst of huge natural resources and amazing human potentials, has been a direct consequence of the failure of political leadership. The leaders have been self-serving [27] with Nigeria ranking consistently among the corrupt countries in the world. Ogbeidi [28] asserted that Nigeria's political leadership and corruption are interwoven. According to the author, the institutionalization of corruption is a notable surviving legacy of the successive military and political leadership of the country. Arguing that qualitative growth and development is always a product of good governance, he recalled the views of Nigeria's ace novelist, Chinua Achebe who opined thus:

The trouble with Nigeria…is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land, climate, water, air, or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to their responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership. [28]
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It is instructive that there has been no correlation between the personal wealth of the political gladiators and the level of the development of their states of origin or religious group which they claimed to defend. The individual elites have become stupendously rich (having private jets and other paraphernalia of materialism) while the masses across Nigeria, including those in their villages, states, mosques and churches have become increasingly impoverished. This exposes the lies told by the elites that they are defending the interest of the nation or interest of their tribes and religion. An irony here is that the elites of different tribes and religions are united as they share the wealth of the nation but the masses, who are the victims of the mis-governance, are divided along ethnic and religious lines in defense of the elites. Poverty and ignorance are afflicting the people with no regards to ethnicity or religion. Nigerian roads are impassable, and security of life and property has become a luxury affordable only by a few. The poor in Sokoto, Maidugri, Abuja, Lagos, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Ibadan or wherever they may be in Nigeria are facing the same hardships, unable to meet the bare necessities of life. How then can education help to open the eyes of the masses to the lies being told by the elites? How can education help the poor to know that the politics of ethnicity, religion and violence engineered by the political gladiators have not benefited the nation? How then can education help to fashion out good governance that can pull the citizens out of their desperate situation? These are some of the burning questions that a conference on sociology of education should address.

Yes, Nigeria has made some gains from what it used to be under the military, but it is still "a long walk to freedom" [29]. The freedom of speech and mobilization of the civil society have improved far more than obtained under the era of military dictatorship. Also, Nigeria has proved to be resilient especially by overcoming doomsayers who predicted that the nation would disintegrate after the general elections. Instead, Nigeria has seen peaceful hand-over of power from one civilian administration to another. The climax of this was the administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan where, as a sitting President, he lost election and called to congratulate the winner, President Muhammadu Buhari. He peacefully surrendered the vestiges of power and moved on with his life. That was a rare development in the political history of Africa and had set a continental standard for leadership. Thus, sociologists of education should map the areas where Nigeria has done well in its

democratic experiment in order to strengthen them while also determine the vices that still plague the nation so as to address them.

Though Nigeria has made a modest progress, the building of the institutions and entrenchment of the democratic values are far from attaining international levels. Barack Obama, the former American President once said that "Africa doesn't need strongmen, it needs strong institutions" [30]. He asked African citizens to take charge of their destiny and hold their governments accountable. According to him, "ongoing struggle for democratic and accountable rule would be more significant in building the continent's future than the liberation struggles of times past" [30]. Therefore, sociologists of education are expected to devote substantial time to discuss how education can contribute to the building of **strong institutions**. But what is an institution, one may ask? Sociologically speaking, *institutions are patterns of behaviour or way of life that are relatively permanent and regulated by norms and values in society*. There is a strong belief that education has a lot to contribute towards helping the nation to adjust to the democratic way of life. Education has the power to mold the behaviour of individuals, create institutions and define and refine norms and values that can be supportive of the democratic institutions and culture.

IV.   Educating For Enduring Democracy In Nigeria
4.1 Democracy and Education as Cultural Concepts

In a nutshell, democracy is the totality of how a people wish to be governed. This may be broken down into political philosophies, aspirations, knowledge, competences, norms, and values which are all integral part of the cultural life of the people. Classically, culture has been defined as a "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired my man as a member of society" [31]. Therefore, democracy is essentially part of culture. Education is the process for transmitting culture from generation to generation. It helps society to impart the complex whole called culture, as such no human capabilities and habits are outside the potential influence of education. In the words of the great educator, Obanya [32], "culture is education and education is culture". If therefore, democracy is part of culture, it means that education can powerfully determine its future in Nigeria. Consequently, subthemes such as multi-party democracy system, voting right, political inclusiveness, social justice, freedom, national integration and policy making, social welfare, the rule of law, accountability and transparency, political responsibility, national reconciliation and national consciousness and many other tenets of democracy can also be described as cultural issues and education can have powerful impact on all of them. Most of the syndromes that tend to draw back the Nigeria's advancement, such as the "African time syndrome" and "Nigerian factor" are all matters of culture that can be addressed through education.

Nevertheless, education cannot be a magic wand that can solve all problems of society where the information and communication technology (particularly the social media), globalization, religious ideologies, family values and even peer pressure are also competing strongly for the attention of the citizen. Therefore, partnership and mutual reinforcement between education and these other equally significant agents of socialization which are strong competitors should be contemplated. A situation where the family value and lifestyle fall short of the national expectation; political office holders and few privileged public servants engage in corrupt practices and conspicuous consumption; sermons in the religious houses extol religious and ethnic divisions; peer groups celebrate delinquency and wallop in drug abuse; the teeming youth have no job; crime seems to be a guaranteed quick way to get rich; and law enforcement seems weak or compromised; it will be naive to expect that education alone can absolutely cure all the ills. Thus, the need for education to work cooperatively with the other agencies cannot be over-emphasized. Renaissance in education must go together with national reorientation.

To adequately make its contribution towards an enduring democracy, education requires more than a cursory attention: in the twenty first century, the concern is not just education but **quality education**. This idea underlies the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4-Education which is about "*inclusive and equitable quality education" and "lifelong learning opportunities for all*" [33]. The philosophy of education at the national, continental, and global levels today advocates that education should be about what "works", that is, education should improve those things that are relevant to the socio-cultural environment and economic and political needs of the people as well as global competitiveness. According to Julius Nyerere, former Tanzanian President, in his theory of "education for self-reliance" and "education for liberation", any education that cannot solve the immediate needs of the people is of no value [34]. Kassam [35] recalled Nyerere's philosophy in some detail:

His philosophy of adult education resonates with the concepts of 'conscientization', empowerment and liberation very akin to the ideas expressed in Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, while his ideas on adult learning are very similar to the theories and principles of adult learning of such renowned adult educators as Malcolm Knowles of United States and J. Roby Kidd of Canada.

According to Nyerere, education must serve the common good and foster the social goals of living together and working together. Education must help in the development of a society in which all members share its resources fairly equally. Education must inculcate a sense of commitment to society. [35]

The take-away from Nyerere's philosophy of education is that education must be geared primarily towards resolving immediate needs of society and that education must serve as a vehicle for progressive change.

4.2 The International and National Philosophies of Education and the Democratic Vision

The African Union "*Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*" [36] seeks to promote the democratic ideals declared by the United Nations in 1948. A glance at the seven Aspirations of the African Union (Box 1), which constitute the Agenda for 2063, more than anything else calls for democratic governance across the continent.

> **Box 1: Aspirations for the Africa We Want**
>
> A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.
> An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance.
> An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.
> A peaceful and secure Africa.
> An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics.
> An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African. people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner.
> [36]

Since Nigeria is a signatory to the African Union Agenda 2063, it can be rightly said that the African aspirations are one and the same with Nigeria's aspirations and democratic ideals. The African Union also designed an education framework, *Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025)* [37] to actualize Agenda 2063. Thus, CESA is the African Union's response to Agenda 2063 and SDG 4-Education. The CESA's "*Six Guiding Principles*", "*Seven Pillars*" and "*Twelve Strategic Objectives*" vividly illustrate how the global and continental Agenda are tied to education. For instance, the CESA guiding principles state that education is the key driver of the kind of citizens, human capital and globally competitive society envisioned by Agenda 2063. That is to say that the continent has abiding faith in the efficacy and ability of education to serve as a vehicle to translate society's visions into reality.

At the national level, what is the philosophy of education? What is the nation's faith in the education system and what does the nation think education can help to achieve? The answers to these questions are stated in simple ways in the *National Policy on Education* [38]. According to the Policy, the overarching philosophy of Nigeria are to (a) "Live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice"; and (b) "Promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding" [38]. The philosophy of education then comprises the following beliefs:

  i.   Education is an instrument for national development and social change;
 ii.   Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria;
iii.   Education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society;
 iv.   Education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges; and
  v.   Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional, and relevant to the needs of the society. [38]

Clearly, therefore, the national philosophy is tied to the philosophy of education. The latter believes that a united, harmonious, indivisible, indissoluble, democratic, and sovereign nation operating on the basis of freedom, equality and justice can only be possible through the use of education as an instrument for development and change, promotion of unity, human capital development, and equality of educational opportunities for all. Most importantly, the National Policy on Education expects the education system to be the hinge of the five national goals contained in the Constitution of Nigeria. The five national goals are:

  i.   a free and democratic society;
 ii.   a just and egalitarian society;
iii.   united, strong and self-reliant nation;
 iv.   a great and dynamic economy; and
  v.   a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

The foregoing demonstrates unequivocally that education has a great role to play in determining the democratic future of the nation.

4.3 Overarching Issues in Education for Good Governance

Having demonstrated the affinity between democracy and education, especially the belief that quality education is a sine qua non for good governance, there is much that education needs to do to move governance in Nigeria forward. These include re-examination of curriculum; educating the 13 million or more out-of-school and a*lmajiri* children roaming the streets; enhancing quality of learning for the children that are in school; eradicating illiteracy; reducing poverty; and promoting self-reliance and entrepreneurship [39, 40, 41,42]. The issues of civic education and inculcation of religious virtues equally occupy important place on what needs to be done; and social inclusion and multiculturalism in curriculum are imperative and must be fostered through education [43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51]. Teacher shortages need to be addressed and quality teachers are indispensable [52, 53, 54, 55]. Education policies that complement and promote the virtues of the National Youth Service Corps are still highly desirable, as well as the need to continue to promote social harmony through the unity schools (Federal Government Colleges). Some of these issues have become a burden on the education system and whatever we say about nurturing an enduring democracy without adequately addressing these may have limited impact. For instance, Nigeria has the largest number of out of school children in the world. The children grow up to become adults who must cast their votes during election. But with ignorance coupled with poverty and disease afflicting the populace, it will be impossible for them to make informed political decisions or to withstand the manipulations of the political class. Similarly, teaching and learning in Nigeria are still passing through a crisis phase where learning assessments indicate that the children do not attain the learning objectives, and that teachers are in shortage and their quality is below the national professional standards [40, 41]. It follows that imparting the proper democratic values and empowering the citizens politically and economically may suffer setbacks unless these educational challenges are addressed.

Furthermore, many conferences had recommended education reforms. In this respect it is important to review an important paper by the revered Professor of Education, Pai Obanya, titled "Reforming Education Reforms" that recommendations for education reform can be better guided. He reviewed education reforms in Nigeria and Africa over the decades and found out that they were marked by either partial success or outright failures: None succeeded completely. He found out that the reforms had common deficiencies which he described with phrases such as "Adding on and on", "Patch-Patch Alterations", "Jumping the Guns", "Doing the Wrong Things for the Wrong Reasons", Hop-Step-but-no-jump", and "Old Wines in New Bottles". He therefore advocated a paradigm shift from transactional to transformational reform advocacies. He believed that the old types of reforms were merely transactional and bordered on toying with bits and pieces of issues in education whereas transformational strategies "involves taking a systematic view of needed changes in education, acting selectively and strategically by acting on educational challenge areas that are the most likely to impact meaningfully on the system, and in ways that add value" [56]. In other words, recommendations for education reform must be well thought-out, holistic, integrated and evidence based. They must not be adjunct but rather take into cognizance the overall education system and ensure alignment with national and international frameworks and be consistent and coherent with overall operations of the education system and realities of the nation.

V. Conclusion

It may then be apt to round up the discussion about how education can contribute to good governance by citing at length the views of the great sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. What he said in 1960, reproduced here below, is still relevant, 59 years after:

Our human and natural resources are great potentialities which, if properly organized and deployed, will bring prosperity and orderly progress to our nation as well as contribute to the contentment of the world in general. I make bold to assert that the prosperity, strength and the influence which a nation possesses depend on the following factors – (a) a large population which is enlightened, disciplined, nationalistic and loyal enough to make any requisite sacrifice, be it of money, time or even life, for the cause of the fatherland; (b) the possession of natural resources in considerable measure, and the intensive exploitation of such resources for the benefit of the nation and humanity at large; (c) a large pool of master-minds or experts in every walk of life who, out of a sense of mission to the nation and humanity, are determined to ensure maximum results in their respective callings.

It must be admitted that we are at present deficient in some of these essential factors. Our teeming millions are still far from being sufficiently enlightened. A public opinion strong and healthy enough to discourage irresponsibility and rascality in public life still has to be developed. A sense of civic responsibility on the part of

the generality of our people is still to be cultivated. Our natural resources, to which reference has been made, have little or no value for our people unless we apply to them, for their exploitation, a vast supply of capital, a strong and large body of technicians as well as persons with managerial skill. [57]

The statements above are from Awolowo's autobiography. He dedicated the book to **"A new and free Nigeria where individual freedom and more abundant life are guaranteed to all her citizens"**. These are still the earnest desires of Nigerians till this day. Modest gains have been made but as stated earlier, it is still "a long walk to freedom". Education has an important role to play in achieving individual freedom and more abundant life for the citizens. Sociologists of education should therefore fashion out a feasible roadmap for a more decisive intervention of the education system in the nation's march towards freedom, self-governance, unity, and prosperity.

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