



Rousseau's Social Contract as an Archetype of Education for Political Leadership in Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to examine Rousseau's Social Contract (RSC) with the view to determining its applicability as an archetype of education for political leadership in Nigeria. The work utilizes data through secondary sources and relies on the logical inference, ideal statements and axiological questions as a framework of analysis to explore incidences of corruption and its effects on Nigeria's developmental strides. It understudies the true imagery of a Nigerian political leader and the corrosive effects of corrupt practices of the Nigerian political leaders on the educational system. Based on the analysis, it is obvious that a Nigerian political leader is a political animal who makes the law and breaks it. Who cannot give up corrupt practices for personal gains. Who suppresses every opposition to assume leadership position for the purpose of having access to unlimited funds. Who through his corrupt practices has fueled the rate of poverty, reduced the gross domestic product and retards investment. The work equally revealed that the only trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. Consequently, the paper concludes that a failed leadership state needs to cast its glance to a well-articulated and coordinated policy such as RSC in order to groom and nurture its ruling class to rise to their responsibility to the challenge of personal example which is the hallmark of true leadership.

Introduction

The concern of any good Nigerian at the moment is on how to get a good leader who will guarantee political stability for sustainable national development. Politics in Nigeria, based on the immediate state of art is a do or die affair. All political and other available means have been employed by the Nigerian political leaders to 'grab' power including the blatant rigging of elections, manipulation of census figures, violence, thuggery, arson, vandalism, gangsterism, corruption, religious bigotry, regionalism, tribalism, ethnic sentiments and acts of brigandage as perceived in the utterances of some delegates in the 2014 national conference. While puzzling over the above state of affairs, a good Nigerian would be forced to inquire whether the Nigerian political leaders care about integrity and hard work in government services or money and power.

The present Nigerian society is what it is because; the Nigerian political leaders are what they

are. Counting from the flag of political independence in 1960, Nigerian leaders and their regimes have been deeply engrossed in excessive acts of corruption and bad governance. The issue of getting the right leadership to fight corruption and propel good governance has been a persistent issue in Nigeria. The ricochet effects of the failure of leadership, corruption and bad governance are visible and being felt across all sectors and segments of the Nigerian society such as unemployment and employment for cash, insecurity, crude oil thefts, crisis in education, dearth of infrastructures and others. In Nigeria, it is evident that the corrosive effects of the corrupt practices of the Nigerian political leaders have increased the rate of poverty, reduced the gross domestic product, retards investment and decrease in the national foreign reserve and earnings. Corruption has been adjudged to be responsible for Nigeria's underdevelopment. The revelation by the Economic and Financial Crimes

Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and allied Commission (ICPC) concerning looted resources by private businessmen, political office holders and civil servants is alarming to the extent that one ponders whether the menace can actually be stamped out in the country. These maladies in the view of Mbaji (2013) protrudes because a Nigerian in the public office first thinks of himself and what he stands to gain, not what he should contribute for the cause of national unity and progress. If truth be told, a society that is unjust and devoid of equity and equality will inherently be unstable. To this end, issues and questions worth posing are: are Nigerian political leaders really committed to the ideal of productive service and sustainable development? Considering the ravaging authority looting by the highly placed government officials, can the economy guarantee sustainable development or economic woes? Can anything be done to rescue the Nigerian economy? These kind of issues cannot be answered and resolved by chance. This is because; they are questions addressing the main question. The focus of this paper therefore is to ascertain how Rousseau's social contract can be employed as an archetype of education for Political leadership in Nigeria. However, for the purpose of conceptual clarifications and to limit the level of ambiguity, which as a standard is the hallmark of academic research, it is essential to look at some of the concepts and terms that are used in this study such as Rousseau's social contract, education and political leadership.

Conceptual Analysis on Rousseau's Social Contract, Education and Political Leadership

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a citizen of Switzerland; French descendant and philosopher, social and political theorist, musician, botanist, and one of the most eloquent writers of the age of enlightenment. Rousseau was born in Geneva on June 28, 1712, and was raised by an aunt and uncle following the death of his mother few days after his birth. He was apprenticed at the age of 13 to an engraver, but after three years he ran away and became secretary and companion to Madame Louise de Warens, a wealthy and charitable woman who had a profound influence in his life and writings. According to Redmond (2009), Rousseau later became a close friend of Denis Diderot (1713-1784), French Encyclopedist and philosopher, who commissioned him to write articles on music for the French *Encyclopédie*. Thereafter, Rousseau's unconventional views antagonized French

and Swiss authorities and alienated many of his friends, and in 1762 he fled first to Prussia and then to England. There he was befriended by the Scottish historian and philosopher David Hume (1711-1776), but they later parted ways and denounced each other in public letters. Rousseau's social life was often characterized by conflicts and resolutions which had profound influence on his philosophical writings. Some fruits of his prolific writings include Discourse on Political Economy, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, Emile, Education, Confessions and Social Contract.

The social contract theory of Rousseau is his critical exposition of the life of man in the society. Rousseau begins by reflecting on how man existed in the state of nature, that is, before the society emerged. He then proceeds to look at the evaluation of the society and its consequences for man. His target was to find out the legitimate ground for the governing of men in the society. Rousseau believes that men had natural liberty at the state of nature. He also asserts that the instinct for self-preservation is natural in all men. However, as men progressed in the exercise of their liberty in the state of nature, they experienced obstacles in their struggle for self-preservation. Such obstacles range from conflicts of interests to the inability of each man to provide enough resources to satisfy his needs. Rousseau thinks that there is the problem of how to organize men in the society. Their coming and working together forms what he interchangeably calls the social contract, social compact, body politic or sovereignty. What then is education?

Education as a concept owes its origin from the following Latin words-Educare, Educere and Educatum. Educare means to rise up or bring up or nourish". It indicates that the child is to be brought up or nourished keeping certain aims and ideals. Educere denotes to lead out or to draw out". In this regard, education through its process draws out of the best what is inside the learner. Educatum indicates the act of teaching or training. It throws light on the principles and practice of teaching. It means educating the learner as well providing training facilities for his all round development. In this context, all round development should be conceived as the aim of education. This implies that a person is educated if only the education he receives helps him to find solutions to whatever problems that confront him and his society. This informed Plato's (1941) conception of education that education is not for personal growth but service of the state, which is the guarantor of the happiness of its citizens for as long as they allow it to be the

embodiment of justice. In consequence, that one is a trained medical doctor, teacher, or lawyer does not make him an educated man. For such a person to be looked upon as an educated man he must be virtuous; he must be good, he must be an ideal citizen. An educated man should have access to optimal state of the mind regardless of the situation in which he is. He should be attracted to good, repulsed to evil, perceive accurately, think clearly and act effectively to achieve communal or societal goals. This is an archetype of an educated gentleman that Plato (1913) recommended to assume office or pilot the affairs of a given state as political leaders.

Political leadership according to Ogbeidi (2012), is a generic word that is used while referring to the ruling class that bears the responsibility of managing the affairs and resources of a political entity by setting and influencing policy priorities affecting the territory through different decision-making structures and institutions created for the orderly development of the territory. It could also be described as the human element that operates the machineries of government on behalf of an organized territory. This includes people who hold decision making positions in government, and people who seek those positions, whether by means of election, coup d'état, appointment, electoral fraud, conquest, right of inheritance or other means. With particular reference to the Nigerian society, political leadership goes beyond the ruling elites that directly manage the affairs of a territory; it embraces the totality of the political class that has the capacity to manipulate the machineries of government even from behind the scene. Going by the above analogy, the question then is this: is there any difference between political leaders in other countries of the world such as the United States of America, Germany, Russia, Brazil to mention but a few, and the Nigerian political leaders? Or in other words, who is a Nigerian political leader? This work is therefore set out to address the above questions

Analysis of the True Imagery of a Nigerian Political Leader

The nature of this subheading is obvious considering the unwrap activities of the Nigerian political leaders. This is because, if the writers submit that Nigerian political leaders are the ruling class as well good leaders that bear the responsibility of managing the affairs and resources of the country so as to guarantee political stability for sustainable national development, their submission may be viewed as an ironic or sardonic statement. This being the case, the

question followed by is still: who then is a Nigerian political leader?

Considering the situation in which the Nigerian state has found herself since independence, a Nigerian political leader could be described as a leader in its quest to secure or retain power, suppress every opposition, and have access to unlimited funds for personal use. They are leaders who have sacrificed positive leadership on the altar of corruption. To unveil the true portrait of the Nigerian political leaders in actual practice, Abah and Nwoba (2016) relates that a Nigerian political leader specifically; the formal Governor of the Bayelsa State, Diepreye Alamieyesigha was arrested on 40 counts of corruption and money laundering. Consequently, In July, 2006 British authorities returned about 1 million pounds of the alleged illicit gains that he kept in British, banks. What a pity? In addition to the analysis, in April 2005, the former Nigerian president, president Obasanjo sacked Housing Minister Alice Mobolaji Osomo after it was discovered that hundreds of properties were sold below market value to top officials instead of going on public sale. Still in November 2005, former Inspector General of Police, Tafa Balogun was convicted and sentenced to six months in jail for extorting more than 16 billion naira. Malpractices of all forms, crimes of every description, dishonesty, lack of candour, readiness to cheat, grabbing, relegation of public interest and others depict what a Nigerian political leader can do. All these have precipitated abject poverty, socio-economic and political instability.

A Nigerian political leader is a leader with limited sympathy; who through his corrupt practices has fueled the rate of poverty, reduced the gross domestic product, retard investment and decrease in the national foreign reserve and earnings. Based on the analysis of Shettima (2009), in December 2007, James Ibori, the Former Governor of Delta State and others were arrested by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) on charges of Abuse of office, corruption and money laundering. He was believed to have stolen billions of naira during his eight-year tenure as governor of the state. Equally, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, head of the EFCC in its three years of operation in 2005 relates that more than 400 billion Dollars of oil revenue had been stolen. He investigated and arrested more than 5000 people, secured 82 convictions and recorded 641 billion naira in looted assets. Judging from the above ugly scenarios, it is evident that the Nigerian political leadership has grown continually in corrupt practices. Thus, asking a Nigerian born political leader to give



corrupt practices for personal gains is like asking a Dracula to forsake blood. The matters then are: when the political leadership class of a country espouses corruption; is it possible for it to act positively to the benefit of the state and its citizens? Is there any significant difference between a Nigerian born political leader and a hungry lion in the forest? These questions came up because, activities of the Nigerian political leaders entail that there are political lions and crocodiles leaders in the Nigerian civil society.

A Nigerian political leader is a political animal who makes the law and breaks it. As reported by Abah and Nwoba (2016), the former president of Nigeria, president Olusegun Obasanjo in August, 2002, was accused of disregard to rule of law and corruption by the then National Assembly. An average Nigerian political leader takes pride in breaking laws because, among other reasons, disobedience to laws is one of the fastest means employed to enrich oneself. It is an established truth that laws passed in Nigeria will definitely enrich most of the people entrusted with its enforcement. The controversies surrounding the fuel subsidy fund, politics surrounding the privatization of public owned companies and distribution of the excess crude account were one of the cases in which the leaders employed to enrich themselves. The above explain the extent to which corruption has been institutionalized by the Nigerian leaders. The ugly side of these anomalies is that it is not just only in governance or educational system that corruption is found; it is equally noticeable in every human society today in Nigeria. Thus, considering the above analysis, another issue at this stage is this: is there any corrosive effect of corrupt practices of the Nigerian political leaders on the educational system? The above question is one of the intents of this study.

Corrosive Effects of Corrupt practices of the Nigerian Political Leaders on the Educational System

There is a popular adage that a person cannot offer what he does not have. With this, it is proper to say that if the Nigerian society is corrupt, then the educational sector will also be corrupt. Similarly, if the educational sector is corrupt, then society will be corrupted since many graduates would end up becoming public policy makers, public administrators, military and police officers, politicians, lawyers, doctors, businessmen and women among others.

One of the greatest threats to the Nigerian education is corruption. The Nigerian educational

sector is greatly influenced by the massive corrupt practices of the Nigerian political leaders. The corrosive effect of corrupt practices on the Nigerian Educational System is very high and uncontrollable. This is because, corruption undermines every aspect of the educational system among which are, political development, economic development, social development and so on. As expressed by Olayiwola (2013), some private schools are now being contracted by top government officials to help deliver the schools with sound results in the name of special or miracle centres. Equally, as a result of unemployment in the society, some Nigerian political leaders submit the names of their relatives for employment notwithstanding their qualifications and grades. By so doing, unqualified teachers are being employed to teach in Nigerian schools. For instance, a person who read Philosophy is employed to teach Economics without any or little background of the subject matter. As a result, the students do whatever within their capacity to survive including bribing school administrators and instructors/lecturers/professors, paying for grades, prostituting as well using violence.

Going by the above illustrations, it is obvious that there is a corrosive effect of corrupt practices of the Nigerian political leaders on the educational system. The corrosive effect of it could be described as garbage in garbage out. This is because; corruption thrives in the educational sector because of the corrupt practices of Nigerian political leaders. It then, becomes garbage in garbage out because many individuals who hold positions of power in the country today went through the higher educational system, in an environment in which corruption, exploitation, and amorality were rampant. Thus, the matter then is this: can these hideous circumstances ever be solved? The answer to the above question is yes but cannot be resolved in a vacuum. Then, if yes notwithstanding the stipulations, how can the Nigerian political leaders be groomed to forsake corrupt practices for the common good of the Nigerian society? This work is designed to address the above matter.

Rousseau's Social Contract as an Archetype of Education for Grooming the Nigerian Political Leaders

In the Social Contract, Rousseau upholds that man is always and naturally egocentric and selfish; filled with the quest for social, economic or political security which results to conflict and division. To save the society from self-destruction and develop a vision

of a society better than the existing one, Rousseau relates that individuals in a democracy possess two wills, two contrary inclinations as to how to act politically, socially, and morally; the particular and general will which he described as the general will contract. According to Rousseau, the particular will of individuals represents their selfish impulses, the urge to satisfy personal interests and desires with little regard for the community to which they belong. Rousseau relates that individuals also possess a general will. He defines the general will as the civic impulses of citizens seeking to pursue the common good within their community. He contrasts the general will with the particular will of individuals seeking only their personal good. Rousseau argues that the general will of the people, not the individual will of a king or the particular wills of nobility or clergy, should produce the laws that govern that community. Rousseau expected that the laws enacted via popular sovereignty will be general and impartial in form.

Rousseau envisioned a direct democracy where citizens would meet in public assemblies and pass laws reflecting the interests and goals of the community. This is what he described as the contract of direct democracy. In this sense, the function of government for Rousseau was not simply to protect the private rights of individuals, as it was for liberal political theorists, such as John Locke (1632-1704), and Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826). Rousseau's contract of direct democracy emphasized the obligation of citizens to create a moral community where the general good triumphs over the particular will and personal interests. He compares the general will with a public conception of freedom, in which participation in the common life of a community liberates citizens from the chains of a narrow, selfish individualism. For instance, according to Kramnick (2009), citizens of the United States sometimes resent paying taxes to the government. However, they want the government to provide services that benefit everyone, such as schools and police protection. The tension between these two impulses demonstrates the conflict between the particular and the general will of individuals.

Considering the situation in which the Nigerian state has found herself since independence, Rousseau's Social Contract is highly needed to instill the spirit of sympathy; understanding and love to such political animals who make the law and break it. Who takes pride in breaking the laws because of selfishness. Who cannot give up corrupt practices for personal gains. Who suppress every opposition to assume leadership position

for the purpose of having access to unlimited funds. Who through his corrupt practices has fueled the rate of poverty, reduced the gross domestic product and retard investment.

Rousseau's Social Contract is a necessity for any nation that aspires to grow educationally, politically, economically, socially and technologically in order to compete favourably with other nations. It is a type of education given to individuals who are egocentric and selfish. It is a prototype of education necessary to selfish leaders who have sacrificed positive leadership on the altar of corruption. If not, why should a governor who cannot pay his worker's salary as at when due, be looking for a second term in office? The answer to the above question is simply selfishness. Selfishness and corrupt practices on the part of Nigerian political leaders could be curbed by casting our glance to the tenets of Rousseau's Social Contract. For Rousseau, the particular will of individuals represents their selfish impulses, the urge to satisfy personal interests and desires with little regard for the community to which they belong while general will depicts the civic impulses of citizens seeking to pursue the common good within their community. Rousseau relates that the general will of the leaders, not the individual will of a leader or king or the particular wills of nobility or clergy, should produce the laws that govern that community. This is an archetype of edification necessary for grooming the Nigerian political leaders.

Conclusion

Going by the careful examination of the leadership impasses in Nigeria, the fact remains that there is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land, climate, water, air or anything else. Nigeria is endowed with enormous material and human resources. The only trouble with Nigeria as expressed by Achebe (1983), is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. In consequence, a country that has been mugged by episodes of violence, political instability, corruption, ethnic or religious conflicts, leadership inertia, hunger, poverty, suicide bombing, criminal genocide, assassination, aggravated assault, forcible rape, unjustified losses of human lives, violation of human rights, regional and sectorial injustice, aggressive tendencies, crime, general insecurity, destruction of properties and deep rooted tribal animosity as a result of failure of leadership needs to cast its glance to a well-articulated and coordinated policy such as Rousseau's Social Contract in order to groom and nurture her ruling



class to rise to their responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which is the hallmarks of true leadership. This is because, leaders holds the key to unlocking the leadership impasses and questions in any given society such as Nigeria.

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