

Richards S. Peters' Concept of Education and the Educated Man: Implications for Leadership Recruitment in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines Richards S. Peter's concept of education and the educated man as a template for leadership recruitment in Nigeria. The purpose is to determine the extent to which ascension into political leadership positions in Nigeria conforms to such conception especially against the background of the general belief that greatness of a nation is a product of its educational attainment. However, the paper through content analyses observes that political leadership in Nigeria from independence up to the present has fallen short of the criteria of education and the marks of an educated man. Hence, the manifest relegation of the concept and what it stands for. The paper concludes that the observance of these criteria in breach rather than in compliance inadvertently foregrounds godfatherism in political participation while serving as precursor to the various absurdities confronting the country. To achieve the objectives of this paper, it is hereby recommended that leadership recruitment is a challenge and should be for the truly educated as prescribed by R. S. Peters.

Keywords: Richards S. Peters, Education, Educated Man, Leadership, Nigeria.

Introduction

As philosophers of education take interest in analyzing concepts that have relevance to education, they have also recognized the fact that education itself needs clarification and application. Analyzing and applying the concept of education is the pre-eminent point of all analysis of educational concepts because determining concepts that are connected to it that need clarification would be almost impossible in the absence of such a task. In the effort to analyse the concept of education, Richard S. Peters has been at the front burner. In the opening paragraph of his edited book *The Concept of Education*, he pointed out that in exploring the concept of education, a territory is being entered where there are few signposts. It is not surprising, therefore, that "in presenting at the start what amounts to a bird's eye view of the contours of this territory, I have to rely on my own previous attempt (Peters 1967). Peters has in a consistent manner tried to sharpen his ideas of the concept in several of his writings following his Famous (1963) inaugural lecture on "Education as initiation".

As a tribute to Peters, all serious attempts to analyse the concept of education since his initial effort have been footnotes to his ideas (Enoh 2002). The same line of thought shall suffice here. The first part of the task shall be to render what may be rightly referred to as his concept of education and the educated man. In the second part, some attempts shall be made to determine the extent to which leadership recruitment in Nigeria meets those criteria and the implications of such standard or otherwise on governance. Out of the numerous books on which Peters has attempted to analyse the concept, only two will be used here. These are chapter One of his *Ethics and Education* (1966) and "what is an educational process" the chapter he contributed in his edited book, *the concept of education* (1977). References will also be made to other relevant works of his as they become necessary.

Peters' Criteria of Education and being educated

Peters would refrain from any attempt to define education apparently because of the difficulty in encompassing all that education involves in one definition. Asserting that the word education has normative implication, he proposes instead, three criteria against which to match the processes of education for fitness. Any process that does not satisfy these criteria, will not be called education and cannot result in the production of an educated man. The criteria are that:

- i. education implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it;
- ii. education must involve knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective, which are not inert;
- iii. education at least rules out some procedures of transmission, on the grounds that they lack willingness and voluntariness on the part of the learner (Peters 1966:25,31, 45).

The above three criteria can conveniently be expanded to four without missing any of the ingredients espoused therefrom. These are:

- a. The value or normative criterion
- b. Knowledge and understanding criterion

- c. The cognitive criterion
- d. Mode of transmission criterion.

Discussion on the Normative /Value Criterion

Peters, applying Gilbert Ryle's (1952) distinction between "task" words and "achievement" words identifies education as an achievement word. According to him, a man who is educated is a man who has succeeded in relation to certain tasks on which he and his teacher has been engaged for a considerable period of time (Peters 1966). Thus, the concept of education or being educated has the criterion of value built into such that when we talk of a man being educated, there is the implication that what he has achieved is worthwhile. In Peters view, the connection between "being educated" and having something that is worthwhile is purely conceptual-meaning that if we deny the worthwhileness of an activity, we are logically bound to deny referring to that activity as being educational (Enoh 2002: 29) Peters sums up his views thus: education implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to

- those who become committed to it;
- an educated man is one whose form of life as exhibited in his conduct, the activities to which he is committed, his judgment and feeling is thought to be desirable;
- it is true that people differ in their estimate of desirability in respect of achievements and states of mind that can be thought of as desirable, all that is implied is a commitment to what is thought valuable (Peters 1966:25, 45, 1972:9).

What is uppermost in this criterion is the commitment of the learners to the course that would lead to the achievement of what is desirable. In the Nigerian context, one may be constrained to ask to what extent are the political leaders committed to the demand of their offices?. The analysis of Ray Ekpu in *Newswatch* magazine needs paraphrasing here to illuminate the issue. Sir Abubaka Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's first prime minister was pushed by Ahmadu Bello to come to Lagos while he tended the shop in Kaduna. Alhaji Shehu Shagari in the Second Republic who emerged as the compromise candidate of the National Party of Nigeria (NRN) in 1979 was honest to have admitted that all he ever aspired for was to be a senator but unpatriotic forces catapulted him to president. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was still in prison when the godfathers pulled him out of the dungeon and put the crown on his head amidst a mild protest. The same familiar terrain was followed in the case of late Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'adua who was foisted on Nigerians by Obasanjo after he had dusted his books to return to the classroom. Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan on his part was just adjusting his seat as the governor of Bayelsa State when Obansajo called him to higher duties as vice-president to Yar'adua. Giving the failing health and eventual death of the latter, luck smiled on the former who eventually became what he was not prepared for-president. The same is true of other political office holders in Nigeria (Ekpu 2010:13).

The truth emanating from the foregoing analysis is that none of our elected leaders spent years dreaming, studying, working, researching and networking in readiness for the top job. Is it surprising that they could not have become peak performers as they obeyed the values defined by the society in the constitution more in breach than in compliance? Such constitutional values as justice, equality, human right, common welfare, human security sovereignty of the people, growth and development that make a state strong and capable do not mean anything to them. Little wonder Adeyeye (2010) described Nigerian politics thus:

Our politics is depressingly primitive. Its leading men are thugs made good, former drug barons, retired fraudsters, unrepentant age-cheats, occasional murderers and irredeemable pen robbers. It hosts only a sprinkling of good men (Punch Newspaper Sept 28 back page).

It is, to say the least, regrettable that no Nigerian leader has shown evidence that having studied, read about the world, he or she has decided to seek power as a means of enforcing principles and belief. They have as a result stumbled into power by accident than by design. They hardly speak from conviction, deep understanding of issues, experience and patriotism. Unfortunately, Obafemi Awolowo, the man who spent a high time courting the job, and was obviously prepared for it, never got it.

Knowledge and Understanding Criterion

Peters (1972) advances a number of conditions which must be satisfied before one can be called an educated man. For instance, he insists that education does not consist in the mere acquisition of disjointed fact, knowledge and skills, but that such facts, knowledge and skills should be properly understood and clearly explained whenever the need arises. He should demonstrate that what he has acquired is not merely intellectual but can transform the way the individual perceives and does things. Implicitly, the educated is expected to possess the know-how, know-that and the ability to arrange experiences (Peters 1966:30). Possessing a conceptual scheme involves the capacity to make distinction between different objects or things, or to classify them on the basis of some unifying factor or principle.

Also the attitudinal aspect requires that the knowledge acquired must not be inert in two ways. Firstly, it must transform the individual's outlook. Secondly, it must improve some form of knowledge on the part of the individual who acquired the knowledge (Peters 1966:31). This attitudinal transformation can be regarded as representing "Good" in education which implies increase in human knowledge, consciousness and understanding. These goods, Babarinde (2000) regards as "cognitive goods" which must be demonstrated so that they will not be inert in him. Peters argues that we should refrain from calling anyone educated until he shows proof that what he claims to know and understand affects his ways of looking at things.

Corroborating Peters criterion Randall as cited by Ekpu (2010:10) demands

...the leader must know, must know that he knows and must be able to make it abundantly clear to those about him that he knows.

The 1999 Nigeria constitution provides in section 131, four qualifications for the office of president

- He must be a citizen of Nigeria by birth
- He must attain the age of 40 years
- He must be a member of a political party and sponsored by that political party.
- He must be educated up to at least school certificate level or its equivalent.

The first three qualifications should not bother us here. No first school certificate holder today can be made a managing director of a bank or a manager of a high grade restaurant in Nigeria. Is it not an irony that we should have school certificate as the qualification for the most important office in the land at a time of great complexity in world affairs? If our entry qualification is this low, how can we expect a high level of achievement from the occupant since higher education is part of the preparation for higher office quarried Ekpu (2010).

Indeed, that Nigerian leaders are too inexperienced and could be dismissed as starry-eyed novices will not leave anyone in doubt. The best instrument for the good training and discipline of the mind is education which is important not only for all shades of occupation but most importantly for those who aspire to leadership positions. In the process intellectual comprehension and spiritual depth which are elements of mental discipline are developed. Plato calls them philosopher-kings-men whose thought and insight are so profound that they help to chart a pathway for society; men who have read widely and understand the workings of business; men who appreciate the critical role that fidelity plays in powering business to the top and indeed facilitating their plunge to the bottom; men who possess the intellectual wherewithal to counsel corporation on tips imperative to accelerated performance in the market place. These men will overwhelm clients with the potency of their thoughts and ideas that drive superior market place performance. Agitated by the low level of education of Nigerian leaders level Esiemokhai (2010:12) has recommended:

a good relevant education preferably in the fields of law, economics, sociology and political science should frame the synthesis for grasping the complex phenomenon which statecraft actually represents.

The possession of such knowledge will reduce the incidences of tutoring, mentoring and nurturing political leaders who should have gone through the brain purification process earlier in life. In most successful countries, it is the outside people not businessmen that assist government to firm up policies. Azaiki (2008) has noted that in the United States for instance, 5, 100 think tanks support the government and look at government policies, polish and return them to government. This process enhances governance. But in Nigeria it is the contractors that think for government due largely to lack of knowledge and understanding of the workings of the system. When government does not have structures that can enhance or give it capacity support, it will have problems as we have always had in Nigeria. The attraction of education system is in its initiation who worthwhile activities of which Nigeria has remained largely dissonant to that principle. No wonder raw power has remained the cultural model of leadership in Nigeria (get the power before you know what to do with it)

Cognitive Criterion

Here Peters has distinguished narrowness or specialization from wholeness or broad understanding as in an arm of knowledge. Educated man should appreciate the interrelatedness of various fields of knowledge. According to Peters, an individual who acquires competence in some limited area may not qualify to be described as educated because in the case of a scientist:

...the man could have a very limited conception of what he is doing. He could work away at science without seeing its connection with much else, its place in a coherent pattern of life: for him it is an activity which is cognitively adrift (1966:31)

Peters would be guarding against the tendency for individual becoming too restricted in what they know as such narrow interest makes them to become like hermits without seeing the relationship between what they know or engage in to related ones (Enoh 2002).

In uncountable circumstances, our leaders have shown themselves as people who are not good chess players. For instance, president Goodluck Jonathan in one week in 2010 has made a wrong move twice that if Nigeria were a chessboard he would have lost his king and the game would be over. His ban on Super Eagles and subsequent reversal of same shows that there was no blueprint for Nigeria's football or the ban was not thought through. Also the award of National honours to 186 in the same year on Nigerians is an indication that national awards have been bastardized as honorary degrees that universities award to people that are not "clean" as long as they can afford it. Just recently in the same year, a catholic university awarded former dictator General Ibrahim Babangida and two serving governors honorary degree for exemplary leadership among other simplistic reasons. IBB? exemplary leadership? When national awards are bestowed on people who should be ostracized for the ignominious role they played in knocking national engine does it not say something to the rest of the citizens? Is it not a signal that it pays to plunder your country and not to plough?

Does it not annoy common sense that Nigerian government in October 2010 decided to import 600,000 units of plastic waste disposal with N1bn for Federal Capital territory when plastics is one industry where she is open on equal footing with every part of the world given that the basic raw materials from crude and gas are easily available in the country?. It could also have given the country a comparative advantage. Does such decision not undermine the country's image and aspiration to become one of the industrialized nations by 2020?

It is poignant to point out a recent narrowness of mind exhibited by a minister of state for education Kenneth Gbagi in 2010 when he shamelessly confessed that his daughter was schooling in Ghana because of the hydra-headed problems of Nigerian education. It is unthinkable that a managing director of the soap I patronize would say his wife does not use the product he manufactures. Should a man who is not a stakeholder in Nigerian education be allowed to remain in such a ministry? Whatever happened to moral? The same position accounts for why Nigerian leaders never bother to rescue education from collapse. The president of Ghana waded in and averted the strike early enough embarked upon by the University Teachers Association of Ghana. If it were in Nigeria, the government would have shown apathy until the issue becomes a scandal. If militants threaten to strike and lecturers threaten same, it is sure the former will get attention first. In the little mind of Nigerian leaders, militants are more powerful. Little do they realize that teachers/lecturers can do worse in crippling minds and paralyzing children's future and outright destruction of a generation. When the chips are down, leaders whose children school abroad would realize lately that they are not safe as one thing is always the consequence of another. Is it surprising therefore that the narrowness of mind of leadership in Nigeria prompts them to repeat effective gauge and plaster therapy for deep national problems?

Indeed, the same lack of cognition is at play when political office holders shamelessly defect from the parties on whose platform they are serving to other parties and still retain such mandates. Morality is thrown to the wind. They need to be reminded that ethics has to do with creating values which symbolizes excellence in behaviour. Accordingly, ethics shape behaviour while behaviour drives performance in every facet of life. It is therefore of utmost importance to ensure connectivity and where there is any disconnect as we have seen, leaders are bound to under perform which has been a collective experience in Nigeria. Is it not sickening to note that 25% of annual national budget is spent on national assembly members while the ordinary worker is fighting to earn a paltry N18,000 a month. Does such a situation not amount to the height of disservice and portend danger for such a country? Total absence of cognition in leadership is a dangerous weapon that can destroy a nation.

Mode of Transmission criterion

Educational processes have to be directly productive of understanding based on mode of transmission of knowledge. Here reference is made to the methods of passing on the desired values and mores which constitute the content of education from one generation to another. Some methods are morally acceptable, others are not. The reference to methods of passing on the content of education implies that education is a process which is inclusive of many activities not just a particular activity. Teaching, training, instruction, drill, conditioning, indoctrination are all distinguishable activities within the educative process which are not by themselves synonymous with education. That the methods must be morally acceptable implies that the term education as a process has connotations of value just like the application of the term to content. For a method to be morally acceptable, it must not deny the learner willingness and voluntariness by which is meant that the method must be one in which children are treated with respect, are not coerced and ordered around but are allowed to choose for themselves. Any process that does that guarantee willingness and voluntariness on the part of the learner does not fall within the class of dispositional concomitant to education and is therefore morally repugnant.

The defining characteristic of a democratically elected government is that it assumes power at the pleasure of the majority of the electorate voting in transparent and credible election. A democratically elected government can only remain in power for as long as it enjoys enough credibility to continue to win majority of

legitimate votes cast in periodic election as constitutionally prescribed. A democratic system of government observed Fashola (2008) must pass the credibility test on at least two levels.

Credibility of the government in power at a particular time in terms of its capacity to retain the confidence of the people through fulfilling the electoral promises that earned it the popular mandate. In exchange for the mandate conferred on it on trust by the people, the government is under obligation to fulfill its electoral promises. The degree of success with which it does this will be a critical determinant of its triumph or failure in future elections.

Credibility of the integrity of the electoral process and its capacity to ensure that government assumes and retains power only in accordance with the majority will expressed in free and fair election.

That elections in Nigeria are brazenly rigged as exemplified in multiple thumb-printing, figure juggling, mass violence, ballot box snatching and stuffing is no longer news. That weak capacity is a preponderant quality of Nigeria's leaders, a quality shared by their aids and consultants is a naked truth. That these parliamentary support persons are mostly drawn from their friends and cronies for personal reason rather than added value professionalism or expertise stares every Nigerian on the face. Given this scenario, gross inability to discharge the two aspects of legislators responsibility- representation and oversight is a common experience. Because they were appointed and not elected, their accountability is first to their godfather and so they have no business with their constituencies. In conducting their oversight, there have been many cases of compromise and lack of patriotism. The case of Farouk Lawal in the fuel subsidy scam where the hunter has become the hunted is a case in point. The flaws associated with the mode of transmission criterion in respect of elections in Nigeria has paved the way for the wide gulf between promises and performance and thus create credibility crises both for the government in particular and the democratic system as a whole.

Consequences

It is widely believed and rightly too, that no nation, no matter how wishful she thinks, can just wake up to greatness as greatness, either for nation or individuals is a product of great planning, thinking, focus, concentration and preparation. Where these qualities are lacking as in the case of Nigeria as a reference point, what should be expected? Can the Nigeria project from the exploration so far show evidence of greatness? If any greatness is observed, can it be in the positive or negative direction? Does any one require extra ordinary insight to appreciate the fact that the criteria of education and the educated man are far from constituting the hallmark of leadership in Nigeria hence the stories of woes that are daily being told about the country that parades herself as a "giant".

The common currency among Nigerian leaders has been sheer greed, inordinate ambition and desperation for power. Their actions have been such that offend civil society through mis-implementation of budget, mismanagement of national and world economy, the over manipulation of the stock market, the banks and the financial sector, the constraining of the manufacturing sector and industries, and utmostly, the provision of more darkness than light, less power and energy, less food for the tables and less money for the pockets by way of corruption and bad policies. To Nigerian leaders, civil society should be sub-human with only them approximating the human conditions of the second and third worlds.

As a result, the country has become a place where savage instincts enjoy free rein and life too cheap and utterly worthless as government no longer exercises monopoly over the instruments of force, authority and violence as should be the case in every enclave ruled by sane humans. No thanks to bad roads, dilapidated vehicles, reckless driving, drugless hospitals, striking doctors, nurses and lecturers, bad and trigger-hungry policemen, undisciplined armed forces members, hunger and diseases, generally polluted and un-hygienic environment, decline of the rule of law, weak civil service, economic decay, hopelessness and declining life expectancy. The fall out of embarking on a mission they are ill-equipped to accomplish-mentally, strategically, politically and spiritually translates to a house built on the quick sand of illegalities, imposition and injustice, which will continue to crumble under the weight of truth and incontrovertible evidence. The struggle is not of brawn but of the brains. The list is endless. In the face of all these negativities, staying alive in Nigeria is a miracle and an achievement worth celebrating. No nation, no matter how wishful she thinks, can just wake up to greatness. Greatness, either for nation or individual is a product of great planning, thinking, focus, concentration and preparation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Education all over the world remains the best instrument for the achievement of a good life. The criteria to attain before one could be regarded as educated are spelt out by R. S. Peters. Our exploration of such criteria and their application to Nigeria has not convinced us that Nigerian leadership is anywhere close to being called educated. This unfortunate posture has presented the country as a place where the blind try to lead one with

sight. The glaring disconnect between the people and those that lead them is a function of the nexus between the ineptitude of the leadership and the acute poverty that characterizes the lives of the citizens. Because they are convinced, lacked character and have learnt nothing to transform themselves through conscientious service to the people, the country that should have been flying by now is still in a crawling position. Falling short of the criteria of education has presented leadership in Nigeria as an establishment that has destroyed the dreams of their fathers at independence, frittered away the wealth of the children and seeing nothing wrong about destroying the future of their grand children.

It is hereby recommended that leadership recruitment is a challenge and should be for people who have intermingled with history, battled with vision and have sieved out pragmatic vision from frivolous illusion, men who have developed a sense of love for the well being of others whose hand can reach the higher strata including the celestial stratum and whose love can subdue innate jealousy and can use their strategies to score needle-point excellence. Education of the citizenry that will arm them with the boldness to insist on a genuine debate on the pedigree, character, competence and ideas offered by each aspirant and to freely make a choice that must be respected is the answer to Nigeria's lunatic leadership" as described by Chinweizu.

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