A Case for Plato's Philosophy of Education as Groundwork for Nation-Building and Political Stability in Nigeria

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Abstract
The primary contention of this intellectual inquiry is to provide a workable and practicable panacea to the retarded development of Africa with particular reference to Nigeria. It is the position of this paper that an approach from the philosophy of education is the most plausible in the face of other seemingly competing approaches that have emanated from mainstream and dominant theories of the social sciences. This essay employs the work of Plato because of its intrinsic link between education and governance as a yardstick to enhance precisely how education can function as the groundwork for nation-building. In so doing, through qualitative research, this work advances the course of an educational system that is value-driven and problem-solving in the light of Plato's social and political philosophy in which philosophy of education can begin to undertake and thread toward such a path through the lens of the philosopher king.

Keywords: Philosopher King, Political Stability, Philosophy of Education, Nation-Building.

Introduction

Despite the contemporary attacks and reactions to Plato's political thought as reflected in his political philosophy, there is no doubt that there will be continuous reference to Plato as one whose philosophical enterprise has a political vitamin to reinvigorate new ideas that would challenge any threat to the socio-economic and political development of any nation state. In this paper, Plato's philosophy of education will be used as a mould to cater for the quest toward nation-building. Before engaging with the thrust of this work, it is important to state from the onset that a philosopher is usually confronted by stark realities which may then account for their reflections as a way of overcoming the realities that confronts them as both challenges and problems; and this is the case of Plato

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who moved from the pedagogy of a would-be leader to analyse the ideal state. Hence, this will establish a framework that can ameliorate the reality of our pseudo-development in Nigeria. Although this problem is very common amongst other African countries, we shall limit it to the Nigerian state so as not to carry out a comparative study which is not the onus of this paper. As such, this work is discussed in various sections; the role of the philosopher king is succinctly articulated and examined through the concept of the Ideal State. Consequently, the meaning and nature of nation building is discussed elaborately in relation to Plato's socio-political ideas as it concerns good governance as a means of democratic consolidation.

Reminiscence of the Political Situation in Plato's Society

To understand Plato's political philosophy, it is important to give a background of governance and leadership situation at the time of Plato. Greece was composed of a number of small city states which had autonomous governments; and these states engaged in constant warfare with each other and with such large powerful nations as Persia. Most of them suffered from great deal of internal strife, just like Nigeria is undergoing the problem of governance due to poor leadership.[1] In other words, Plato's political ideas were informed by the anomalies of his time in the Greek City state of Athens. He resorted to solve or remedy the political problems of his time as a result of prolong and protracted wars as well as intensified civil strives throughout Greece.

Plato's aim was to reform and then build a just society for Greeks. He felt there were lapses in the distribution of justice in Athens. In other words, the characteristic feature of the early rulers of Plato's time includes egocentrism, greed, nepotism and favouritism. Meritocracy had no place in the distribution of political portfolios and this resulted in the placement of mediocre in the helm of affairs instead of experts.[2] These features are in no small way responsible for the backward state of affairs in terms of development which are still found among most developing nations of the world today. This has been one of the catalogues of reasons responsible for their under- development.[3]

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1 E.F.Ebuta, "Plato's Education for Political Stability" A paper delivered 38th Annual Conference of Philosophers of Education Association of Nigeria (PEAN), 2018, pp.1-2.

2 P.O. Iroegbu and M.A. Izibili, *Kpim of Democracy Thematic Introduction to Socio-Political Philosophy*, (Benin City: Ever-Blessed Publishers, 2004), p.81.

3 S.N. Eneanya, "The Contribution of African Traditional Religion to Nation Building" in E. C. Amucheazi (ed.) *Readings in Social Sciences: Issues in National Development* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publisher, 1980), p. 321.

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Thus, Plato worried about these deplorable conditions of the Greek City States of his time postulated the Ideal State; and his intention was to provide a blueprint for contemporary state to follow in order that they might not be overwhelmed by the same problems that the early Greek City States had to contend with. He therefore confronted social and political structures and raised the morale and ethical consciousness of the Greek City States. According to Plato, politics is a science that should be left to the experts no less than with any craft, skill, or science. He expatiated and elaborated on this using medical analogies to say that if you wanted to know whether you needed open-heart surgery; you would not put it to a democratic vote among your friends, your banker; or your automobile mechanic; instead, you would seek the wisdom of physicians who are experts on this matter. Similarly, when it comes to formulating the policies and laws that govern the state, the democratic majority represents those least likely to make an informed decision; and if we are concerned with the health of the body we yield to the advice of the experts. So, when we are concerned with the health of the state, we should similarly seek out those who have the necessary wisdom to govern. These experts must have vision for the 'Common Good' and they must know what constitutes true knowledge. Just as a navigator must understand the stars and be able to use them to guide a ship through the vast ocean, so our political rulers must be able to navigate the ship of state by means of a vision of the Forms and the Good. Who else would these political navigators be but those with philosophical wisdom.[4]

Plato's Political Philosophy of Education and the "Philosopher King"

A good place to begin with Plato's political philosophy is the emphasis on who should govern the society, and this is why one of the most difficult and perplexing questions in political philosophy is "Who should rule?" Or alternatively asked: "What is the best form the State can have?" So fundamental are these questions in ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary era. A large amount of classical theories have dealt with it, and almost all of them can be classified according to how they attempt to answer it. If one holds that the people should rule themselves, he is advancing the democracy of John Lock;[5] those that give title of king or queen, emperor or empress to the absolute power holder are monarchical (Thomas Hobbes); those holding that rulers should have unlimited power are said to be absolutist; those holding that unlimited power should be vested in one person are

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4 W.F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, (Belmont: Wadswoth, 2002), p.61.

5 R.H. Popkin and A. Stroll, *Philosophy Made Simple*, (New York: Broadway Books, 1993), pp 60-61.

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autocratic; those holding that power should be vested on (a few) rich individuals are oligarchy; those holding that power should be vested upon (a few) who are best (elite) are aristocratic; those holding that constitution is where power should be vested are constitutional and so forth.[6] The crucial question that every society must face, and his entire political philosophy can be understood as an attempt to answer the question "who should rule?"

Plato devoted his work *The Republic* to the question "Who should rule?" Plato's answer to the question was the ruler should consist of a specially trained class of intellectuals who he referred to as *philosophers.*[7]Roughly put, the Platonic answer is that a specially trained group of intellectuals should rule. Plato himself called his view "aristocratic." This was because he believed that intellectuals were best fitted to rule; indeed the Greek words *Ariston* and *kratos* together mean "the rule by the best."[8]

Plato talked about a philosopher King. Here, he emphasized the art of giving leadership role to the wise one otherwise referred to as 'philosopher King'. In his words:

> Until philosophers are Kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils-on, nor the human race, as I believe, -and then only will this our state have a possibility of life and behold the light of day.[9]

He contended that the art of leadership role should be given to the philosopher king who had undergone thirty-five years of training or education in order to be fully and thoroughly equipped with knowledge and understanding of carrying the people along. By this projection, the philosopher King should be that which had the community at heart and should be statesman rather than a demagogue whose interest is his own welfare alone at the very expense of his people (the citizen of the state). For Plato, it seems natural that competence should be the peculiar

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6 F.O. Odhiambo, *Handbook on some Social-Political Philosophers*, (Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy, 2012), pp.2-3.

7 Ibid.

8 R.H. Popkin and A. Stroll, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

9 B. Jowett (trans.), *Plato's Republic*, (New York: Airmount Publishing Co., Inc., 1968), p. 415.

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abilities to fulfil that function. Disorder in the state is caused by the same circumstances that produce disorder in the individual, namely, the attempt on the part of the lower elements to usurp the role of the higher faculties. Plato's idea of the philosopher king as the best man to rule the society implies that leaders are made; and that a high level of intelligence and knowledge that is required for a leader in a society and state is needed for ruling; hence, the saying: "knowledge is power". This projects the 'Ideal State' as advanced by Plato; this has to do with government versus citizen inter-relations that has the capacity of bringing about meaningful condition favourable for human growth and overall societal development. It is on this basis therefore, an ideal state is expected to be very conscious efforts to build upon a social relation in order that in turn bring about political development.[10]

Plato's Socio-Political Ideas and Nation Building

The concept of nation building is another way to address national development. Hence, there cannot be a one-sentence definition of national development. This work will not agree with some scholars who view national development as consisting mainly of technological development and the setting up of all kinds of modern structures, accumulating in an almost inexhaustible supply of the most sophisticated and deadly weapons. The ability to define the frontiers of a nation is high percentage of mass literacy and in control of buoyant economy, being in possession of all kind of material goods, which are calculated to make humans happy and also guarantee national security by force of arms, is yet another view of nation building.[11] Accordingly, Iroegbu holds that nation building has both the material and spiritual aspects; he further states that nation building calls for the builders who are morally conscious and morality should flow naturally from religious creed in the realization of patriotic citizens.[12] It is however noteworthy, that it takes a well-built people to build a nation. As such, Plato advocated that the emergence of a philosopher-king through rigorous and step-by-step quest for knowledge will distinguish those who take the leadership position from that of the craftsmen and solders. Plato's socio-political ideas could in no small way aid nation building if properly appropriated. Take for example his opinion on the spirit of statesmanship; a community where such exists would never be short of development because the statesman has the interest of the community at heart rather than his own selfish interests as seen in most parts of modern-day

10 P.O. Iroegbuand M.A. Izibili, op. cit., p.81.

11 Omoregbe, J. I. *Knowing Philosophy* (Lagos: Joja Educational •and Research Pub. Ltd., 1990), p. 194.

12 P.O. Iroegbuand M.A. Izibili, op. cit., p.81.

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government of the world especially in Africa and with particular reference to Nigeria as seen as the so-called third world nations.

Plato advocated for public ownership of property and children to enhance the efficiency of the ruler in the discharge of his duties to the state and inert the emergence of self-interest, which would lead to embezzlement of public funds. Moreover, Plato's political thought in nation building expressly elucidated the nature of human being; for human being is made by God and is placed in a community where he gets what he wants and actualizes their dreams and aspirations. Hence, we cannot talk of integral development of the human person without reference to the state; because Plato considered the state as being "Man Writ large"[13] Plato did not simply say that there is an interesting or coincidental connection between the just man and the society. He argues rather that there is a structural and natural as well as a logical relation between man and the state. Put differently, the state must have to exist for man to live and survive within the available provision of the state; and that the existence of man necessitates the existence of the state. Then, if this is true, the development of man within the state he lives in equally corresponds to the development of the state itself.

Plato emphasized a social relation, which stipulates the ideal years or age, which a man and woman may attain before being married; it is this view that a man should undergo a prolong training to about the age of thirty-five to forty-five years within which he may have been wisely endowed before getting married. The same he recommended for the female; a lady should attain the age of twenty five to thirty years before getting married; within this age bracket she must have been educated as her male counterpart; the advantage of this among others is that it makes way for a nation to have a thoroughly equipped work force, which in no small measure contributes to the development of the nation in all spheres (economically, socially and above all, morally).[14] He warned against immoral teaching of such doctrines that would pollute the young minds and make them to be social deviants. These vices to say the least would not move a nation forward; but rather constitute a stumbling block when one considers the restive nature of most youths then and now.

Plato's social ideas in *The Republic* show a social relation which implies a common ownership of property among the guardians and the auxiliaries. The abundance of love, peace and harmony noticeable in a communalistic

[13] B. Jowett (trans.),op. cit., p. 415.
[14] S.E. Stumpf, *Element of Philosophy* (New York: McGraw Hill Inc., 1993), p.138.

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organization is in fact an ideal structure of human existence. This makes it possible for people to live as the same ancestral family without the ideology of inequality and class differences, which create disaffection among members of the same community.[15] This communal existence as advocated by Plato does not create room for capitalistic exploitation, class distinction, divided minds, inevitable class struggles which would result from the awareness of suppression and subjugation and element of repression of the less privileged ones. The fact that there is no class distinction among the people would make them adhere to one and the same ideology; that is, there would be no room for ideological differences as found in most modern states today. No doubt, these various elements of a communalistic society are a fundamental ingredient for national development. According to Kwame Gyekye, communalism is a doctrine that the group constitutes the focus of the activities of the individual members of the society.[16]

Plato made plain the relationship between the individual and the state. His whole argument was that individual and the state grows out of the nature of the individual so that logically the individual comes prior to the state. The state, according to Plato is a natural institution; natural because it reflects the structure of human nature. The origin of the state is a reflection of man's economic needs; a state comes into existence because no individual is self- sufficient and we all have many needs.[17] Our many needs require many skills, and no one possesses all the skills needed to produce food, shelter and clothing, to say nothing of the various arts.

> There must, therefore, be a division of labour for more things will be produced and the work more easily and better done, when every man is set free from all other occupations to do, at the right time, that one thing for which he is naturally filled.[18]

Hence, a social relation of symbiotic necessity becomes the product of forming a government by man. This simple but important idea stresses widely a complex nature in showing the ideal social relation which would exist between the rulers

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15 A.S. Bogomolov, *History of Ancient Philosophy*, (USSR: Progress Publishers, 1985), p. 189.

16 G. Kweme, *An Essay On African Philosophical Thought: The Conceptual Scheme,* (New York: Cambridge University Press), p.20.

17 B. Jowett (trans.),op. cit., p. 415.

18 Ibid.

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and their subject in the state. The government is necessarily obligated to provide the essentials of life to its citizens and to protect their integrity and dignity. The citizens have their own side of the bargain to keep which is stipulated in its code of conduct and part of these expectations includes: payments of taxes and rates promptly. A detail of this and others are found in *The Republic* which was handed down by Plato as a blueprint of an ideal state. This is analogous to the principles and policies, which would be used or applied to nation policies for it to rise to the threshold of development.

Separation of Power for Good Governance

According to Plato, the human soul is divided into three parts-which he called "the rational element," "the spirited element," and "the appetitive element." The rational element is that part of soul that enables one to reason, to argue, and to deliberate. The spirited element is what makes one courageous or cowardly and gives one the strength of the Will. The appetitive element consists of his/her desires and passions, such as the desire for food, drink, and sex. In terms of this threefold division of the soul, Plato argued that a person will be psychologically healthy if the three parts of one's soul function harmoniously. A person is regarded as being "sound in mind" when he/she is not unbalanced; that is, if all the parts of his/her soul function harmoniously with each of them playing its role without dominating the other or without being so dominated. Thus the Platonic answer to the question "What makes a healthy or ideal individual?" An individual is healthy if all of the elements of his/her soul function harmoniously with each other."[19]

The separation of powers for an Ideal State according to Iroegbu; holds that another re-sounding political thought popularized by Plato in nation building was the concept of the class differentiation or group in the state. This, he saw as possessing the ability, of creating harmony in the governmental structure in the state. It was perhaps thought of in Plato's classification of the state structure that necessitated balance in the various organs of modern-day government. This is because; this idea later gave birth to the famous Montesquieu's "principles of separation of power" (Plato's Republic). Whereby, the three organs of government of modern states, functions in such a way that they do not interfere with each other in the process of carrying out their constitutionally assigned functions.[20] The principle of separation of powers finds its foremost exposition in the *Spirit of Laws* by the French jurist Baron de Montesquieu. However, it should

[19] R.H. Popkin and A. Stroll, op. cit., pp. 61-62.
[20] P.O. Iroegbu and M.A. Izibili, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

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be stated that the idea is as old as the ancient Greek scholars Plato and Aristotle. Nidhi Singh and Anurag Vijay assert:

> Aristotle who first perceived and saw that there is a specialization of function in each Constitution developed this doctrine. Later other theorists like Montesquieu, John Locke and James Harrington described these functions as legislative, executive and judicial. All the theories that were forwarded by these political thinkers in relation to the doctrine of separation of powers were on a basic presumption that the liberties of the people should be protected from the tyrannical and despotic rulers when all the powers are vested and exercised by the very same persons.[21]

The foregoing has also vindicated the submission of Ted Bahardur Singh who states that:

> The doctrine of Separation of Powers deals with the mutual relations among the three organs of the Government namely legislature, executive and judiciary. The origin of this principle goes back to the period of Plato and Aristotle. It was Aristotle who for the first time classified the functions of the Government into three categories viz., deliberative, magisterial and judicial. Locke categorized the powers of the Government into three parts namely: continuous executive power, discontinuous legislative power and federative power. "Continuous executive power" implies the executive and the judicial power, "discontinuous legislative power" implies the rule making power, "federative power" signifies the power regulating the foreign affairs."[22]

In very simple terms, "the principle of separation of powers contemplates the idea that the governmental functions must be based on a tripartite division of legislature, executive and judiciary."[23] In the words of Montesquieu:

> When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body or Magistrate, there can be no liberty. Again, there is no liberty if the judicial power is not separated from the Legislative and

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21 N. Singh, and V. Anurag, "Separation of Powers: Constitutional Plans and Practice" in *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 2013. Vol.3, p.1.

22 T.B. Singh, "Principle of Separation of Power and Concentration of Authority" in *Institute's Journal*, Issue 4 & 5, March 1996, p.1.

23 N. Singh, and V. Anurag, op. cit., Vol.3, p.1.

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> Executive power. Where it joined with the legislative power, the life and liberty of the subject would be exposed to arbitrary control, for the judge would then be the legislator. Where it joined with the executive power, the judge might behave with violence and oppression. There would be an end if everything were the same man or the same body to exercise these three powers...[24]

Montesquieu's 'Separation' took the form, not of impassable barriers and unalterable frontiers, but of mutual restraints, or of what afterwards came to be known as "checks and balances."[25] The three organs may act in concert, not that their respective functions should not touch one another. Thus it may be deduced that the three arms of government are allowed to exercise their powers without interference but within certain limits. This is the case if we recall in his words that: "Political liberty is to be found only when there is no abuse of power."[26] It should be stated that the constitution of Nigeria is supposedly steeped in these injunctions. Given that the country claims to be politically democratic, the principle of separation of powers in this connection is further strengthened. This is the case as put forward by Singh and Anurag that:

> The doctrine of separation of powers is an inseparable part of the evolution of democracy. Democracy dictates a system in which every citizen can, without fear of retribution, breathe, express himself, and pursue his or her interests. It enables him to live a life of his choice to the extent he does not encroach upon the rights of the other people. It is in this context that it can be presupposed that a system of balances and counter balances exists among the three organs of the government to ensure a strong nurtured democratic system. The Legislature, the Judiciary and the Executive are the pillars of democracy. No democracy indeed contemplates conferment of absolute power in any single authority.[27]

On first showing, it could be deduced that in practice a complete and absolute separation of powers is not possible. This is the case if the basic tenets of the principle admit that:

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24 B. Montesquieu, (1748) De L'Espirit de Lois, pp.3-6.

25 Singh, T.B. (1996). "Principle of Separation of Power and Concentration of Authority" Institute's Journal. Issue 4 & 5 March 1996, pp.1-2.

26 B. Montesquieu, op. cit., p.3.

27 T.B. Singh, op, cit., 3013. Vol.3, p.1.

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i. That the same individual(s) ought not to be part of more than one of the three organs of government;
ii. That one of the arms of government ought not control or interfere with the work of another;
iii. That one arm ought to usurp or exercise the functions of the other.

The above reveals some of the snags that modern democracies and the attendant arm of government experiences; and as a consequence of abuse of one arm of government by the other and poor comprehension of the dictum. As noted above, Montesquieu (1748) is more concerned about the harmony of functions where one arm does not usurp the authority of the other. The principle of checks and balances is a clear caveat in this regard. The casualty of checks and balances is usually the first sign of an abused arm of government.

Political Instability in Nigeria: Nature and Cause

Political instability arises as a result of the inability of government and the society in general to adequately address the grievances of the population or particular subset of that population. It is common knowledge that political instability retards the development and progress of a country. In order for a country to develop and move forward there should be a stable political atmosphere.[28]

Possibly, the greatest challenge facing Nigeria today is the threat to political instability. According to Umar, Nigeria is among the African nations with the greatest amount of political instability. Political instability in Nigeria can be caused by many factors, including conflict between rival parties, insufficient resources, mode of campaign and election malpractice. Political instability also occurs in Nigeria when there is a sudden change in Government. This sudden change can leave citizens in doubt about their nation's situation and may lead to conflict. Again, Nigerian political instability can be caused by the general population when they feel their rights are being restricted or they are unhappy with their circumstances, such as mass unemployment.[29] Onyenuga states that political instability has been an enduring feature of the post-colonial landscape in Africa. Nigeria is one of the worst-hit countries by their challenges as they experience economic failure, religious violence, insurgency, corruption, politics

[28] S.T. Umar, et al. "Promoting Political Stability in Nigeria Through Ahmadu Bello's Education Philosophy" A paper delivered 38th Annual Conference of Philosophers of Education Association of Nigeria (PEAN), 2018, pp.5-6

[29] Ibid.

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of cultural sub-nationalism, electoral malpractice, morbid tenacity for self-perpetuation in power are some of the purported of this problem.[30]

Speaking of the state of political upheaval in Nigeria, Oladipo writes:

> It does not require any special power of observation or reflection to recognize that Nigeria today is far from being a viable society. For not only are the social institutions that should regulate social life and strengthen the capacity of the individual and the society for coping with challenges of life weak and pathological, also the worst human instincts predominant in individual conduct and human relations. In Nigeria today normlessness and social disorder constitute the chief index of national life.[31]

Furthermore, one of the major factors responsible for political instability is the failure of the political class to sufficiently adhere to the basic tenets of democracy and constitutionalism, because they do not have political education. This situation has given rise to abuse of power, brazen corruption, disregard for due process and the rule of law, intolerance of political opposition. This contradicts the tenet of governance, which presupposes 'the process of social engagement between the rulers and the ruled in a political community.

Furthermore, another reason for political instability in Nigeria is the militarization of politics. According to Onyenuga, the military violence of the state against people has led more militant tendencies among them.[32] In the same token, Onyekpe holds that the development of militant actions or what might be termed militarization in the area simply means that the state violence cannot suppress the people's resolve to achieve justices and fair play. The phenomenon of hostage taking and explosion of oil-flow satiations are the least dimension of the people's struggle.[33]

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30 O.F. Onyenuga, "A Marxico-Gramsci's Appraisal of Political Instability in Nigeria" in *Journal of Philosophy and Development*, Vol.13 (1&2) Ago Iwoye: Olabisi Onabanjo University, 2011/2012. p.18.

31 O. Oladipo, *Thinking About Philosophy: A General Guide,* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2008), p.85.

32 Ibid.

33 N. Onyekpe, *AAU African Study Review* vol.3. (Akure: Stebak A Book & Publishers, 2004), p.65.

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Prioritization of politics is one of the major causes of political instability in Nigeria. Those in power deploy all available resources to acquire and retain power. Politician sought power and to retain power. Elections are manipulated and election results are manufactured to the disdain of the electorate. The political elites have allowed partisan interest to becloud their sense of judgment. Thus, while a given set of people or section enjoy political patronage and dividends, some others are simply ostracized. In fact, the party in power determines who gets what, how and to what degree.[34] Yet, another sector that has led to the political instability in Nigeria is the judiciary. According to Onyenuga, the worst of it all is that judicial process is being doctored and manipulated by the political class in order to achieve their aims.[35]

Plato's Educational system for Nation Building

The proposition that education is one of the indispensable tools for national development is undeniable. It is also not a misplaced position that education that, shies away from being tailored to the present demands for development is a recipe for disaster. Education as a vital instrument for national development involves acquisition of fundamental knowledge and essential developmental skills needed for technological breakthrough and socio-political development which accelerates economic growth.[36] A nation's strength largely lies in the quantity and quality of her human resources; education is the pivot on which development rotates and fundamental capacity building for sustainable development. It is one of the indispensable backbones of any civilization. This is a reason one of the ancient scholars of education sees education as: "That training which is given by suitable habits to the first instinct of virtue in children when pleasure and pain are rightly imparted in rational souls."[37]

In this section, we shall be concentrating on Plato's philosophy of education for nation's building. It is imperative to state here that Plato's philosophy of education cannot be discussed in isolation without his political theory. Plato's well formulated educational and political theory can if accepted lead to political stability and in turn bring about responsible governance in Nigeria. Plato's Republic is devoted to the laying of foundation, to the essentials of education for

34 O.F. Onyenuga, op. cit., p.19.

35 Ibid. p.19.

36 B.P. Irabor, "Entrepreneurial Studies for National Development: A Pesalozzi-Deweyan Groundwork" in *Ekiti Educational Conference*, 2018.

37 S. Amaele, *Understanding the Philosophy of Education*, (Ibadan: Bounty Press Limited, 2003), p.16.

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political stability in the society. Plato prescribes education for various classes in the society.[38] According to Russell, Plato begins by deciding that the citizens are to be divided into three classes: the common people, the soldiers, and the guardians; and the guardians alone, are to have political power.[39] For Plato, one of the goals of education is to produce good citizens who would be able to make wise political decisions. Thus, Plato does not see governance as something which anybody can do; rather it is something which requires a special education. Corroborating this, Ekpo states that, governance is like navigation which is not just for any person or group of persons without special training if the ship is not to wander aimlessly in the sea. Likewise political stability for good governance requires special education.[40] Thus, Plato proposes the philosopher-king as only the suitable person to rule the people. Plato buttressed further by stating that, society will not have peace until either philosophers become kings or kings become philosophers.[41] Corroborating this, Tukur, *et al* state:

> the overall aim of education is to trained individuals with specific skills that will help them solve their individual problems and societal problems. It also helps them to contribute to the development of the society which they belong and the world in general. It is generally accepted that, education is uniquely human. Human being cannot develop without education. Education is informative and distancing oneself from ignorance and making uninformed decisions that may sometimes disrupt peace and result to political instability… Plato believes that leaders need to possess the qualities of gravity, decorum and courage which are to be cultivated in education.[42]

Furthermore, Plato believes that education, not training or development of the intellect alone but the training of both the intellect and the will. As a matter of fact, there are two great faculties in man the intellectual and the will. These two

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38 E.E. Ebuta, "Plato's Education for Political Stability in Nigeria" A paper delivered 38th Annual Conference of Philosophers of Education Association of Nigeria (PEAN), 2018, pp.2-4.

39 B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), p.108.

40 I. Ekpo, "Moral Education and Responsible Governance: A Reflection on Plato's Council on Education" in Ozumba, G. et al. (eds.), *Philosophy and Education in the Third Millennium Ad.* Vol.2, (Anambra: Verax Global, 2009), p.169.

41 Ibid.

42 S. Tukur, *et al.* "Appraising the Concepts of Teaching and Knowledge for Political Stability in Nigeria" unpub. A Paper presented at 38th Annual Conference of Philosophers of Association of Nigeria (PEAN), 2018.

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are necessarily involved in the process of education. The training of the intellect alone does not bring forth an educated man but a skilful man who has acquired a certain skill. An educated man in this context is a person whose intellect will have been trained and who has come out as a learned and virtuous person. Thus, Plato's education is a process of both intellectual and moral formation. It important to state that by 'philosopher king' Plato does not mean mere philosophic acquisition of cognitive knowledge, but rather an embodiment of knowledge and virtue, that is, a highly learned, virtuous and discipline person. For one to be philosopher king, one needs to be an embodiment of qualities such as, immense knowledge, moral probity and self-discipline in order to be able to lead the citizens out of ignorance thereby enhanced the general enlightenment for the creation of political awareness among the people. In other words, Plato's "Philosopher King" captures the essence and relevance of education to good, political and national building. He holds that the view that socio-political maladies are a function of ignorance. To produce individuals that are physically fit, intellectually competent, mentally and psychologically balanced, emotionally, socially and morally sound, highly compassionate and passionately committed to guaranteeing an environment that guarantees the good life, a well-structured educational system is imperative. A system of education should be able to produce individuals who are educated in the true sense of the word whose outlook reflects those values that true education entails. It is on this note that this paper holds the view that until our educational system is structured to addresses our peculiar challenges, the burden of bad governance, political instability and underdevelopment would remain our lot. Plato justified giving philosopher-kings absolute powers on the basis that ruling is a skill, just as medicine is. In order to rule justify one has to be trained for it, just as in order to practice medicine properly one has to be trained for it. To allow an untrained person a voice in matters of governance is as foolish, in Plato's eyes, as to allow an untrained person to give advice for the proper conduct of a surgical operation.

Plato emphasis on the importance of education for nation building and political stability influenced him to advocate two distinct levels of education

i. Compulsory education for all citizens up to the age of 18 years.
ii. A prolonged education programme for the guardians who should continue up to the age of 35 years before taking up any official function.

An analysis of these distinct levels of education is expedient here; all children male and female should be raised communally by the state, until they are about eighteen. During this period they will be subjected to three types of tests in order

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to determine prospective rulers from those who are to become warriors and artisans. They would be in part physical (since ruling imposes a severe physical strain and also because Plato believes that physical health) in part intellectual moral temptation, then the ruler must sacrifice the interest of the society in order to satisfy their own interest. The individual who possessed these tests would be carefully isolated for further training-most of it intellectual and would be schooled in the abstract science. They would study arithmetic, geometry, solid geometry, astronomy and harmonics to prepare them for the abstract thinking necessary for their subsequent study of philosophy.[43]

The study of philosophy or dialectic as Plato calls it, is the culmination of their theoretical preparation for the task of ruling since it will lead them finally to a complete knowledge of the good. Once they have this knowledge, their action must be good and they will always make decisions which are in the best interest of the state; and they will in fact be philosopher-kings. The second part of their school will be practical; they would be appointed to administrative posts of a lesser order and constantly observed in the performance of their duties and anyone who failed to achieve competence in any of the above subjects would be dismissed as a potential ruler. After all the tests had been passed, the ruler would take part in the active administration of the society.[44]

Plato also stresses that the citizens should be given education both male and female. Women are to have the same education with men in all respects.[45] Thus, according to Rorty, education of the rulers is the pivotal fulcrum of all education, since the rulers must structure social practices and institutions; regulate and direct culture and effectively form opinion for all sectors of the polis.[46]

In his outlining of the ideal state, Plato propounds a theory of a new social order, under which the governing class surrenders in the interests of the state. Family life and private property and lives under a system of communism; and the aim of this social order is to secure the unity of the state. Therefore, they must go. The ruling class must live under a regime of communism if they are to perform their duties well and unselfishly. They must be made free from the worries and snares of economic and domestic life. They "are not to be allowed to have their own

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43 R.H. Popkin and A. Stroll, op. cit., pp. 60-63.

44 Ibid. p.63.

45 S.Tukur, et al., op. cit.

46 A.O. Rorty, "Plato's Council on Education in Philosophy",O'Hear, A. (ed.), in *the Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy*, vol.73. No.28, 1999, pp.157-178.

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houses of families lest their minds should get diverted to the preservation and extension of such property"[47]

Conclusion

Plato's social political thought carefully adumbrated in this paper had a far-reaching effect on nation building when a nation applies them to its national policies. Although it had been observed in most quarters that his ideal state is not realizable. This paper has established the fact that quality education as advocated by Plato in which the people specialized in their respective roles will produce good citizens and will ensure political stability in Nigeria. Thus, is hereby recommended rigorous education that will produce philosopher-kings for Nigeria's political stability. Plato's philosophy of education is not without some pitfalls. Even the division of society into three classes has some criticism. However, the main current in the Platonic education is the value of education to political stability and governance. Plato's contention is that education will bring new spirit of life through the body polity. For Plato's philosophy education is a counsel which will foster development of moral life, designed to form a type of character which the state requires in its citizens as a *conditio-sine-qua-non* for realizing an ideal polity. The most illuminating lesson of Plato's philosophy of education is that well-formed citizen requires nothing less than a well sound habits of perception and thought desire and action. Education ought to prepare a person for a patient and effective work of bringing out opinions and practices into a consistent well-reason whole. That is education, culminates in the realization of the ideal.

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47 Plato, *The Republic* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1987), p.

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