

## *Political Scepticism*

### A Panacea for the Nigerian Political Leadership Quagmire

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#### **Abstract**

The paper blames the Nigerian political misfortune on the ignorance of the masses. It argues that the gullibility of the Nigerian masses has not fared well on the political climate of the country. As a way of taming this political monster, the paper proposes a sceptical attitude among the masses. The proposed political scepticism is differentiated from a wholesome rejection of the possibility of good governance in the Nigerian polity; rather it is an attitude towards the establishment of a critical and rigorous intellectual basis for national political culture. This attitude, the paper maintains, is impossible without the internalization of an appropriate education, a form of education tailored towards the attainment of sustainable development in the political sphere. It is believed that the projected appropriate education would help maintain a high standard of political proficiency among members of political class by pruning the Nigerian politics of incompetent and selfish persons who have since grown to an unbearable proportion.

Keywords: Political Scepticism, Gullibility, Nigeria, Masses, Political Quagmire.

#### **Introduction**

Previous studies have unearthed some of the root causes of Nigerian problems. These range from tribalism, nepotism, corruption, indiscipline, cult of mediocrity, lack of patriotism, and lot others traceable to the so-called Nigerian factors. All these are arguably reducible to bad leadership style the country has been constantly put through since its ascendance to nationhood status at independence (Aboluwodi, 2012:59). To quote Achebe (1983:1) "the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership" (Achebe, 1983:1). The paper blames this (bad leadership quality) on the lack of critical attitude of the Nigerian followers, who have persistently refused to learn from their past by perpetually falling prey of the inordinate selfishness of their leaders. It is argued that Nigerian citizens have played a significant role in enduring their leaders with unpalatable characteristics that have crippled Nigeria's real potential for good governance.

The paper is divided into five phases. The first phase focuses on the need for a rigorous mental disposition on the part of the citizens towards their intending and actual leaders. In the section that

follows, efforts are made to define, in clear terms, the concept of scepticism, from which the concept of political scepticism is derived. In the third phase, the paper explicates on the necessity of the idea of political scepticism, and proposes to find out ways of appropriating political scepticism to test the moral credibility and genuineness of purpose of intending members of political class, the same way classical scepticism has helped to maintain a high standard of knowledge in traditional epistemology. This leads to suggestions of appropriate model of education for the citizens as a means of equipping them to imbibe the right attitude required for political scepticism. The last section concludes the paper.

### **Scepticism and Political Scepticism**

Scepticism is an attitude. Actually, it is a critical attitude. This criticalness has sometimes been misinterpreted as negativity or disbelief. The popular misconception is that sceptics, or critical thinkers, are people who disbelieve things (Dunning, 2012). In this sense, to be sceptical is to be negative about things and doubt or disbelieve them. On the contrary, however,

The true meaning of the word scepticism has nothing to do with doubt, disbelief, or negativity. Scepticism is the process of applying reason and critical thinking to determine validity. It's the process of finding a supported conclusion, not the justification of a preconceived conclusion (Dunning, *ibid*).

As an idea, scepticism connotes the critical spirit: the tendency of not being easily satisfied with simple and superficial evidence and striving to accept only incorrigible beliefs that are absolutely certain (Owolabi, 2000:55). Such absolute level of certainty may be rare to come by. A simple refusal to be gullible, scepticism is the opposite of dogmatism. The Biblical Thomas' demand for evidence from the resurrected Jesus was a historical illustration of standard scepticism. The action of Thomas is epistemically justified because "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence, particularly in claims that are far-fetched or that violate physical laws" (Dunning, *ibid*).

Political scepticism, therefore, is the application of the sceptical spirit in the demand for high moral and administrative standards in governance. This implies the prevention or eradication of political gullibility from among the people within a polity. To paraphrase Bertrand Russell's (1958) proposal, political scepticism is the doctrine that it is undesirable to believe a political proposition when there is no ground whatever for supposing it true. This is a simple statement of the thesis of political scepticism. It reiterates the very important fact that dogmatic or passive acceptance of the politicians' promises and policies does not accord well with the dream of good governance. It is the re-thinking of political claims with the sole aim of sieving them in the light of what is reasonable, realizable and most importantly, feasibly pragmatic within the context of the claimants.

The concept of political scepticism is not new in African political/philosophical discourse. Prominent among African scholars who have expressed scepticism towards the African, particularly Nigerian, politics is Moses Akin Makinde. In Makinde's (2010) opinion, political scepticism is inevitable in Nigeria because of the nature of the Nigerian politics, which is maladies-infected. Properly called a monstrous couple - contradiction and absurdity - these maladies have given birth to two sets of twins: first, indiscipline and lawlessness, and second, greed and corruption, with the second set of twins coming barely one year after the first (Makinde, 2010:216). Consequently, Makinde writes:

... my scepticism about Nigerian politics, especially its so-called democratic system of government, arises from the fact that there is no guarantee that there can be a true democracy in Nigeria, not only

in our life time as Chief Awolowo had predicted a long time ago, but in the life of our future generation. My scepticism rests on the maladies stated above... (Makinde, 2010:217).

My scepticism rests on my suspicion that these, truly, are incurable for now or in the near future, especially as they have grown their wings from top to the bottom, i.e. from government to the governed (Makinde, 2010:232).

One can therefore safely describe Makinde's scepticism as negative scepticism. It is an attitude of withdrawal based on the seeming hopelessness of the political situation of a country. This interpretation is reflected in Makinde's proposed solution to the Nigerian political maladies: "we may conceive of the possibility of eradicating all indisciplined [sic], lawless and corrupt people in Nigeria, or if we cannot find all of them for elimination, we put an age limit say, 18 years and below as those to be spared if we think that this age group has not been contaminated" (Makinde, 2010: 230). Perhaps this solution is based on the author's conviction that every Nigerian above the stipulated age (i.e. 18 years) is guilty of the trio of indiscipline, lawlessness and corruption. Such solution as this may as well leave all Nigerians dead, including the scholar from whom the suggestion emanates. This is beside the question as to who to carry out the eradication and through what means.

Whereas Makinde's political scepticism is informed by his recognition of irresolvable contradictions inherent in the Nigerian socio-political scene, Benson Igboin (2010) premises his on what he refers to as political Onanism. According to him, Onanism as a political concept refers to

"the use of the combined quanta of power and wealth by rulers to frustrate a progressive ideology, such as democracy, by attempting to perpetuate themselves in power." Strictly speaking, Onanism is "the deliberate withdrawal of the seminal force meant to fertilize a system in order to give birth to new desired species to perpetuate the genealogy arising from the inability of the deceased to keep the continuum (Igboin, 2010: 4).

Given the grounds they hold for their scepticism, Makinde and Igboin are justified in losing hope in the Nigerian political situation. In fact, the empirical evidence of the Nigerian condition itself bears witness to this near-undeniable conclusion. To reason this way, however, is to deny Nigeria the possibility of ever attaining the much-needed transformational social miracle required for a movement towards sustainable socio-political and economic development. This is negative political scepticism, which cannot be justifiably defended or sustained. For all that we know, this runs in the very opposite direction of what history testifies to as capable of happening. Nigerians are not socio-political mutants as far as humanity is concerned. Their case is thus not radically different from other species of mankind. Achebe (1983:1) cites the following historical event to justify this position:

On the morning after Murtala Mohammed seized power in July 1975 public servants were found "on seats" at seven-thirty in the morning. Even the 'go-slow' traffic that had defeated every solution and defied every regime vanished over night from the street! .... That the character of one man could establish that quantum change in a people's social behaviour was nothing less than miraculous. But it shows that social miracle can happen.

Although the drastic change described above was attributed to the alleged reputation for ruthlessness of the military figure in question, one is of the confident opinion that with the appropriate critical attitude from Nigerians, the morally, and thus politically, unworthy elements in power would be made to fizzle

out of the surface of the Nigerian politics. For, when the people cease to patronize them, they will realize their political mediocrity and allow the competent ones to take up the scene.

Being critical about political ideas and policies does not mean that the citizens are unnecessarily unreceptive of their leaders' opinions. On the contrary, it is the guarding against the egoistic manoeuvring of state's power for personal aggrandizement. To be 'critical' of others' ideas is therefore not the same thing as rejecting them: it consists rather in seriously asking oneself whether the idea in question should be reformed, modified or conserved, and in applying one's entire intellectual and imaginative intelligence to the search for an answer (Staniland, 2000:4). Constructive criticism is a necessary driver of functional governance. It constantly appraises the activities and the exercise of power of the political class, and, where necessary and justified, initiates actions to resist government's move at implementing unpopular policies. Criticism therefore means not negative appraisal but rational, impartial and articulate appraisal whether positive or negative (Staniland, *ibid.*). It is in this sense that the political sceptic understands the term criticism.

Political scepticism, as it is capable of being misconstrued, does not refer to unreasonable political antagonism, especially one borne out of sheer ethnic or religious bigotry. It is not political parochialism. Hence, if there will be opposition to government's policies at all, such must be for the best reason; that is, it must be one that is morally justified. The phrase 'morally justified' must be understood in the utilitarian sense of being politically beneficial to all Nigerians.

Furthermore, political scepticism should be clearly delineated from political apathy or intolerance. To be politically apathetic is to be indifferent to how the government of one's country is being run, and by who. It is to be less concerned about the activities of government, and consequently, to be politically irresponsible as a citizen. Political intolerance, on the other hand, describes a situation where there is unwillingness to accept different political view, which does not accord to one's own, even though such view may contain elements of political truth. Political scepticism is different from these two because it not only entails active political participation, but because it also expresses readiness to consider other positions, accepting them should they meet up with the ideals by which it operates. In political scepticism, all opinions are significant, and worthy of being considered. Perhaps the motivation for this permissiveness can be found in J. S. Mill (1994:433), who argues that:

The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

Neither is political scepticism another name for anarchism. By being politically sceptical, citizens are not to treat the existing government as non-existent. On the contrary, political sceptics accord government its due respect, for they believe in the maxim that two wrongs do not make a right. Whereas anarchism seeks to eliminate all forms of governmental institutions, such as education, religions, law, etc., political scepticism strives to consolidate the government by repositioning it for a more effective service to the people it is ideally constituted to serve. Anarchists of all sorts see government as an impediment to human progress and wish to eliminate it in part, or even completely (Baradat, 1984:126).

Political sceptics, on the contrary, see government as a necessary instrument to the realization of people's happiness and aspirations.

Political sceptics do not stake national political fate on mere unproven luck of political candidates or aspirants. Luck is not synonymous with political competence. A political sceptic has no thought for luck, only competence. For instance, the height of political unawareness displayed by Nigerians in the last presidential election, which brought President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan into office, points to the level of political naïveté of the Nigerian electorates. It is worth noting that Dr. Goodluck Jonathan came to the pick of the Nigerian political power, not on the account of anything he had achieved politically in the past, but because of his alleged, unearned ability to bring good-luck to Nigeria. It is arguable, as perceivable from the tunes of existing literatures and opinions on the emergence of President Goodluck Jonathan, that it was merely his first name, Goodluck, coupled with his "rags-to-riches tales" (Bankong-Obi, 2012) which perhaps, endeared Nigerians to a vote of sympathy on which he rode to the first-man's office of the country. It should have been expected that in that critical stage of a national life, considering all the political blunders introduced by the protracted illness and eventual death of President Musa Yar'dua, what Nigeria needed was not mere luck, but purposive and proficient political actions, aimed at putting the country back at its right course.

The above attitude is not unprecedented in the Nigerian political history. Earlier in the 80s, Alhaji Abubakar Rimi had allegedly made a similar frivolity of national politics, when he expressed confidence that his party would win the vote of every Nigerian woman because of his handsomeness and the handsomeness of his party cohort, Jim Nwobodo (Achebe, 1983:62). By implication, a national issue is relegated to the level of levities as insignificant to national politics as mere beauty pageant! In the same vein, Olusegun Obasanjo, the acclaimed giant of the Nigerian Fourth Republic, rose to power as a result of the sympathy people had on him for having been unjustifiably imprisoned by the late Gen. Sanni Abacha, and not really because he was the most qualified presidential candidate available at the time. Given the above analysis, Nigeria can arguably be described as a country where the best candidate never wins an election; a country where people win elections for different reasons but never the right one. The consequence of this general inability of the masses to make the right political choice can be found in the proliferation of mediocre and half-baked politicians, who are more interested in their own narrow confines defined by their selves, family members, and political friends.

Of all the things that leave the Nigerian democracy troubled, perhaps the greatest of them all, is the nonchalant attitude of the citizens about what their leaders do or fail to do. This black spot of Nigerian followership has been observed by some scholars including Awolowo (1947) and Utomi (2012) to mention but a few. Albert O. Hirschman, quoted by Utomi (2012), has observed that people tend to react to the government's policies in two broad ways: they either raise their voice or they exit. In Nigeria, the first is hardly used, and when it is used at all, it is so wrongfully used that it loses its effectiveness. It should be added that this option is more open to the poor, who, even when they have the gut to raise their voice loud, are too economically impotent to make any difference to those at the elms of political affairs. To this category of people, as Awolowo writes, "it does not matter who rule the country, so long as in the process they are allowed to live their lives in peace and crude comfort" (ibid, 37).

Perhaps, Nigerians are best at the second option. Utomi (2012) presents a hypothetical way the 'exit' option is often demonstrated, particularly among the upper and middle economic class. According to Utomi, they will say:

"I'll play Andrew and leave the country" or "After all, God has helped me, I've managed to build a house in Gbagada. I've my Land Cruiser and I don't want any problem with the people who run this country because they are a murderous gang, I don't want to be killed or don't want to suffer any pain. You people should just leave me alone, let me stay in my comfort zone and enjoy myself." So he has exited....

Ironically, people with the above attitude seem to have forgotten that they need an enabling political environment of the country to sustain whatever property they possess that makes life worth living for them.

Academics, who are primarily saddled with the responsibility of playing the watch-dog role over the political class, checkmating their excesses and correcting their blunders, have not been exempted from this "exit" option, with the exception of those, who, having no integrity of their own, are lured into the sordid political terrain in the charade of being appointed as technocrats. Hence, Osoba (2006:116) opines that "the African intellectual elites have been justly accused of having "abundant imitative capacity"; but, with a few honourable exceptions, the leading lights among them are totally subjugated to the authority, whims and caprices of their (political) bosses who permit them in the looting of the national wealth through very lucrative appointments as ministers, commissioners, special advisers, and assistance. Thus, instead of fulfilling their expected traditional role of generating original and critical ideas about society and its problems, and helping to hold the rulers to account, they invariably become mere followers and joiners in a procession crazed by greed and heading for ruins."

In a different but related opinion, Osuntokun (2005) laments the unprofitable silence of the university community in the face of political anomalies. He writes:

...we shy away from serious discussions of our times. Billions of dollars of our patrimony are lodged in foreign banks while the university community, students and staff, keep mute instead of demonstrating in front of embassies of countries involved in looting or keeping looted money so that we can add our voice to that of government demanding a return of our money illegally appropriated by a few people (Osuntokun, 2005:28).

The bemoaned silence (above) seems to be a general social pathological trait among the Nigerian citizens perhaps as a result of the long history of government's deliberate deafness to several corrective efforts made in the past by the public.

In democracy, enjoying the luxury of a comfort zone is insufficient on its own merit. The real happiness of citizens resides exclusively with the people; not with the government. As noted by Nyong'o (1992:92), "democracy is not about what government does: it is about what people do to make their government accomplish things for the common good." Staying with or staying away from the government is not significantly necessary. The most important thing is that the people must first of all have power to make their government do what they want before they can expect these governments to rule democratically in order to expect security and comfort as a necessary consequence.

### The Imperative of Political Scepticism

Perhaps it would be apposite to begin this section with a brief examination of the role of scepticism in traditional epistemology. The importance of scepticism is easily demonstrated by the fact that "historically speaking, epistemology did not begin until the Greek Sophists actually began to manifest sceptical tendencies by denying the possibility of objective knowledge" (Owolabi, 2000:55). In fact, there is a sense in which the whole of the epistemological enterprise is an attempt to meet up with the standards set in place by the sceptics. The consequence of this is that, in constantly challenging epistemic claims, scepticism helps to raise the standard of what we ordinarily call knowledge, which earlier thinkers took for granted. Owolabi (2000:59) sums up why scepticism is desirable to the enterprise of epistemology. He writes:

It (scepticism) constantly cautions and constantly reminds us of the need to scrutinize epistemic claims. The enterprise of epistemology is unique and worthwhile because of this capacity to distinguish knowledge from mere opinion.

In a similar vein, political scepticism has become imperative to the Nigerian political development for several reasons. As it was established in the preceding section, the problem with the Nigerian leadership style does not originate from the leaders themselves as such, but rather and, in an important sense, from the gullible and indifferent masses. In other words, the Nigerian masses have made their leaders as politically reckless as they have become. As observed by Reuben Abati, (cited in William, 2008:332-333), "the people, the so-called followers, are the problem with Nigeria: we have failed to choose the right people to lead us; when they fail in position of authority, we have often failed to show them the way out". Nigerians have not played their role in the entrenchment of good governance. Democracy extols the ideal of supremacy of the people. This is because ideally, democracy should reflect the will of the people in all its ramifications, although this people's supremacy has regularly been flouted by even the most professed democratic government.

Nigeria is a country where political ignorance and gullibility reign supreme. This could be explained, in part, as a result of the lack of rigorous intellectual basis of her political culture, which makes anyone, insofar as he/she possesses the material resources "qualify" for the job of a politician. This way, politics is seen as a lucrative business, where all manners of lunatics come to invest their ill-made money with the assurance of regaining it many-folds, provided they are ready to protect their investments with all ploys at their disposal, including rigging, kidnapping and assassination of political opponents, among others. When an incumbent president once described our politics as "a do-or-die affair", he was not only confirming the suspicion that Nigeria's democracy is about the most dangerous in the world, but that the Nigerian politics has been invaded by the most self-centred people, who have made the political landscape unsafe for their worthy counterparts.

The introduction of an appropriate measure of political scepticism in Nigerian politics must therefore, be a welcome idea. The need to convince the doubting masses on rational grounds, rather than confuse them with money or other ill-gotten material resources, would perhaps foster the spirit of periodic discussions between political contenders and the Nigerian public. This provides a political platform where critical issues about the future political destiny of the country are given topmost priority. A political debate, when it is carefully orchestrated, is an essential aspect of a strong political culture and

a functional democracy. Where it does not obtain, the citizens are thrown into a depth of ignorance regarding the intentions of the aspiring politicians and the activities of actual governments.

76. In the course of political debates, political candidates are made to present their political and economic agendas in blueprints that explain, in clear terms, steps to be taken in realizing their goals. Hence, political debates afford the participants a chance to display their political acumen or naiveté, as the case may be. In fielding questions from the public/audience, the judgment of who is capable or who is not to be in a particular political position becomes apparent to the critical public observers. This naturally sharpens the citizens' sense of judgment, and enhances the political choice of the citizens at the polls and elsewhere.

An anticipated challenge to the above need for periodic political debates could be that it is possible for a viceroy for a political office to promise one thing and do another at the assumption of office. In fact, this has been the nature of the post-colonial politics in Nigeria. To this objection, however, one may reply that a proper awareness by the masses has the potential of leading to the provision of an agreement, a political pact of a sort, which spells out the operational modalities guarding the occupancy of political offices, coupled with actions to be followed should there be renege on terms of the contract by erring politicians.

Another relevance of political scepticism is that it propels citizens towards taking conscious effort at knowing their rights under the law. To be able to defend one's rights, it is requisite that one knows such rights. The law has provided, under the constitution of each country, certain fundamental rights for the citizens, and it is expected that every citizen gets to know what these rights are. Ignorance of them is nobody's fault. And it is this ignorance that constitutes the weapon of mass destruction employed by the Nigerian political leaders. On countless occasions, Nigerians have watched, with impunity, their constitutionally protected human rights trampled upon by members of political class.

The citizens' unawareness of their rights has been amply demonstrated in several ways, one of which is their cold attitude to voting. The voting pattern of the Nigerian electorate has sufficiently shown the most uncritical voting masses. "Where the culture of affectional ties, preferences and ethnic considerations hold sway in a political system, in that culture, the voting rights exercised by the electorate will be nothing more than an untrue instrument of choice and sanction" (William, 2008:335). When people do not exercise their civic right, judiciously, through voting their choice of candidates during elections, they lose perhaps the only opportunity they have got to entrench good governance. This way, they help their leaders to kill the seminar force in the political development of the country.

Aluko (2010) highlights some of the consequences of the masses' neglect of their rights as guaranteed in the Nigerian 1999 constitution. These, according to him, are the real cost of the Nigerian democracy. In an assessment of the constitutional cost, which he considers the greatest disservice to the Nigerian democracy; Aluko (2010) observes four ways in which the Nigerian politicians have violated the dictates of the Nigerian constitution. One of such violations can be found in the area of education of the citizenry. Aluko (2010: 15) explains further:

The educational objectives provide among others, that government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy and shall, as and when practicable provide (a) free, compulsory and universal primary education; (b) free secondary education; (c) free university education; (d) free adult literacy programme (Article 18).



How are these provisions consistent with the increasing privatization of education, increase in the fees charged in higher educational institutions and the mushrooming of private universities?

The situation becomes more worrisome in that, except for a handful of human right activists, mostly lawyers, no conscious effort has been made by any Nigerian, rich or poor, to challenge this abuse. Though groaning under the encumbrance of this carefree attitude of government, the masses have refused to act decisively like a people who are conscious of their rights. Thus, Aluko (2010:18) concludes "we as citizens have not taken our citizenship seriously, though the Fundamental Rights of our people are enshrined in the Constitution". This is political gullibility, which the proposed scepticism would help eradicate or reduce.

It could be argued that the citizens' ignorance of their constitutional rights results chiefly from the general lack of reading culture prevalent among Nigerians. This is linked to the fact that a great number of the Nigerian citizens do not own copies of the Nigerian constitution; while very many of the few that have it are ignorant of its contents. Government has the primary purpose of safeguarding the rights of the citizens only when the citizens themselves are conscious of their rights. This is because government may initiate certain policies which, consciously or otherwise, may override a particular right of the citizens. When this occurs, it results in a sort of conflict. Only politically and constitutionally informed citizens can discern this conflict, and initiate actions to address it.

### **The Need for Appropriate Education**

Scepticism is an attitude of the learned mind. This implies that it takes an enlightened mind to be critical of the ideas of others; to ask relevant questions when needs arise for them. "It demands rational reflection and rigorous thinking for one to know that some programmes which appear genuine and for public interests are meant to serve the interest of a small clique" (Owolabi, 1999:21). Unrefined minds readily take anything as true, and hence are prone to falling prey of human contrivance. Gullibility is a disease of the unlearned mind. In a country where ignorance reigns, "it becomes possible and easy for the elites to use various cleavages, especially ethnic and religious, to make the people go against their own personal interests" (Owolabi, *ibid.*). Some writers have, to this end, emphasized the indispensability of education to effective governance (Akinpelu, 1987; Adedeji, 1991; Awolowo, 1968; Onukaogu, 2012).

The notion of appropriate education here presupposes that there must be inappropriate education. Although there is truism in the cliché that no knowledge is lost, not all knowledge is appropriate for all contexts. This is because whereas knowledge is ideally to be sought for its own sake, in practice, knowledge is sought for a particular pragmatic reason. Education is the general name given to methods of knowledge acquisition, so it is a path that leads to knowledge of varied types. Appropriate education, therefore, is the type of education that leads to a special skill or attitude in the people, and for the purpose for which it is sought. By contrast, inappropriate education is one which does not lead to this end. A little illustration might help to drive home this point.

Consider the Nigerian quest to become a technologically driven economy in the shortest period of time. Although this yen has received less seriousness than it requires, it has nevertheless created a need for education planners to make adjustment in educational policies that would reflect a move in this direction. Among other things, this move has remained a technical justification for the creation of several government-owned universities of technology, polytechnics and technical colleges in the country

in recent years. It is also the reason for providing more funds and scholarship facilities for science-oriented studies and researches, almost to a total neglect of other fields of studies (Onukaogu, 2012). This has inspired an unholy schism in the requirements for admission into the Nigerian universities, leaving students applying for non-science courses with limited space to fill in and stricter pass-mark requirements for admission. Such is an imperfect candidate for what we mean by appropriate education. The reason: because it reflects our insatiable thirst to develop in Nigerian citizens a scientific consciousness needed for speedy technological development.

In the same vein, there is need to create in the new generation Nigerians a rigorous political posture, such that would be required for a sceptical attitude that will put political aspirants on their toes about what they are up against should they be incompetent or politically selfish. For a very long time, perhaps from independence, Nigerian politicians have ridden on the ignorance and gullibility of the masses to inflict on them all sort of political mayhems. It may be difficult to change this existing trend if the citizens do not embark on mass-enlightenment programmes. Such programmes should be inculcated into the very fabric of our educational system, spanning through the length and breadth thereof, and with the intention of making it part and parcel of our national consciousness. It is the duty of every sane citizen to resist bad personalities in government, and prevent the ambitious ones from getting into power. Prevention, they say, is better than cure. Cases where wrong characters had spent months or even years in political offices only to be thrown out later on the account of illicit mandate, which have plagued the Nigerian politics since the inception of the Fourth Republic, have not left Nigeria in good shape, politically and economically.

Appropriate education, as it is used here, therefore describes a form of education suitable for the arousal of strong sceptical feelings in the masses towards the ostensible, mouth-deep promises and alleged goodwill of the Nigerian political class. This type of education should be designed to incorporate ways through which citizens can identify genuine political interests and stewardship, differentiate between political charlatans and their serious counterparts, between unscrupulous elements in politics and those with political integrity, wheat from chaff. Such education shall instil in citizens, especially the youths, the moral virtue of resistance to evil proposals, such as bribes, hooliganism and political violence, by entrenching in them a sense of human dignity and self-worth (Stromquist, 2009). Thus, such education is one that makes the citizens self-confident and mentally independent. Onukaogu (2012) captures this more vividly in the light of his electoral literacy empowerment hypothesis:

It should enable us to develop economic ability to survive in the society so that we will not be financially induced to subvert or compromise the electoral process. Thus whatever electoral literacy empowerment (ELE) education we give, must empower the recipient, especially our adults rural dwellers to have life skills that can help them to develop as entrepreneurs i.e. able to generate self-employment and able to employ others... (33).

The proposed appropriate education is gender-neutral. It is neither patriarch nor matriarch-based. It does not sacrifice political merit and competence on the altar of mediocrity inspired by gender chauvinism. Since religion and progress are a problematic conjunction (Makinde, 2010:316), appropriate education makes a clear distinction between religion and politics. It is neither Christian nor Muslim. Religious fanaticism is a thing appropriate education has nothing to do with. In other words, it does away with any religious affiliation. Nor is it ethnic-biased. For such practice is not meant to favour any

part of the country particularly, but for the common good of all Nigerians. In appropriate education, the individual citizen is de-tribalized as objectively as possible. It goes without saying that in this sort of education, only Nigeria counts. These elements (gender, religion and ethnic group, that is) have constituted a clog in the wheel of good governance and effective political representation in Nigeria for a very long time. It is high time they were molted out of our national consciousness. This, the proposed appropriate education, helps to realize.

It is worthy of note that any form of education apt for the description (of the sort given above) must be one which does not discriminate between courses of study, levels of education and/or, more importantly, between formal and informal education. This is what makes the difference between appropriate education and the kind exemplified by the Nigeria's hunger to "buy, hire or steal technology" (Achebe, 1983) from advanced nations of the world. In addition, appropriate education must not be left at the level of theorization alone. It must be theory plus practice, hence its departure from its conventional counterpart. For its effects to be wholesome and all-encompassing, the practice of appropriate education must be encouraged at all levels of the society, starting from the family, school, work-places, places of worship, and most significantly in government.

### Conclusion

It is evident from the foregoing that Nigerian citizens have contributed in no small way to the failure of the Nigerian state. They have done this through the non-discharge of their constitutional roles as responsible citizens of their country. Saying this does not mean that no effort, at all, has been made by any Nigerian to challenge positively the government, when it oversteps its bounds. The late legal icon, Ganni Fawehinmi, for instance, was at the forefront of the defence of the citizens' rights, which, on several occasions, got him involved in severe court cases with the Federal Government over improper interpretations of certain sections of the constitution. Others include Festus Kiyamo, Femi Falana, Professor Wole Soyinka, Dipo Fasina, and a couple of others. What one observes, however, is that these people, though have made giant stride in their efforts against bad governments and anti-people policies, are too numerically insignificant to make any difference to the high and mighty that occupy the Nigerian political space.

It should be stressed that the vision for a better Nigeria is that of every citizen, irrespective of his/her social status or economic class. It is no time to lament how deteriorated things have become, but time to take decisive actions to save Nigeria from the upsurge of high-handedness in the business of governance. This starts by voting out of power any government which does not accord the people the human dignity that they deserve as citizens. The right to vote is a potent weapon which no government can usurp from the citizens. Democracy provides a model of government where such weapon is put to the best use. The new generation of Nigerian voters must be kept abreast of this inalienable right, and also of the attendant consequences of its misuse.

On a final note, it needs be said that it is people's business what government does or fails to do. This implies that the people have the right to poke around in government business, although in a harmless fashion. The recently passed freedom of information law is of great importance in this respect. This should be intelligently exploited by the masses to their own advantage. It is to be added that the bill was not made into law for the purpose of selfish witch-hunting of responsible members of political class, but

for a more advantageous purpose of laying bare the activities of the government in such a way that they are admissible of critical appraisal from the watching public. A conscious citizenry is expected to use such medium to advance the cause of its country's socio-political/economic welfare. Nigeria can only be truly great if it is properly monitored from both ends. This should be the mission of the new generation of government and people.

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