

**DEMOCRACY IN EDUCATION:
DOES THIS CULTURE EXIST IN SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS OF AFRICA?**

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the extent of students' democratic involvement in the teaching/learning process in selected African countries. The sample was 1,044 students and 708 teachers selected from sixty secondary schools in Nigeria, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Tunisia, and South Africa through the multi-stage and stratified random sampling techniques to ensure adequate sample representativeness. A structured questionnaire containing thirty-three items was used to collect data which were analyzed using mean ratings, t-test and ANOVA. Results revealed that teaching and learning activities were largely pursued in undemocratic classroom environments in Africa where teachers do not appreciably involve students in important classroom decisions and activities. These were further constrained by the disturbing high levels of bullying and restlessness in the classroom. The study concluded that the undemocratic practices were inconsistent with conducive classroom environment for effective and efficient teaching/learning. This lowers students' academic performance and development.

Keywords: Africa Classroom Democracy Learner-Centred Pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

The study examined the extent of democratic education, learner-centred teaching, academic freedom, and children rights in Africa with a view to highlighting some of the things that have influenced the educational systems of Africa to date. This would help educational administrators, planners, and policy makers in making and taking decisions concerning the on-going education reforms in developing countries especially as they relate to Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals in Africa.

That education should be democratic in a democratic State is axiomatic since it should be undisputable for everyone living in a democracy. However, it is not very clear as to what democratic education precisely means. Some people have seen it as democracy being a qualifying adjective for education in a democratic country while others believe it has to do with the way and manner in which educational issues are carried out. Since there are many definitions for democracy, there are also many definitions for democratic education. The most popular and probably the commonest definition of democracy in modern states is the Abraham Lincoln's (the 16th president of the United States of America) which defined democracy as 'the

government of the people by the people for the people'. Then, democratic education could be the education of the people by the people for the people.

Ajayi (1983) suggests that the economic system of a community or nation should be democratically distributed and organized to have a democratic education, where schools are made democratic by giving the heads teachers, teachers, supportive staff, students, and other stakeholders a say in the running of their institutions. Orji (2002: 298) says 'democracy as a phenomenon deals with man's effort to transcend himself and reach his ideal'. It underscores the point that democracy and education are intricately tied – no democracy, no democratic education. He went further to say that democracy would basically mean a government in which all the citizens participate in governance as opposed to oligarchy or monarchy. This would imply that democratic education would be an educational system in which everybody that is involved participates in the governance of education.

History reveals that the first version of democracy emerged in Athens between the 6th and 4th centuries B.C. where a direct rule by all free-born adults was practiced. This had since assumed a situation of government by representation. If one takes the Greek model said to be the classical example of a democracy, it simply means that any form of authoritarianism would be foreign to its nature. In other words, a democratic state, by consequence, should have a democratic education. The most notable political achievement of the Greeks was the establishment of a democracy in ancient Athens which apparently made all citizens equal before the law and had equal opportunities of taking part in governance. It was perhaps such a favourable political atmosphere that encouraged free thought and free expression that ultimately led to the rise of Athens as the most cultured city of the time, unrivalled in literature, arts, philosophy, architecture and aesthetics (Nwuzor and Ocho, 1982).

One thing about democracy is that it allows fundamental rights of citizens such as freedom of speech, opinion, expression, religion, association, due process, as well as the assertion of the rule of law and majority rule, and respect for the rights of minorities. Therefore the control of education in such a democratic state may not usually be easy and will definitely not be a clear cut affair especially in developing countries where democracy appears to be a new-comer.

Education, the world over, aims at promoting the intellectual development of the learner by widening his boundaries of knowledge (Gerstmann and Streb, 2006) which can best be achieved in an environment of disciplined inquiry, characterized by an atmosphere that allows for free and close interaction between the learner and his teachers and colleagues. This depicts a conducive classroom atmosphere that engenders effective teaching and learning (Bottery, 1993; Moswela, 2010). Embedded in such environments are rules and regulations, procedures, and policies usually backed by enacted laws referred to in the school system as Education Law. Education Law is about the educational liberties of individuals and groups in an educational setting (Barrell and Partington, 1985; Adams, 1992; Peretomode, 1992; Nakpodia, 2007; Thro, 2007; Moswela, 2010) and as such, everyone is expected to understand the implications and consequences of breaking the law (Joubert, 2007). Therefore, in exercising one's rights in the school, it must never be assumed that liberty is unlimited or justify any misconduct of the learner. The existence of a code of conduct in a school is a right and proper way of limiting fundamental liberties. The interests and welfare of learners and school administrators must be balanced against the rights of a learner or a group of

learners. However, learner-centered pedagogy embodies the principle of democracy because the learner's academic interests are recognized and given express attention (Duze, 2007; Joubert, 2007; Moswela, 2010).

Democracy in education in this study is seen as a classroom culture that bothers on academic freedom, learner-centred pedagogy, and children's rights. Although schools purport to encourage the democratization of teaching and learning that involves the students' interests as well as uninhibited participation in the learning activity, the exact scope of such participation remains unclear in African classrooms. A clear background understanding of democracy in education would require a brief literature review on some of the concepts involved. These include academic freedom, learner-centred pedagogy, and children's rights.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The concept of academic freedom actually relates to higher education in the sense of autonomy. Since the university system which is regarded as a community of its own is a place where scholars are to pursue truth, formulate and transmit it to students, who at the same time learn to search for truth for themselves, an idea developed right from the middle ages that such organizations should be autonomous. Thereafter, a concept that scholars should be free to learn and to teach what they please freely followed. This is usually seen as the philosophy of intellectual freedom which originated from Greece. Going by these, autonomy simply means giving the universities opportunity to take their own decisions, while academic freedom means the right to design and teach courses, conduct researches, hold ideas, associate with others, challenge established orthodoxies, and other activities without fear of harassment or victimization, all in the pursuit of truth (Agih and Egumu, 2007). However, as rightly noted by Agih and Egumu (2007) and Moswela (2010) situating autonomy and academic freedom in the university system reveals that autonomy in the modern university does not exist, except as a corollary of academic freedom. This is probably the case because at higher institutions lecturers, professors, research fellows and students can be very vocal and critical in their analysis of the way and manner governments' policies relating to education, politics, religion, the economy, etc are arrived at, managed, and implemented. Governments on the other hand, defend their policies and programmes and want to ensure that what the academics publish or write about does not threaten governance. Besides, the government or authority who is the major sponsor of the university often assumes the position in the idiom that "he who blows the pipe dictates the tune". Thus, the motive to stifle academic freedom at the higher education level can often be political and/or economical, while at the lower education level, the motive may not be ulterior or intentional but can be influenced mainly by culture, that is, the tradition that "adults tell and children listen and do without question" (Moswela, 2010:56). This culture-based tradition was also noted by Covey (2004:16-17) when he declared: "Often, the students tend to consent to this tradition, perhaps unconsciously... Even if they perceive a need to act, they do not take the initiative to do so. They want to be told what to do by the person with the formal title, and then they respond as directed. This kind of dependency does not help intellectual growth in the child." Furthermore, Ojebode (2006) discussing elements of human communication, said this involves people tagged sender-receivers or transceivers who simultaneously send and receive messages and there are no and indeed there should be no permanent senders and permanent receivers because both alternate roles as senders and receivers. He then referred to the conventional classroom which has been found wanting in this regard

where learners are often treated as permanent receivers, in fact, empty receptacles to be filled, while the teacher assumes the role of a permanent sender.

Moswela (2010) reported a global overview of academic freedom and how governments have attempted to stifle it in schools for various motives. In the USA, following the September 11 disaster, the government put into immediate effect the Patriotic Act which expands the federal governments' authority to demand business records including lists of library records and recent book orders. The Act bars librarians and bookstore employees from disclosing any request for such law enforcement (Gerstmann and Streb, 2006). Also, academic freedom in the USA universities has further been threatened by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq with government officials and watchdog groups becoming more aggressive about denouncing and calling for punishment of academics who challenge the war against terrorism and the invasion of Iraq (Gerstmann and Streb, 2006).

In Iran and Iraq college/university lecturers and professor reported to have fled these countries because their academic lives were threatened. Their works were under constant surveillance and subjected to restrictions and censorship which made their teaching and research difficult (Gerstmann and Streb, 2006).

In Africa, incidences of similar governments' censorship exist. For instance, at the height of the apartheid era in South Africa, censorship of published material to those opposed to the regime, including the academics was the order of the day (Mandela, 1994). In the recent past in Zimbabwe, students have been subjected to beating, harassment and expulsion from universities for protesting against government policies on higher education. Also, because of the political instability and the economic turmoil prevailing in that country, brain drain is very high. Academics leave the job because they no longer have the freedom to teach as the ruling Zanu-PF accuses and harasses them for supporting the opposition parties. In Zambia, university students' protest was met with brutal Police force. One student was shot, allegedly by a stray bullet. In Botswana there was the infamous case of a university professor who was deported from the country under controversial circumstances following a protracted court wrangling. Critics have linked the government's decision to the professor's publications which government felt were politically inciting (Moswela, 2010). In Nigeria, the bill submitted to the National Assembly by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) was stifled by the Obasanjo administration.

The teachers' freedom in the classroom is the learners' freedom in learning in school. If teachers cannot exercise freedom of teaching, the learners cannot learn freely. Scholars and researchers have noted that what the university needs in achieving teaching and research excellence is academic freedom (Sanda, 1992; Munzah, 2000; Agih and Egumu, 2007).

As for learners, their academic freedom refers to their ethical involvement and consultation about the manner of their treatment and about suggestions for improvement. Thus, while learners are given and may exercise freedom of expression and participation in the classroom, they remain subject to the teacher's guidance and control. Such involvement is made bearing in mind that teachers are authorities on what they teach and therefore, they must be authorities relative to the learners who are not authority in this sphere otherwise they would not be learners. In democratic environments, democratic education

or academic freedom is a constitutional entitlement. It is an essential component to education at all levels and is the cradle to democracy. Without the ability to openly and freely discuss issues with teachers, students' intellectual development is constrained (Bottery, 1993; Gerstmann and Streb, 2006; Duze, 2007; Joubert, 2007; Thro, 2007). As far back as the early fifties, Breadwin (1952) has argued that to encourage intellectual progress, a spirit of reflection and coordination must be promoted in the classroom since it enhances the process of academic development. He further submitted that although there are other ways this can be achieved the fundamental context for all of them is the one that encourages students to consider, propose and openly discuss a variety of ideas in the classroom. This, according to him constitutes democratic education or academic freedom in the classroom (Breadwin, 1952 in Merruti et al., 2006). Unfortunately, Education Law tends to concentrate more on the child's rights to education, information, harsh and cruel treatment, religion and language than on the specific rights of the child to classroom educational processes that include the rules that regulate behaviour and the teaching methods (Barrell and Partington, 1985; Adams, 1992; Thro, 2007; Moswela, 2010). This is evident in the various bills passed by law-makers in different countries of Africa. For example, Moswela (2010) reported that in the recent draft Bill on Children's Rights in Botswana, emphasis is on children's safety about child abduction and trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation, exposure to narcotic substances and subjection to cruel punishment at the apparent exclusion of their academic freedom in schools or in the classroom in particular. He lamented that the rather tenuous and skeletal Education Act also does not have any clause on democratic education in schools let alone in the classroom but with emphasis instead on safeguarding the health of pupils. In South Africa, the Constitution in Act 108 of 1996, does not specifically touch on the learner's democratic involvement in the classroom but talked about the right of a learner to enjoy education in a harmonious and free environment which is a source of significant learning. In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education talked about equality in opportunities to education and made no reference to democracy in the classroom while the child rights bill was like that in Botswana concerned with safety and health promotion. The same is true of other African nations.

STUDENT-CENTRED PEDAGOGY

Another major source of significant learning is when the learner solves problems by himself rather than being taught by teacher. This is learner-centred pedagogy that positions learners at the heart of the instructional process and not as passive recipients of information (Pedler et al., 2001; Mehendra et al., 2005; Duze, 2010b; Moswela, 2010). Scholars and educators have agreed that since children naturally differ in their learning abilities, teaching must be adapted to the individual differences and school children should not be treated as though everyone were just alike or the same. In this type of learning environment the learner should not be force-fitted into a standard mold but be allowed to compete against himself more than he competes with other students with opportunities provided for him to experience different teaching methods. Such an approach to teaching, where the learner is granted the freedom to explore and manipulate his learning environment, can have the effect of empowerment on the learner and his whole process of learning can begin to make sense. This is what they called democratic teaching and democratic learning (Hess, 1998; Tomlison, 1999; Moswela, 2010). Findings on differentiated instruction added a social interaction dimension between the learner and the teacher (Subban, 2006) as well as between the learner and the peers as important to the development of the learner's intellect.

Current global educational trends and reforms in the attainment of EFA and MDG goals giving equal educational opportunities to every child, should compel educators, economists and policy-makers in Africa also to re-examine their

teaching and instructional practices to accommodate groups of learners from among others, categorizing them as those from diverse backgrounds, slow learners, students on accelerated programmes, gifted children, physically challenged children, etc. This becomes more imperative for the reason also that some are analytical and rational and prefer the practical application of ideas while others are creative and artistic and like plenty of interaction; some are introverts while some are extroverts. All these affect the child's democratic behaviour in the classroom. (Popham 1993; Hess, 1998; Tomlison, 1999; Anderson, 2005; Subban, 2006; Moswela, 2010). These are, however, not without their own challenges as there are barriers to classroom free learning as noted by Moswela (2010) of which two major ones, legal uncertainty and classroom bullying, and a very subtle one, corporal punishment, will be briefly discussed.

LEGAL UNCERTAINTY

As discussed by Moswela (2010), there can be no exercise of free intellect in a classroom where tension fills the air and students are always uncertain about the expectations of the teacher (Merruti et al., 2006: 12). Such uncertainty can result in what these authors refer to as common fears of school that are characterized by "refusal of school behaviour, conduct disorders, and surreptitious absenteeism without knowledge of the parents." Van Zyl and Van der Vyver (1982: 265) in Oosthuizen (2003) refer to the situation where learners are unsure of what is expected of them as legal uncertainty. According to the principle of legal uncertainty, classroom rules must be "formulated in such a way that those who are subject to them will know exactly what their rights and obligations in terms of the relevant requirements are." Good classroom order is based on the agreement between the teacher and the students about what is expected of the students (legal certainty). Involving students in the maintenance of order in the classroom "helps them learn responsibility for their behaviour and judge between right and wrong. It also helps them gain a sense of responsibility that accompanies freedom" (Fields and Boesser, 2005: 5). If this holds true, then students must participate in the formulation of the classroom rules that regulate their behaviour. The perspectives made by the different authors above constitute academic freedom or democratic education to the learner in more many ways (Moswela, 2010).

CLASSROOM BULLYING

The opportunity for students to pursue their educational rights becomes meaningless except it is done in an environment that is safe and secure. No matter the adequacy of human and physical resources, as long as the learning environment is terror struck, no significant learning can take place in the student. If the right to quality education is to have any substantive meaning, then, there must necessarily be space in the classroom that is secure and free for learning (Thro, 2007). This is why the object law of education is to ensure order and justice in the school (Gilliant, 1999). In classroom settings, the law in the form of rules is important particularly that which regulates the privileges and liberties of learners. Joubert (2007) has argued that schools have the opportunity to create academically free environments through subordinate legislation such as school rules. For learners to begin to be truant because of fear of peer-bullies or teacher-bullies is not in the best interest of the learner. Sadly, it has been observed that some students who were otherwise tertiary materials have lost educational opportunities because they were in the wrong classes at school, either in a class of bullies or taught by teachers who did not protect them, or in classes where teachers are themselves bullies (Thro, 2007; Moswela, 2010). This becomes worrisome

especially when teachers indeed have a duty of care and protection to their students that flow from the *in loco parentis* doctrine, which, literally translated, means “in the place of a parent” (Oosthuizen, 2003; Duze, 2010; Moswela, 2010).

The problem with law, however, is its emphasis on the principle of natural justice which gives extensive due process leaning to the accused more than the victim. The burden of proof often lies with the plaintiff, under the “no person is guilty unless proven so” doctrine, and that often, minimal punishment is given to the accused if found guilty and the victim gets little or no compensation for the harm done. In many cases the student bullies who have caused harm soon return to the classrooms unremorseful constituting a permanent threat to a democratic classroom environment. In the USA, although the victims have the right to protection against aggressors, schools do not vigorously enforce this law (Thro, 2007)). This can make the weak students feel unsafe and unprotected from intimidation and harassment by the strong. This situation can constrain free learning.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Corporal punishment can subtly introduce aggression in the classroom and add to what Merruti et al. (2006: 12) referred to as “conduct disorder” and “refusal of school behaviour.” McManus (1995) views the use of corporal punishment as the application of force that can reinforce bad behaviour rather than deter it while Rigby (1996: 222) says “those who are really tough are sometimes actually encouraged by the threat of punishment and they see it as a challenge” and to get even with school authorities, they often retaliate on other students, thus creating a hostile classroom learning environment (Moswela, 2010).

These impediments to democratic education abound in most classrooms of the world today (McManus, 1995; Thro, 2007; Duze, 2010a, 2010b; Moswela, 2010) but it not known empirically the extent to which they manifest in secondary school classrooms of Africa. The school system will rely on a democratic teacher in a democratic classroom, in a democratic school, in a democratic educational system of a democratic government to eradicate them for optimum productivity.

From this discourse, the term democracy in education is operationally defined as a classroom culture that depicts the students’ democratic right to participate actively in making decisions on the teaching/learning process in the classroom without fear or molestation by either teachers or peers, especially as it pertains to rules and regulations in the class. The problem of this study therefore sought the answer to the question: To what extent do teachers involve students in classroom pedagogy and classroom management decisions in secondary schools in Africa? To guide the investigation, two research questions were raised. The first research question was answered while the four null hypotheses formulated from the second research question were tested.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the extent of democracy in education in secondary schools in Africa?
2. Is there any difference between the perceptions of secondary school students and teachers on the extent of democracy in education in different geographical locations of Africa?

HYPOTHESES

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female secondary school students on the extent of democracy in education in Africa.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female secondary school teachers on the extent of democracy in education in Africa.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference between the perceptions of secondary school students and those of teachers on the extent of democracy in education in Africa.

Ho₄: there is no significant difference between the weighted responses of students, teachers, and the entire sample from different geographical locations in Africa.

METHOD

Specifically, this study sought to find out whether teachers make deliberate efforts to involve students in decisions that affect the teaching/learning process and behaviour in classrooms relating particularly to rules and regulations. The research design was therefore the ex-post facto of a descriptive survey since the information sought has already occurred and there was no manipulation of variables.

The target population of the study was all the students and teachers in secondary schools in Africa. The study sample was a total of 1,752 respondents comprising 1,044 students and 708 teachers selected through a multi-stage stratified random sampling to include schools from African countries in the North, South, East and West Africa. The selected countries are Nigeria, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Tunisia and South Africa. The teachers were made up of 392 males and 316 females while the students were 598 males and 406 females.

The instrument used for data collection was a thirty-three item questionnaire developed by the researcher after a careful review of related literature and validated by a team of experts in Educational Administration and Planning who acted as pilot jurors. It sought information on the various classroom activities and behaviours that relate to democracy in education as well as some relevant demographic data. The reliability of the instrument was established through the test re-test method where the respondents comprised forty students and twenty teachers from secondary schools in Nigeria not involved in the study. The tests were administered within a space period of seventeen days and the two sets of scores subjected to the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistic. The computed coefficient of 0.92 was found satisfactory.

The questionnaire was a four-point Likert-scale with response options of Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point) for positively worded items while the reverse was the case for negatively worded ones. A mean rating of 2.50 and above (or 62.25%) was accepted as being positively disposed to the case investigated while ratings below this were negatively disposed. The instrument was administered to the study respondents by the researcher in Nigeria while well briefed third parties were used to do the same in the other selected African countries. The

data collected were analyzed using mean ratings, t-test for difference between two independent means and the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS

The data were analyzed as they related to the only research question and the four null hypotheses and the results were presented in Tables 1-5 accordingly. The first research question was answered by isolating the scores for each of the variables studied and computing their corresponding means scores which were presented as mean ratings in Table 1. The first, second, and third null hypotheses were tested by subjecting their computed independent mean scores to the t test for difference between two independent means and the results presented in Tables 2,3, and 4 respectively. The fourth null hypothesis of three equal means was tested by subjecting the weighted means to the One-Way ANOVA and the result presented in Table 5. All the tests were carried out at the 0.05 level of significance at their relevant degrees of freedom.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Table 1: Distribution of Sample Size, Scores and Corresponding Mean Ratings for Variables on Democracy in Education

Variables	n	Scores	Mean Ratings	Weighted Mean Ratings	Decision
Students: Males	638	810	1.27	1.31	Undemocratic
Females	406	544	1.34		Undemocratic
Teachers: Males	392	580	1.48	1.55	Undemocratic
Females	316	509	1.61		Undemocratic
Location: North Africa	304	468	1.54	1.49	Undemocratic
South Africa	497	696	1.40		Undemocratic
East Africa	588	888	1.51		Undemocratic
West Africa	363	541	1.49		Undemocratic

The result in Table 1 is quite vivid and self-explanatory. It showed that all the computed mean scores were lower than the 2.50 benchmark. They were therefore not accepted as being positively disposed to the issue investigated and as such declared undemocratic. This meant that secondary school students in Africa were not afforded appreciable opportunities to partake in decisions that pertain to them in classroom administration and management by the teachers.

Null Hypothesis One

Table 2: t-test Analysis of Male and Female Students on Democracy in Education

Variables	n	Mean	SD	df	t _{calculated}	t _{critical}	Decision $p \leq 0.05$
Males	638	1.27	1.15	1042	0.014	1.960	Not Significant
Females	406	1.34	1.19				

Result in Table 2 showed that the calculated value of t, 0.014, is smaller than the critical t value of 1.960, hence the null hypothesis was retained meaning that there is no significant difference between the opinions or perceptions of male and

female students as regards the extent of democracy in education in African classrooms. The very low mean ratings (1.27 and 1.34) indicated by both males and females are democratically handicapped in the classroom.

Null Hypothesis Two

Table 3: t-test Analysis of Male and Female Teachers on Democracy in Education

Variables	n	Mean	SD	df	t _{calculated}	t _{critical}	Decision p ≤ 0.05
Males	392	1.48	1.52	706	0.018	1.960	Not Significant
Females	316	1.61	1.57				

Similarly male and female teachers showed no significant difference in their responses as indicated by results in Table 3. Since the calculated t value of 0.018 is smaller than the critical value of 1.960, the null hypothesis was retained implying that they perceived the problem of democracy in the classroom as the same agreeing that students are democratically deprived.

Null Hypothesis Three

Table 4: t-test Analysis of Students and Teachers on Democracy in Education

Variables	n	Mean	SD	df	t _{calculated}	t _{critical}	Decision p ≤ 0.05
Students	1044	1.31	1.27	1750	0.033	1.960	Not Significant
Teachers	708	1.55	1.48				

Also, null hypothesis three which states that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of students and teachers on democracy in education was retained. The result in Table 4 showed a smaller value of computed t, 0.033, than the critical value of 1.960. This implied that students and teachers alike agreed that the students were democratically deprived from participating fully in decisions about the teaching/learning process and classroom behaviour.

Null Hypothesis Four

Table 5: One-Way ANOVA Summary Table of Weighted Mean Ratings on Democracy in Education (Students, Teachers, and All geographical locations).

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F _{calculated}	F _{critical}	Decision p ≤ 0.05
Between Groups	2	3.614	1.807	0.60	3.00	Not Significant
Within Groups	1749	5262.741	3.009			
Total	1751	5266.355	-			

The result in Table 5 showed that Null Hypothesis Four which sought to find whether any significant difference existed among the three weighted mean ratings of students (1.31), teachers (1.55), and overall rating by respondents in different geographical locations in Africa, North, South, East, and West, (1.49), was also retained. The One-Way ANOVA analysis showed that the calculated F value of 0.60 was smaller than the critical F value of 3.00 hence the decision to retain the null hypothesis implying that there was no significant difference between the three independent means. This reinforced the

finding that African students in secondary schools were indeed deprived from participating in decision-making about pedagogic and other issues that directly pertain to them in the classroom.

DISCUSSION

All the results from the analysis of the data for this study indicated unequivocally that students in secondary schools all over Africa do not enjoy classroom democracy. The situation is so poor that even the teachers themselves admitted it is that bad. This is evident in the more or less similar mean ratings for male and female teachers, 1.55 and 1.61 respectively, on one side and the more or less similar weighted mean ratings of 1.31 and 1.55 by students and teachers respectively on the other side. That these values are this low, far from the minimum acceptable value of 2.50 is quite shocking and alarming. It becomes very worrisome when compared with what obtains in other parts of the globe. The 2.50 minimum rating in this study corresponds to 62.25 percent. If we go by this, it means that the mean ratings observed for students (1.31) is only 32.75 percent and that for teachers (1.55) 38.75 percent, and average for North, South, East and West Africa (1.49) is 37.25 percent. Furthermore, the grand mean rating of 1.45, which should be the average of 1.31, 1.55, and 1.49, is also only 36.25 percent. In all of these, there is none that is up to fifty percent whereas in the USA secondary school students are known to enjoy near 100 percent academic freedom; in the Europe, it is about 96 percent; about 88 percent in Asia, and about 83 percent in Latin America (Delta TV News, 2003). However, the only study found that directly relates to this study carried out in Botswana by Moswela (2010: 62) declared that ‘...in the bigger scheme of things, it can be concluded that the provision of education in secondary schools in Botswana is democratic. To a large extent, this has been influenced by the country’s (Botswana) impeccable democratic practices, at least relative to other African countries’. His study seems to be at par with this present one, but he was quick to add that his sample due to the way it was put together may not be widely generalized. This may perhaps account for the discrepancy observed. Besides, even though Botswana was included in this study, the effects of the other countries may have drowned Botswana’s democratic stand.

The largely undemocratic education found could probably mean that the old and traditional teacher-centred teaching methods where the teacher talks most of the time and the students listen, still dominates teaching activities in African schools. It may also be as a result of this African basic culture that adults talk and children listen without interruption. If children must talk in this kind of relationship, they must have to wait for the adult to be done. In waiting, they could forget their bearing and might even lose interest in the matter. They could also get frustrated and never bother to think rationally next time. In the study of Science, this scenario becomes a big stumbling-block. This may explain why most Nigerian children today shorn and dread science subjects. The fact that this is happening in an era where science and technology is dominating global knowledge and competitiveness, leaves much to be desired in Africa. Both the teachers and the students, however, commonly agree on the benefits students can derive from teaching that places the learner at the centre of the teaching and learning activities. These findings corroborate the views of Peddler et al. (2001) and findings of Moswela (2010) of learner-centred teaching as a way of democratizing learning and those of Mahendra et al. (2005) and Duze (2010b) that significant learning occurs when the learner solves problems by themselves and also supported by Anderson’s (2005) views and Duze’s (2010b) findings on student-based teaching and learning that brings out talent, creativity, innovativeness, discovery and inventions.

This study did not find any tangible effect of classroom bullying on the freedom to learn as was the case in Moswela's (2010) study which found that whereas students enjoy freedom of participation in decision-making in the classroom, the freedom to learn is constrained by the behaviour of bullies. This difference may probably be due to the general secrecy associated with bullying and the fact that it occurs only largely in all-boys schools. Most of the schools sampled in this study were mixed-sex schools.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings two major conclusions were drawn. First is that African nations have evolved lofty and laudable philosophies and objectives of education but failed to articulate and implement them effectively, leaving efficiency off board. For instance, it is recognized globally that the teacher holds the key to pedagogic success yet government and the general society continue to treat them as underdogs in African communities (Orji, 2002; Duze, 2005; 2007). This is largely why the school system is resistant to change and still hanging on the archaic and obsolete ways of classroom administration.

Second is that there still does not exist an integrative social relationship between the teacher and the learner in the African secondary school classrooms. The lack of this collaborative interaction between teachers and learners hinders possibilities and opportunities of arousing and motivating intellectual activities which not only accommodate learning in a developmental sense but also create, enrich, and sustain a conducive classroom environment. Therefore, the culture of democracy in education is still eluding African nations, at least, at the secondary level of education. This finding is grave for Africa because the secondary level feeds the tertiary level which produces the critical human resource necessary for sustainable national development. This, we believe, is the ultimate vision and mission of the Millennium Development Goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this entire discourse and conclusions drawn in this study, we make two recommendations. One is that African nations should, like the developed countries and other emerging Third World countries, afford teachers the dignity and honour that they rightly deserve to motivate them into greater productivity in the school system. Second is that educational administrators and planners should collaborate more often with economists to articulate and strategize feasible routes to accomplishing goals and objectives way before they are put on paper. This way, the paper works will emerge as blueprints for positive action and not documents for round-table deliberation and politicization.

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