

**ACADEMIC CONFERENCE ON INEQUALITY IN OUR SOCIETY AND REBRANDING NIGERIA FOR
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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ABSTRACT

Man was born free and he is everywhere in chains (Jean Jack Rousseau). These are the famous opening words of a treatise which is from the French Revolutionary terror to the dictatorship of the Proletariat. But in the Social Contract theory Rousseau 1712-1778 was at pains to stress the connection between liberty and law, free demand justice. He argued that rulers are the people's agent or servant and not their masters. Rousseau claimed that laws derived from the people generally will give the ruler the opportunity to serve as their agent and/or servant, yet preaching subservience to the impersonal state; he came close to defining freedom from as the recognition of necessity.

KEYWORDS: Academic Conference, Inequality in Our Society, Rebranding Nigeria, National Development

INTRODUCTION

In all sectors of our lives, inequality appears to exist in whatever we do. The Public Service, Social Services Sectors and the entire Social Strata is suffocated with inequality of one kind or the other. The equality or "freedom" which Jean Jack Rousseau painted in his work on Social Contract Covers what we see and encounter in today's Nigeria. I say this because the Nigeria Government has failed her citizens in so many areas. As we are about to celebrate 58 Independence Anniversary we still have inequality in the provisions of social amenities to the poor and major rural areas in the country. The rich enjoy and have access to facilities of all kinds in their private homes and have mansions scattered in different part of the country and even beyond the shores of Nigeria.

From the above extracts from the social contract theory, one would ask, are our leaders our agents or

servants? If the answer is negative, then, we have to proceed to analyze the circumstances that create inequality in our Nigerian Society. But if the answer is yes and no then, something is wrong.

These cleavages in our society poses a great danger if we, continue to condone inequalities in politics, in the work places, and the distribution of Welfare packages, salaries, and the most recently unequal payment of salaries to lecturers where benefits and rewards have to be paid in heaven. Inequality and injustice are the causes of present criminal incidents like kidnapping, armed robbery, Boko Haram resurgent separatist agitations in sections of the country. White collar crimes are as a result of social inequality, manifest and kitten injustices of the present and the past.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF DIS-EQUILIBRIUM IN EQUALITY

The sociological theories of inequality have viewed inequality as a consequence - necessary and inevitable not of social organizational features of the society. It is also not as consequence of some persons being lazy or unlucky or both, while others are talented, Lucky, or industrious. All sociological analysis or inequality - functional or conflict, conservative or radical - view the inequality distribution of social rewards and resources as giving rise to, and sustained by, unequal and ranked population groupings. Social classes in Marx's terminology, castes in traditional Hindu India; estates in medieval Europe; or in more general sociological terms, strata or stratification-all these are classifications base on the norms of the society.

However, Dahrendorf finds that all societies must be characterized by some greater or lesser measure of inequality. But whatever the integrative importance of inequality for societies, inequality even more inevitably generates conflicts and contests for power, with each disadvantaged group striving to impose a system of norms that promises it a better rank, even at the expense of others therefore; inequality is not desirable. It will be consistent to mention that inequality is universal considering the social inequality as institutionalized differential rewards and flow of resources.

One would be inclined to adopt the position of Emile Durkheim in his work on "anomie." This concept refers to a situation where an individual is unsure of his or her social world - the norms are ambiguous or conflicting. In other words, an anomic situation lacks consistency, predictability, and order. Since this condition is upsetting, individuals and groups seek order. Every Society provides a common "nomos" (meaningful order) for its members. "Every society has its specific way of defining and perceiving reality - its world, the universe, its overarching organization of symbols. Through the socialization process, the newcomer to society is provided a reality that makes sense. By learning the

language and the ready-made definitions of Society, the individual is given a consistent way to perceive the world. The order that is created for each of us is taken for granted by us; it is the only world that we can conceive of; it is the only system in which we feel comfortable.

Sigmund Freud argues that this order, by which the individual comes to perceive and define his world, is thus not chosen by him, except perhaps for very small modifications. Rather it is discovered by him as an external datum, a ready - made world that simply is there for him to go ahead and live in, though he modifies it continually in the process of living in it. It is this constant modification that is lacking in Nigeria experiment with cohesive living and that is what we tag today as restructuring.

DISCOVERIES OF INEQUALITY IN OTHER SOCIETIES

Each society has its unique way of perceiving, interpreting, and evaluating reality. This common culture, and norms, is internalized by the members of society through the process of socialization - thus, people are a product of their culture. It follows then, that the members of a society will be similar in many fundamental respects. Although there are individual exceptions and sub cultural variations, we can say that Americans differ fundamentally from Mexicans, Germans, the French, and others. Let us illustrate how people in a society will develop similarly by briefly characterizing two tribes studied by the famous anthropologist Ruth Benedict.

1. The Dobus. The Dobus of the D'Entrecasteaux Island off the southern shore of Eastern New Guinea have a most interesting social life. They live in a world believed to be ruled by magic. Nothing happens from natural causes; all are controlled by witchcraft and sorcery. The natives live in fear of such witchcraft and also that someone will poison their food.

Marriage occurs between members of neighboring villages. The couple lives in the husband's village for one year and the wife's in alternate years. This means that one spouse is always the hated outsider. Tension is heightened in the marriage by the universal practice of adultery. The spouse involved in the activity depends upon in which village they are living at the time. Given the suspicion ridden atmosphere of Dobu, the safest tryst is with a member of one's own village. While adultery brings hostility to the marriage, it is considered a virtue in the large society. The successful adulterer, like the successful thief, is much admired in the Dobuan society. The members of Dobuan society, living in such a cultural setting, are quite "naturally" hostile, suspicious, distrustful, jealous, secretive, and deceitful.

2. The Zunis. In sharp contrast to the Dobus are the Zuni Indians of New Mexico. Zuni children

are treated with warmth and affection. The Zunis live in a cooperative arrangement where individualism is discouraged. A man who thirsts for power is ridiculed.

The ideal man in Zuni is "a person of dignity and affability who has never tried to lead, and who has never called forth comment from his neighbors. Any conflict, even though all right is on his side, is held against him. Even in contests of skill like their foot races, if a man wins habitually he is debarred from running. They are interested in a game that. Number can play with even chances and an outstanding runner spoils the Zunis will have none of him.

In this cooperative setting, persons are trusted. Life is pleasant and free from hatred of one's fellows. The kind of person that develops in such a society will tend to be confident, trusting, generous, polite, and cooperative.

These examples show that each society tends to produce a certain type of individual-a modal personality type. The individual growing up in Nigerian society, with its set of values, will tend to be individualistic, competitive, materialistic, and oriented toward work, progress, and the future. While this characterization of Nigerian is generally correct, there are some problems with the assumption that socialization into a culture is so all-powerful. First, the power of socialization can vary by the type of society. Small, homogeneous societies like those of the Dodu and Zuni provide the individual member of society with a consistent message, while in a heterogeneous society like the Nigerian; individuals are confronted with a number of themes, variations, and counter themes.

These two types of Modal Personality discussed here which the Dubus society is and the Zunis of India show that even when we say that we are not equal in certain areas, there are societal issues that tend to complicate and jeopardize the order or social mores which guides our behavior. From the foregoing; one would have to accept that the behavior of the Dubos society appear to be consistent with what happens with some Nigerian communities.

According to Stanley Etizen 1979 education is presumed by many to be the great equalizer - the process by which the disadvantaged get their chance to be upwardly mobile. To the contrary, however, the schools have served to aid in the perpetuation of social and economic differences. A fundamental function of the school is to "sift and sort" their products. The successful in school will occupy the higher-status positions in society. Conversely, school performance also sorts out those who will occupy the lower rungs in the occupational prestige ladder.

To repeat what we said earlier, education is a selection process. The sorting is done with respect to

the child's ability and his/her social class background. Although the goal of education is to select on ability alone, ascribed social status (the status of one's family, race, and religion) has a pronounced effect on the degree of success in the educational system. The school is analogous to a conveyor belt with persons of all social classes getting on at the same time but leaving the belt in accordance with social class - the lower the class, the shorter the ride. It is clear that in this frame work the formulation of social inequality consist of a patterning or institutionalization of differential reward flows. Ditch diggers exchange uncomplicated toil for low wages and little prestige. Physicians, Bankers and Professors monopolize access to their positions to create and maintain scarcities of incumbents and difference. Politician's trade favours for power.

Important politicians trade minor powers for major power and prestige. Wealthy men may often be able to trade wealth for power and powerful men have been known for wealth. This clearly explains the varied position in every society and how they are exchanged for wealth. While the poor receive reward for the job they do for the rich and the powerful. The poor and the underprivileged have no choice but to pray for their daily bread from the rich and powerful

What I am trying to say is that social interaction consist the flow of social" reward and exchange of social resources among the roles and positions, and among the groupings and Sub-systems of roles and positions, in the social structure. In Eisenstadts words; "the process by which resources and rewards are continually converted into general media of exchange, and Vice Versa, constitute the very fabric of social life". However, the Federal Government Compensation or amnesty programme for the Niger, Delta people and the unequal treatment to "Biafran Youths" after the Nigeria Civil War with the pronouncement of "No Victor No Vanquished" by General Yakubu Gowon leave room to critically appraise the actions and in action of our past Leaders in creating inequality of various kinds in our Nigeria society.

However one needs to add that the time differential between the Biafran Youths and the emergence of Niger Delta Militants should be noted. And as the saying goes experience is the best teacher, so Nigeria may have learnt from the first Biafran experience. Your apperception, conception, and judgment is as good as mine on this particular subject. But I believe that what is good for the goose is good for the gander. The "Biafran Youths" that suffered in the hands of Nigeria Army should be compensated like their brothers from the Delta Region. After all Coal Mining in the South East Region was the major source of energy for the entire Nigerian Community before oil became part of the

National Wealth. When we correct the unequal treatment of the Igbo's, the Youth, and ex Biafran soldiers we would have started the re-branding of Nigeria society.

The dynamics and structure of distributive system in societies include the following men obliged to choose, men choose their own interest over those of others, the objective of men's striving are in short supply; many are unable to produce or obtain enough in an absolute sense, and in any case man has appetite for goods and services. Societal interests and goals are the interests and goals of whatever group or classes are dominant in the society, and they include, typically, maintaining the political status quo-that is, the dominant group - and maintaining production and resources on which production depends.

In the simplest term, the least differentiated and technologically most primitive societies distribute goods and services and they are distributed on the basis of need. Above and beyond individual satisfactions or the deprivations associated with the patterns of inequality have bearing on virtually all facts of social relation in even every society. Lack of moral values brings about increase in crime & juvenile delinquency. The inability of Government to create enabling environment for youth to compete and have employment also brings about recidivism in criminal incident. For social inequality both generates and is sustained by unequal social groups, unequal social categories, and unequal population aggregates within a society.

These in turn are characterized by distinct pattern of behaviour, values and ideologies, and inter-group relation in every society throughout the world. Although inequality is regarded as a necessity or inevitability for this, historically and empirically it has been the case that unequal persons have formed unequal social groups. Not only have such groups been unequal in that their members enjoy greater or lesser power respectively or greater or lesser prestige respectively', but the groups themselves have ranked in their societies. They have been characterized by differential wealth power or prestige, and indeed, membership itself in such groups has accorded individuals greater or lesser wealth, power or prestige.

The above mentioned points explain that inequality is universal and also that it is a necessity, inevitable and a Sinequa non for societies. Inequality is a major source of conflicts, and it is sustained by coercion and subterfuge. If inequality is assumed to be derived from the power and authority the next thing we should expect in any society is confusion and conflict. In a bid for the unequal to improve their condition through hard work - they will also look on the elite with an invidious "eye -

the next thing is to rebel on their unequal position. It is important to point out that conflict is also inevitable in every society because it helps the society to cohere and persist. This is the very reason why the government of the day should be careful in handling the now vexed issue of IPOB. Rather than branding them “terrorists” the government should study their agitation and dialogue with them. However the behavior of the leadership of IPOB should remember now and always that it is a non-state actor and that no state actor no matter how weak or latent would willingly share power with it. Hate speeches type that gorged the world into the Second World War will not be tolerated. For any society to achieve peace and harmony, the condition of the unequal should be improved so that their position will be genuine to accept the conflict, and subterfuge. If inequality continues to exist in any society there will be competition amongst individuals within that community. So it is, so it has been, and so it will continue to be. From the fore going conclusion one will deduce and accept apriority that we are not really equal.

DEFINITION & CONCEPTS

According to Webster's New World College Dictionary, Equality means State or instance of being equal; while inequality means being unequal or lack of equality, the quality of being unequal, a difference or variation in size, amount, rank, social position, and unevenness in distribution of income and resources. In mathematics, it is the relation between two unequal variables or quantities or an expression of a relationship.

Equality is such an easily understood concept in Mathematics that we may not realize it is a bottomless pit of complexities anywhere else. That is because in mathematics we have eliminated the concreteness and complexities of real things. When we say that two plus two equals four, we either don't say two what or we say the same what after each number. But if we said that two apples plus two oranges equals four oranges, we would be in trouble.

SENSE: Yet that is what we are saying in our political reasoning. And we are in trouble. Nothing is more concrete or complex, than a human being-Sunny Ade or Christ Okotie could not play Centre field like Christians Chukwu or NwankwoKanu never tried or write a symphony. In what sense are they equal-or unequal? The common mathematical symbol for inequality points to the smaller quantity and in whose eyes - when such completely different things are involved?

When women have children and men don't, how can they either be equal or unequal? Our passionate desire to reduce things to the simplicity of abstract concepts does not mean that it can be

done. Those who want to cheer their team and boo the visitors may like to think that the issue is equality versus inequality. But the real issue is whether or not we are going to talk sense. Those who believe in inequality have the same confusion as those who believe in equality. The French make better Champagne to Camera to thousand other things and come up with a grand total showing who is "Superior".

When we speak of "equal justice under Law" we simply mean applying the same rules to everybody. That has nothing whatsoever to do with whether everyone performs equally. A good umpire calls balls and strikes by the same rules for everyone, but one better may get twice as many hits as another. In recent years we have increasingly heard it argued that if outcomes are unequal, then the rules must have been applied unequally. It would destroy my last illusion to discover that any better than anybody else, but that the referee and sports writers just conspired to make it look that way. Pending the uncovering of intricate plots of this magnitude, we must accept the fact that performances are very unequal in difference aspect of life. And there is no way to add up these apples, oranges and grapes to get one sum total of fruit.

Anyone with the slightest familiarity with history knows that rules have often been applied very unequally to difference groups (A few are ignorant or misguided enough to think that this is a peculiarity of Nigeria Society). The problem is not in seeing that unequal rules as the sole or main cause. Think about politicians receiving more money or monthly pay cheques than the lecturers and Professors in the classroom. Who is more equal than others? There are incurable places around the world where those who have been the victims of unequal rules have nevertheless vastly out-performed those who were favoured. Almost nowhere in South East Asia have the Chinese minority had equal rights with the native people, but average Chinese income in those Countries has almost invariably been much higher than that of the general population. A very similar story could be told from the history of the Jews in many countries of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. To a greater or lesser extent, this has also been the history of the Italians in Argentina, the Armenians in Turkey, the Japanese in America and so on and so forth and the Palestinians in Israel.

The summary is that Government pays much attention to the political class than professors & lecturers and this unfavourable outcome can bring conflict in the educational policy & programmes in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the Ministers of Education in this great nation were once Lecturers and at present the President and his vice were both lecturers and they know what to do to ameliorate the

unequal position of their colleagues.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

I would like to state that rebranding of Nigeria would commence by making good laws for the governance of the country. All men are regarded equal in the eyes of the law but when regulators or the National Assembly make laws to prevent them from being "kidnapped" by Nigerians who are unemployed, by irate youth whose rights and privileges are shorts circuited by mal administration and deregulation of various kinds by thousands of graduate who could not get employment after doing their National Youth Service. The answers are the unequal production of the basic needs of the poor and the unemployed youth is by the improvement of the public sector social services, which would bring about genuine result of equal provisions of all these shorts circuited programmes enunciated above. The National Assembly should be checked on the kind of law they make that would be "**Counter Productive**" to ridicule the image of the country. Therefore to create good image for the country and to effectively "rebrand Nigeria" the eradication of corruption, avarice, and unequal distribution of incomes, resources, amenities, and provision of jobs that will engage our graduates will be the solution to Nigeria's tattered and battered image before the international community and on a good moral standing that will stand the test of time.

As the Clamour for restructuring or rebranding of Nigeria gains more currency with the Polity Justice and fairness should be the watch word. We have suddenly forgotten the recommendations of the "Wilkin" commission of 1958 on the fear of the minorities. The wisdom of our founding fathers that laid the foundation for a modern Nigeria at Independence should not be swept under the carpet. It is time we should visit the achieves and read up the deliberations of the various London Constitutional Conferences and learn why they took the decisions they did. A return to the 1963 Republican Constitution and possible few amendments can resolve our seemingly intractable socio-economic and political logjam.

Deliberate policies and actions of the federal Government targeted at an entire race for voting in a way that offended the current powers that be; denying them their fair share in the distribution of national Political spoils and outright marginalization as exemplified on the rail lines across the Country is definitely offensive to the sensibilities of right thinking men and women. What has become of our 'Federal Character' principles in distribution of National offices?

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