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DIALOGIC VOICES FROM BOURDIEUSIAN EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY AND FREIREAN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY ON RADICAL DEMOCRACY FOR THE COMMON GOOD IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the intersection of Bourdieusian educational sociology and Freirean educational philosophy in potentially igniting the flames of educational revolution towards radical democracy for the common good in Nigeria. Using a socio-normative methodology that employs dialogic voices from Pierre Bourdieu and Paulo Freire as heuristic devices, the study explores convergence, divergence and complementarity between these integrated theoretical-sociological-philosophical systems of thoughts within the context of Nigeria's repressive politico-educational system. The analysis demonstrates that Bourdieu's structural insights into habitus, cultural capital and symbolic violence converge with Freire's concepts of "conscientização" and dialogic education in exposing how the educational system in Nigeria reproduces inequality whilst simultaneously containing seeds of resistance. However, significant divergences emerge regarding the transformative potential of education under state violence, with Bourdieu's structural determinism coming diametrically at variance with Freire's pedagogical optimism. The study demonstrates how these approaches complement each other through "strategic bifurcation" – a framework that takes together surface compliance with underground resistance, cultural camouflage embedding radical pedagogy within indigenous traditions, and networked resilience sustaining democratic consciousness across generations. Drawing on radical events like #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernance protests in Nigeria, the analysis argues for revolutionary patience and concludes with policy recommendations, urging decentralised governance, critical teacher education and community-managed schools to cultivate a radical democratic ethos.

Keywords: Bourdieusian Sociology, Freirean Philosophy, Radical Democracy, the Common Good

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
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Introduction

Education is awash in potentials as a tool for shaping not only minds but also societies. In Nigeria, however, these potentials are repeatedly rendered unrealisable by structural inequalities, social exclusion and by authoritarian educational practices that act against participation, critical dialogue and inclusive citizenship. In spite of years and decades of seeming reforms, the country's educational system remains deeply stratified – favouring the elite class whilst marginalising the poor; benefitting the urban whilst neglecting the rural; and functioning with privileges accruable to dominant cultures whilst indigenous voices remain in progressive evaporation. These inequities are fundamentally prejudicial to education's potential to empower individuals and foster collective responsibility for the common good.

The pervasive nature of these challenges comes into stark relief as one looks at broader patterns of civic exclusion across Nigeria as a society. The #EndSARS protests of 2020, a youth-directed movement directed at police brutality, generated a spontaneous public demand for accountability and justice (Alokan, 2023). Yet responses from the government – featuring the military's shooting of peaceful protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate (Amnesty International, 2021) – offered an illustration of a disturbing rejection of dialogue and citizen agency. This pattern of exclusion extends to the socio-political system of affairs to encompass educational governance, where policy processes such as curriculum design or funding allocations frequently occur without consultations with teachers, students or parents – those directly and immediately affected by such decisions. In the operation of educational affairs – particularly within public institutions – rote memorisation reigns supreme over critical thinking, whilst student unions in many universities face suspension or heavy monitoring. These practices systematically constrain opportunities for civic engagement and dissent, undermining genuine democratic participation.

This educational operation of affairs reflects a broader structural pattern where decisions that bear squarely on people's lives are made far removed from those who must live with the consequences of those decisions. Rural communities operating on the margin of society find themselves shut out from deliberations and decisions on land use, resource management and educational administration capable of directly shaping their futures. Even the basic democratic right to vote is circumscribed by systemic electoral irregularities. This fosters widespread disillusionment and political apathy, especially among youth. Within the context of these realities, education transmogrifies from a potential tool for liberation into a structural reality that reproduces inequality and produces silence.

The violent 2024 crackdown on the #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protests revealed a striking contradiction within Nigeria's democratic practice: whilst the

state brutally suppressed citizens exercising their right to dissent against economic hardship and skyrocketing inflation caused by fuel subsidy removal and currency devaluation, the very act of protest affirmed the persistence of democratic impulses among Nigerians. However, the inability to sustain these protests, despite soaring inflation and widespread hardship, reflects a recurring pattern of civic complacency that compounds the crisis of democratic participation. This cycle of resistance followed by withdrawal raises urgent questions about how educational transformation might break through patterns of structural violence and civic disengagement that characterise contemporary Nigeria.

The stakes of these educational and democratic failures extend far beyond Nigeria's borders. As Africa's most populous nation and largest economy, Nigeria's educational crisis reverberates across the continent and diaspora. The country's youth bulge – with over 60% of the population under 25 – means that educational failures today will shape not only Nigeria's democratic future but also regional stability, migration patterns and Africa's global positioning for decades to come. When Nigeria's educational system fails to cultivate critical consciousness and participatory capabilities among its citizens, it perpetuates cycles of authoritarian governance, economic dependency and social fragmentation that affect the entire West African region.

These interconnected challenges demand theoretical frameworks capable of analysing both the structural mechanisms that perpetuate educational inequality and the transformative possibilities for democratic renewal – and Pierre Bourdieu's educational sociology and Paulo Freire's educational philosophy, rooted in critical pedagogy, appear to fit the bill. Despite the growing body of scholarship on educational transformation in post-colonial contexts, a significant gap remains in the literature on how these two influential frameworks might inform each other in relation to Nigeria. Whilst Bourdieusian analysis has been applied in relation to the understanding of educational reproduction in various African contexts (Archer, Godec, Calabrese Barton, Dawson, Mau & Patel, 2020; Aluko, 2017; Wadesango, 2016; Ndimande, 2012), and Freirean approaches have provided the framework for critical reflections on educational realities on the continent (Biney, 2024; Sinwell, 2022; Nkansah, 2021), little systematic reflection has been directed towards their potential convergence, divergence and complementarity in addressing the complex realities of Nigerian education. This study addresses this scholarly lacuna by examining how Pierre Bourdieu's educational sociology and Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy might inform educational transformation towards genuine democratic participation and collective wellbeing in Nigeria. The significance of this inquiry lies not merely in its theoretical contributions, but in its potential to illuminate pathways for educational change that can survive authoritarian repression whilst fostering the critical consciousness and participatory capabilities that democracy requires.

AJEMATES
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Socio-Normative Foundation of The Study

This study adopts a socio-normative orientation, aiming not only to interpret Nigeria in relation to its educational context, but also looking to challenge and reimagine the country in the pursuit of justice, participation and the common good. It draws on dialogic voices from Pierre Bourdieu's educational sociology and Paulo Freire's educational philosophy – constructed as heuristic and pedagogical devices from the utilisation of personification and metaphor, in view of the fact that Bourdieu and Freire did not directly engage with each other in educational relation to Nigeria. These philosophically simulated voices serve to model the interplay of conceptual positions and illuminate how dialogic reasoning can foreground convergences, divergences and complementarities in reimagining radical democracy and the common good within the Nigerian educational context. The study therefore follows a dialectical direction (thesis → antithesis → synthesis), reflecting convergence, divergence and complementarity of dialogic voices from Bourdieu and Freire, and is, therefore, structured around three interrelated normative and philosophical research questions:

I. **Convergence**
How do dialogic voices from Bourdieusian educational sociology and Freirean educational philosophy converge for social transformation towards radical democracy for the common good in Nigeria?

II. **Divergence**
In what ways do dialogic voices from Bourdieusian educational sociology and Freirean educational philosophy diverge in social transformation towards radical democracy for the common good in Nigeria?

III. **Complementarity**
How do dialogic voices from Bourdieusian educational sociology and Freirean educational philosophy complement each other in advancing critical consciousness and structural change for the common good in Nigeria?

Overview of Bourdieusian Educational Sociology

Bourdieusian educational sociology is a systematic theoretical framework for an evaluation of how education functions as a vehicle for social reproduction, rather than liberation, through a network of interlocking concepts. The foundational concept of **habitus** looks at how educational experiences become embodied dispositions that define individuals' sense of what is possible, right or appropriate for people like themselves. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds often develop a habitus that leads them to exclude themselves from higher education or prestigious career paths, not because they lack capability but because their socialised realities operate in alignment with their structural position (Bourdieu, 1977). This connects directly to **cultural capital**, a concept that demonstrates how middle and upper-class students enter educational spaces already empowered with the

linguistic codes, aesthetic sensibilities and behavioural dispositions that schools favour and reward, whilst working-class students find their cultural resources treated as inferior – a kind of 'Cinderella' status within the educational hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1986). The educational field operates through what Bourdieu terms **symbolic violence**, a concept according to which dominated groups come to accept their subordination as natural and legitimate. This occurs not through overt coercion but through the subtle imposition of dominant cultural meanings that mask the arbitrary nature of elite privilege (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). These processes unfold within what Bourdieu terms the **field of power** – the competitive social space where different groups struggle over educational resources and legitimacy – seen at play in Nigeria's stark urban–rural school funding variations. In the final analysis, this fosters **doxic compliance**, where marginalised communities misrecognise educational inequality as meritocratic, as they fail to see its structural roots in class domination (Bourdieu, 1977).

Overview of Freirean Educational Philosophy

Freirean educational philosophy centres on the transformative potential of education as a practice of freedom that challenges and transforms oppressive social relations. Central to this philosophy lies **conscientização**, which defines the process of developing critical awareness that oppressive conditions are socially constructed rather than fixed realities (Freire, 1970). This involves developing the capacity to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against oppressive elements. This insight directly challenges the **banking model of education**, which treats students as passive receptacles of official knowledge. Problem-posing education replaces the banking model as it encourages students to develop critical thinking skills through investigating generative themes drawn from their immediate reality. These themes emerge from community dialogue and represent significant contradictions or challenges that affect people's lives. Freire also proposes **dialogic education**, a mutual process where educators learn about community conditions, cultural values and local knowledge whilst sharing analytical frameworks and broader perspectives. This reciprocal relationship precludes the imposition of external solutions whilst building collective capacity for sustained transformation (Freire, 1994). This pedagogical approach is rooted in **praxis**, the cyclical integration of reflection and action, which ensures that educational insights translate into concrete efforts to transform conditions of injustice. This process requires genuine dialogue between educators and learners, where both parties teach and learn simultaneously. Finally, Freire's of **limit-situations** describes circumstances that project the appearance of unchangeability but actually contain possibilities for transformation when evaluated with critical consciousness. What seems like hopeless oppression can become the Vivitron in the generation of liberation when people develop the analytical and organisational tools necessary for collective action. This requires what he calls "critical

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.15 (2), May-August, 2025 https://ajemates.org

transitivity", the ability to gravitate beyond fatalistic acceptance towards active engagement with social change (Freire, 1970).

Radical Democracy Explained

Radical democracy is a political vision that seeks to deepen and broaden democratic participation beyond the confines of voting and formal institutions. Arising as a child birthed by a critique of liberal democracy, it challenges the idea that elections and representation constitute a sufficient condition for true democratic participation (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Instead, it calls for direct involvement of citizens in decision-making processes that shape their lives – be it in workplaces, schools or communities – arguing that all institutions with social impact should be subject to democratic control (Barber, 1984). It also interrogates and aims to dismantle hidden power structures rooted in class, race, and gender, advocating for economic democracy through models like worker cooperatives and public ownership (Wright, 2010).

Crucially, radical democracy is not a fixed system but a politics of unfinished revolution – a refusal to accept the current order as its final reality (Mouffe, 2000). Where liberal democracy seeks stability through consensus and institutional closure, radical democracy thrives on contestation, rupture and the refusal to accept any final political form. It views the people not as passive electors but as an unpredictable force, constantly capable of unsettling established hierarchies. In education, radical democracy encourages dialogic teaching, critical pedagogy and curricula that promote civic agency and question dominant narratives (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1997). In practice, it manifests in movements that resist authoritarianism, challenge inequality, and seek bottom-up democratisation of institutions (Hardt & Negri, 2004).

The Concept of The Common Good

The concept of the common good refers to benefits accruable to society as a whole, rather than to specific individuals or groups (Etzioni, 1998). Rooted in philosophical and political traditions from Aristotle to modern civic thought, the common good emphasises shared values, mutual responsibility, and the well-being of all members of a community (Aristotle, *Politics*; MacIntyre, 1984). Operational realities of the common good appear in various societal structures. Transportation networks and digital infrastructure create shared platforms for economic and social interaction (Sandel, 2009). Public health systems and educational institutions provide fundamental services that function in the upliftment of entire communities (Nussbaum, 2011). Environmental protections and sustainable policies safeguard resources for current and future generations (Sachs, 2015). Legal frameworks and democratic processes establish and regulate mechanisms for fair governance and civic participation (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004).

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.15 (2), May-August, 2025 https://ajemates.org

Radical Democracy: Realities and Implications for The Common Good in Nigeria

Nigeria's historical and contemporary realities reveal that operational forces – both state and non-state actors – have persistently acted against the emergence of a radical democratic order, quite often with profoundly corrosive implications generated for the common good in the country. The earliest threat to radical democracy in Nigeria was a foray by the military into politics (Adeakin, 2012). Six years after independence from the United Kingdom, successive military actions interrupted democratic processes, with corruption and political instability cited by the military as justifications (Ojo, 2008). In the subsequent years, successive military administrations replaced democratic rule with autocracy, as they suspended constitutional rights, promulgated draconian decrees, and ultimately entrenched authoritarianism (Udo, Falola, Ajayi & Kirk-Greene, 2025; Campbell, 2020; Omotola, 2010). Far from improving governance for the common good, they circumscribed public trust and concentrated power and resources at the elite strata of society, laying the groundwork for a seeming enduring legacy of impunity. This legacy has given life to authoritarian tendencies and shaken the foundations of participatory governance so that Nigeria now reckons with compromised prospects for politics grounded in the common good (Campbell, 2020; Adeakin, 2012).

A pivotal example of operational forces arrayed against radical democracy in the democratic era was the #EndSARS protest of 2020, which began as a youth-led campaign directed against police brutality and evolved into a nationwide call for accountability and governance reform (BBC News, 2020; Amnesty International, 2020). As noted in the introduction to this study, the reaction of the military was marked by overwhelming violence, resulting in the tragic events of 20 October 2020 at the Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos state, where the Nigerian military opened fire on unarmed protesters (Campbell, 2020; CNN, 2020). The incident resulted in civilian deaths, profoundly traumatising a generation of young Nigerians (The Guardian Nigeria, 2020). This military action compromised the right to peaceful assembly and drastically undermined public trust in state institutions.

Similar patterns of state repression are out there in the handling of pro-Biafra movements, particularly the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The Nigerian military's Operation Python Dance, conducted between 2016 and 2017, encompassed aggressive operations across the South-East, featuring extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, and arbitrary arrests (Campbell, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2017; Amnesty International, 2017). These instances aggravated ethnic tensions, disrupted the flows of local economies, and contributed to the radicalisation of groups that had

previously been nonviolent (Eze, 2018). Rather than addressing underlying issues through dialogue and inclusive policies, the state resorted to force, thereby deepening regional grievances and potentially blocking an ethnic group of Nigerians from national integration and justice (Okeke, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2018).

The 2019 #RevolutionNow protests, led by activist Omoyele Sowore, were birthed as a child of widespread disaffection with systemic corruption and democratic stagnation (Adebanwi, 2020). Instead of responding to the movement's substantive grievances, the government declared the protest illegal, arrested Mr Sowore, and deployed security forces to suppress the demonstrators (Campbell, 2020; Amnesty International, 2019; Premium Times, 2019). This criminalisation of dissent sent a chilling signal to civil society and reinforced the notion that activism and political criticism were punishable offences. Such repression is prejudicial to the active citizenship necessary for radical democracy and constrains the space for the public to hold leadership accountable, all to the detriment of national progress (Ojo, 2021; International Crisis Group, 2020).

Electoral processes in Nigeria have also been compromised by corruption and the use of force. The general elections of 2019 and 2023 provided widely reported instances of voter intimidation, ballot snatching and violence (Ndidigwe & Adie, 2021; Campbell, 2020). State security forces, sometimes operating together with political thugs, were deployed to opposition strongholds to suppress or disrupt voting in areas deemed unfavourable to the ruling elite. These tactics only disenfranchised significant portions of the electorate but also called into question the legitimacy of the electoral outcomes (Ndidigwe & Adie, 2021; Campbell, 2020). Consequently, public confidence in democratic processes appears to have continued to diminish, corroding the participatory foundation fertile for inclusive development and governance (Onapajo & Babalola, 2020).

The 2021 Twitter ban by the Muhammadu Buhari led-Federal Government – enacted after the microblogging platform had deleted a controversial tweet by General Buhari – exemplifies how the state employs information control to suppress dissent in the digital governance of public affairs (CNN, 2021; Campbell, 2020). The ban, which lasted for nearly a year, significantly acted against freedom of expression, disrupted digital operations, and disengaged many Nigerians from a critical space for political engagement, social activism, and, ultimately, radical democracy for the common good in Nigeria (Brookings Institution, 2022). Citing the Cybercrimes Act, the government justified this decision as a national security intervention, but the practical effect of this was the silencing of dissent and the suppression of dialogue (Mimeta, 2025; Public International Law and Policy Group, 2021).

In the Niger Delta, the deployment of the military as a measure against environmental activism and demands for equitable

resource control has given rise to long-term adverse consequences. People in Odi and Ogoniland have had to reckon with mass killings, forced displacement and ecological degradation of their communities as the state has prioritised oil interests over the welfare of local populations (Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria [ERA/FOE], 2002). In place of addressing demands for justice, environmental remediation and fair revenue distribution, the government has treated repressive force as the first choice in dealing with the demands (Okonta & Douglas, 2001). These actions have served to entrench poverty, to alienate entire regions, to fuel recurring unrest and, ultimately, to undermine national cohesion and economic equity (Mimeta, 2025; Fani-Kayode, 2009; MEND, 2006).

These incidents, when considered collectively, reveal a consistent and disconcerting pattern: operational forces are utilised not in the protection of democracy or the safeguarding of public interests, but in the defence of elite interests against utilitarian service to the general populace. This approach has far-reaching implications for the common good in Nigeria. Trust in public institutions appears to be systematically circumscribed when citizens witness or experience violence from the very forces that should be protecting them (Human Rights Watch, 2021). This is vastly capable of generating widespread disillusionment and produce a breakdown in the social contract (Akinola & Olutayo, 2018). Civic engagement becomes stifled as individuals and communities become fearful of participating in activism or even speaking out. The marginalisation of dissenting voices works against innovation in policy and excludes the very perspectives needed to solve entrenched social problems (Mimeta, 2025; Omotola, 2019).

Social cohesion also suffers a fatal blow when the state's use of force appears directed against particular ethnic, regional or ideological groups of citizens. This fosters a sense of exclusion and deepens divisions that threaten national unity (Conflict Studies Quarterly, 2023). Injustice becomes institutionalised when those responsible for citizenry abuses face no consequences, and this culture of impunity provides oxygen for further violations (Agbedo, 2014; Africa Polling Institute, 2022). Economic development is hamstrung in regions made to face military aggression or political instability, discouraging investment, displacing communities, and undermining livelihoods – all this with low expectations for radical democracy and the common good (Tandfonline, 2023).

The Nigerian government's violent 2024 crackdown on the #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protests demonstrates another quintessential violation of radical democratic principles (Amnesty International, 2024a). When the Federal Government of Nigeria led by Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu implemented economic policies linked to fuel subsidy removal and currency devaluation with an attendant skyrocket in inflation to 34% by

mid-2024 triggering widespread hardship, Nigerian citizens exercised their fundamental democratic right to assemble and voice dissent (Amnesty International, 2024b). This was greeted by the government with violent suppression of protesters, which fundamentally betrayed radical democratic values that prioritise popular sovereignty and direct action as legitimate forms of political expression. Security forces killed at least 21 protesters on the first day alone, with additional casualties recorded and reported in the states of Borno, Niger, Kaduna and Jigawa, with over 1,100 demonstrators arrested nationwide (Amnesty International, 2024a, 2024c). Despite this repression, the protests demonstrated an existence of radical democratic ideals in Nigeria, as ordinary citizens had brought themselves together to challenge power structures, demand accountability and assert their agency in the operation of affairs of state (Amnesty International, 2024a).

In the light of the foregoing, this tension between state violence and popular resistance reveals a paradox: whilst the government's actions defied radical democracy, the protests affirmed its enduring spirit. However, there have been past instances in the country that reflected a clear complacency toward radical democracy. After the alleged Lekki Toll Gate shooting during the #EndSARS protests, many Nigerians withdrew from public dissent informed by fear of reprisals, thereby weakening radical democratic momentum. Chantal Mouffe (2005) argues that radical democracy derives oxygen for its principles from sustained confrontation with power structures, yet Nigeria's post-EndSARS silence reflected a departure from such radical engagement. The electoral history of the country is a further indication of this complacency – looking at the disputed 2007 elections to the contentious 2023 polls, the country is awash with electoral fraud and disenfranchisement, yet public resistance has often been sporadic or driven by ethnic loyalties in place of radical democratic principles. Claude Ake (1996) warns that shorn of active citizen oversight, elections become hollow rituals, producing a "democracy without democrats".

This passivity persists despite glaring injustices. Members of Nigeria's National Assembly rank among the world's highest-paid, even as public services crumble, yet mass protests against this reality constitute a rare phenomenon. Political elites further exploit ethnic and religious divisions to divert attention from governance failures. This was seen in the 2023 elections, where divisive rhetoric overshadowed critical issues like healthcare and inequality. Achille Mbembe (2001) observes that in postcolonial Africa, identity politics often supplant substantive democratic debate, eroding civic consciousness.

The #EndBadGovernance protests of August 2024, earlier alluded to, emerged as a desperate child of Bola Tinubu's economic policies, which triggered

hyperinflation, hunger and business closures. Although the #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest initially generated momentum in widespread participation, it quickly evaporated under the heat of state repression, with security forces employing tactics reminiscent of the Lekki Toll Gate crackdown. Despite public outrage over the punishing economic conditions triggered by fuel subsidy removal and currency devaluation, these policies stayed in place, significantly unchallenged. The inability or unwillingness of citizens to sustain pressure until these reforms were reversed demonstrated a form of civic complacency. As Acemoglu and Robinson (2019) argue, repression often succeeds when it raises the cost of dissent beyond what ordinary citizens are willing to bear. The complacency seen here reflects what Chantal Mouffe (2005) describes as the erosion of "agonistic pluralism" – the democratic imperative for ongoing contestation against power structures. Without persistent civic struggle, Mouffe warns, "democracy becomes a mere façade hiding the continuation of domination" (p. 31). The failure to sustain resistance in this case reflects a 180-degree turn from the radical democratic ideal of continuous citizen engagement in the face of unjust governance. As Paulo Freire (1970) argued, true democracy demands critical consciousness, turning passive subjects into active agents of change.

Dialogic Voices from Bourdieusian Educational Sociology and Freirean Educational Philosophy on Radical Democracy for The Common Good in Nigeria

This section presents the philosophical reflections on the research questions, where Bourdieu and Freire serve at the centre of the dialectical axis. Dialogic insights arise from contemporary sociological and philosophical thinkers who are not full participants in the dialogue. They merely offer conceptual interventions, framing suggestions or critical reflections that enrich, complicate or clarify the primary dialogue. They do not operate in the dialogical system beyond the wonders they work as echoes, footnotes or marginalia – strategically inserted to deepen the dialectic without crowding the centre. On the educational sociology front, dialogical insights are drawn from the voices of Henry A. Giroux (1988), Michael W. Apple (2004) and Loïc Wacquant (2004). Coming to educational philosophy, conceptual interjections that challenge, refine or reorient the central dialogue are heard from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), Jacques Rancière (1991), and Maxine Greene (1995). Further to all, African thinkers – Achille Mbembe (2001), Wole Soyinka (1983) and Sophie Oluwole (1997), with the latter two being Nigerians – provide crucial contextual and epistemic depth to the dialogue.

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.15 (2), May-August, 2025 https://ajemates.org

Research Question 1: How do dialogic voices from Bourdieusian educational sociology and Freirean educational philosophy converge for social transformation towards radical democracy for the common good in Nigeria?

Nigerian Interlocutor: *Colleagues, any synthesis of voices from Bourdieusian educational sociology and Freirean educational philosophy feels incomplete when we consider the Lekki massacre, the crushing of #EndBadGovernance protests, and the civic retreat that ensues. How do we maintain hope for radical democracy when the state kills its own children?*

Bourdieu [adjusting his theoretical lens grimly]: What we witness is the field of power defending itself through what I call "legitimate violence". The Nigerian state does not just reproduce inequality but also weaponises it. When protesters are shot at Lekki, this is not aberration but the logical endpoint of symbolic violence given some sort of a literal reality.

Freire: But Pierre, even in this darkness, conscientização persists! The #EndSARS youth did not just protest police brutality, but they also created alternative democratic spaces, used technology to bypass state media, demonstrated what Habermas calls "communicative action" in its purest form.

[Mbembe interjects]: What we're witnessing here is the "postcolony" in its most brutal form – where the state exercises necropower not just through killing but through creating conditions where life becomes barely livable. The Nigerian state's response to protests reveals what I call the "necropolitical machine" – sovereignty exercised as the power to dictate who may live or die.

[Mouffe interjects more forcefully]: Paulo, your optimism renders you blind to the ruthless logic of power! The government's violent response to #EndBadGovernance reveals that Nigeria's elites will never permit genuine democratisation. Radical democracy must prepare to reckon with permanent antagonism, not dialogue.

Bourdieu: Chantal grasps the stakes better than Paulo sometimes admits. When Bola Ahmed Tinubu's economic policies triggered 34% inflation yet protesters were killed rather than heard, this exemplifies what I term "structural violence" – the field protecting its economic logic through physical force.

[Soyinka, his voice tightening]: And let us not forget the theatre of cruelty that accompanies this force. The Nigerian state doesn't just silence protest – it stages its silencing. At Lekki, it was not enough to shoot; they turned off the lights, they removed CCTV, they created a silence so loud it screamed. This is what Fanon called the spectacle of punishment – a calculated performance to unmake the citizen.

[Apple adds urgently]: Both perspectives miss how neoliberalism manufactures this complacency. When Nigerians struggle to afford food due to Tinubu's policies, survival trumps politics. This isn't moral

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.15 (2), May-August, 2025 https://ajemates.org

failure – it's rational response to engineered precarity.

[Giroux warns]: Apple's right – we are witnessing what I call "zombie politics." The Nigerian state creates conditions where civic death becomes preferable to civic engagement. When protest means potential death, withdrawal becomes survival strategy.

Nigerian Interlocutor: *But what about the complacency? The post-EndSARS silence, the inability to sustain #EndBadGovernance despite obvious suffering?*

Bourdieu [nodding gravely]: This is doxa at its most invidious – when domination becomes so naturalised that even brutalised subjects come to imbibe and internalise the reality of their oppression. The Lekki shooting wasn't just meant to kill protesters; it was meant to kill the possibility of protest itself.

[Mbembe adds]: This reflects what I term the "postcolonial subject" – caught between the aspiration for democratic agency and the brutal reality of necropolitical governance. The silence after Lekki isn't just fear; it's the rational calculation of subjects who understand that the postcolonial state reserves the right to transform any citizen into what Giorgio Agamben calls "bare life" – life stripped of political significance.

Freire: I refuse to accept this determinism! Yes, fear creates what I call a "culture of silence", but beneath silence lies what Ernst Bloch termed educated hope. Every Nigerian student learning critical thinking, every civil society organisation surviving repression, represents seeds of future conscientização.

[Oluwole, gently but firmly]: Paulo, hope without context becomes abstraction. We cannot plant seeds in soil we do not understand. If conscientização is to flourish in Nigeria, it must root itself in our indigenous thought systems. Our ancestors practised dialogic reasoning long before the Enlightenment. Yoruba àjọṣe ethics, Igbo ọfọ na ogu justice – these are not merely traditions, but philosophies of civic mutuality.

[Laclau interjects]: This requires what I term "populist reason" – constructing chains of equivalence between different struggles. #EndSARS, #EndBadGovernance, Niger Delta activism – these are not isolated voices but points of vociferations in a broader democratic revolution.

[Maxine Greene adds poetically]: We need what I call "aesthetic resistance" – being of service to Nigerians in leading them to imagine alternative futures. When young people at Lekki sang the national anthem whilst soldiers shot at them, they were performing a different Nigeria into existence.

Nigerian Interlocutor: This suggests our "critical bifocals" need re-evaluation. We need: • Diagnostic lenses (Bourdieu) to map how state violence reproduces elite dominance • Transformative lenses (Freire)

to identify spaces for conscientização even within repression • Strategic lenses (Laclau/Mouffe) to build sustainable democratic coalitions • Imaginative lenses (Greene/[Soyinka]) to envision post-colonial democratic futures

Bourdieu: A sophisticated framework, though we must remember that Nigeria's elites study our theories too. They have learnt to co-opt resistance voices whilst intensifying actual repression.

Freire: Which is where we have to let in praxis! Theory without practice is nothing beyond academic exercise. Every Nigerian teacher fostering critical thinking, every community organiser building grassroots networks, every artist creating counter-narratives engages in radical democratic practice.

[Oluwole's voice echoes]: But it must be authentically Nigerian practice! European theories of democracy, however radical, cannot simply be transplanted. We need what I call epistemic synthesis – wedding critical consciousness to indigenous communal values.

Nigerian Interlocutor: *Then the path forward for us requires what we might term revolutionary patience – looking at it that radical democracy in Nigeria will never arise from single dramatic events but emerge from sustained cultural and political work that fosters democratic subjectivity despite state repression.*

Explanatory Summary

This dialogue explores the convergence of Bourdieusian educational sociology and Freirean educational philosophy in reckoning with the crisis of radical democracy in Nigeria. Bourdieu reveals how the state deploys symbolic and structural violence to maintain the place of the elite at the top strata of society, whilst Freire insists that critical consciousness (conscientização) can still arise from grassroots resistance, as seen in the #EndSARS movement. Interventions from [Mbembe] highlight the necropolitical realities of the post-colonial Nigerian state, and [Mouffe] challenges Freire's optimism with an emphasis on the inevitability of political antagonism. [Apple] and Giroux draw attention to how neoliberal conditions act corrosively against civic action, whilst Nigerian thinkers like [Soyinka] and [Oluwole] call for a culturally grounded resistance rooted in indigenous philosophies of justice and communal ethics. Together, these voices suggest that whilst domination persists, the struggle for radical democracy must proceed through critical education, strategic coalition and sustained cultural work that fosters democratic subjectivity within and against the structures of repressive powers.

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.15 (2), May-August, 2025 https://ajemates.org

Research Question 2: In what ways do dialogic voices from Bourdieusian educational sociology and Freirean educational philosophy diverge in social transformation towards radical democracy for the common good in Nigeria?

Nigerian Interlocutor: *The divergence between your approaches becomes sharper when we consider how state violence drives educational possibilities. How do we reconcile Bourdieusian structural analysis with Freirean hope when the state literally strangulates the lives of those who advocate for transformation?*

Bourdieu [his voice having to it a touch of hardness]: The Lekki massacre proves my claims regarding field dynamics. When #EndSARS protesters sang the national anthem whilst soldiers shot them, this did not particularly come across as heroic resistance – it was the tragic naivety of believing symbolic capital could provide them with lee against state violence. Those young people died because they never understood that the educational field and the field of power are ultimately unified through what Weber calls the "monopoly of legitimate violence".

Freire [in anger]: Pierre, your cynicism reflects no honour on their sacrifice! Those young people demonstrated the quintessence of what I call critical transitivity – they refused to accept that education should produce docile realities in subjects. When they created alternative media, organised medical aid, maintained peaceful discipline under fire, they were practising the pedagogy of the oppressed in the purest form of the concept!

[Wacquant interjects grimly]: Both of you appear to be romanticising what was essentially urban warfare. Operation Python Dance in the Southeast, the #EndBadGovernance killings – these represent what I call the centaur state: bureaucratic face for elites, punitive body for the masses. Education in Nigeria does not just reproduce inequality – it produces subjects empowered to face either exploitation or elimination.

[Mbembe warns]: We must understand this through what I call "colonial matrices of power" that persist in the postcolony. The Nigerian state doesn't simply repress – it operates through what I term "entanglement," where colonial violence is simultaneously rejected and reproduced. When the state kills protesters whilst funding peace education programmes, this isn't contradiction but the logic of postcolonial governance.

Bourdieu: Exactly, Loïc. When the Niger Delta women Paulo admires map environmental destruction, they are collecting evidence for their own obituaries. The state's response is so much far removed from dialogue as to verge on "environmental terrorism" charges and military occupation. Education under these conditions leads us to what Foucault would call biopower – training populations for managed death.

Freire [his voice breaking]: You reduce human beings to habitus and doxa, but even

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.15 (2), May-August, 2025 https://ajemates.org

in Ogoniland, even after Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution under General Sani Abacha, communities still gather to read his letters aloud, teaching children environmental consciousness through his martyrdom. This is what I mean by limit-situations – the oppressed transforming their very oppression into pedagogical material!

[Soyinka, his voice darkened with memory]: And yet, Paulo, let us not forget that martyrdom can become repetition. In Nigeria, we replay the same scenes of sacrifice without institutional transformation. Our people are not just dying for freedom – they're dying in loops. The challenge is not merely to remember Saro-Wiwa, but to ask why his lessons never take root in our public culture.

[Oluwole]: Wole raises a crucial point. Freire, your concept of conscientização presumes an individual awakening, but in African traditions, consciousness is communal. Education must be rooted in shared cosmologies. Transformation cannot occur through confrontation alone – it must be embedded in moral renewal consistent with African conceptions of justice and being.

[Rancière challenges both]: You gentle guys are both trapped in teacher-student hierarchies! When street vendors at #EndBadGovernance protests explained inflation to bank managers, when okada riders taught constitutional law to lawyers – these were in no way your "co-intentional education" or "cultural capital transfer". These reflected moments of equality breaking through, what I call "the ignorant schoolmaster" principle actualised in struggle.

Nigerian Interlocutor: *But how do we address the complacency that follows state violence? The post-Lekki silence, the collapse of sustained resistance after #EndBadGovernance?*

Bourdieu: This is precisely doxa reassertingly looking at itself. State terror works not just through immediate violence but through what I call doxic compliance – citizens imbibing and internalising the message that resistance equals death. When

Nigerians stopped protesting after Lekki, it was not anything about cowardice – it was everything about making rational calculations within a field where political capital has become literally life-threatening.

Freire [desperately]: But even silence can be strategic! What for you is "complacency" might be what Gramsci termed transformism – apparent withdrawal that masks subterranean organisation. The fact that #EndBadGovernance emerged despite Lekki proves that conscientização cannot be a phenomenon permanently suppressed!

[Soyinka]: But Paulo, if silence is strategy, it must eventually speak. You cannot eternally hide organisation in the shadows without suffocating it. Silence may shelter the seed, but at some point, it must break soil. Nigeria suffers not from a lack of resistance, but from a failure to translate resistance into structures.

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.15 (2), May-August, 2025 https://ajemates.org

[Oluwole, softly but firmly]: And these structures must be indigenously intelligible. Paulo and Pierre, both of you speak in frames built for European crises. But Nigerian transformation must speak the language of the òwe (proverb), of àjọṣe (communal governance), of òrìṣà (ethical plurality). Without these, we teach young people to resist, but we do not teach them where to rebuild.

Explanatory Summary

This dialogue centres on the divergence between Bourdieu's structural realism and Freire's liberatory optimism in addressing social transformation in Nigeria. Bourdieu views state violence, such as the Lekki massacre, as a sociological operation of symbolic and structural domination that renders resistance fragile within oppressive fields. Freire, from a contrast lens, sees even moments of repression as openings for conscientização, where the oppressed use suffering as a leverage for critical action. Whilst Bourdieu stresses the internalisation of doxa and rational withdrawal, Freire insists silence can be strategic and transformative. [Mbembe], [Wacquant] and [Soyinka] support Bourdieu's view of violence as cyclical and systematised, whereas [Oluwole] critiques both thinkers for neglecting African communal philosophies as the basis for transformation. [Rancière] breaks the binary by looking at spontaneous acts of equality outside formal education. Ultimately, the divergence lies in whether transformation arises from structural rupture or from emancipatory learning rooted in local cultural logics.

Research Question 3: How do dialogic voices from Bourdieusian educational sociology and Freirean educational philosophy complement each other in advancing critical consciousness and structural change for the common good in Nigeria?

Nigerian Interlocutor: *Can your approaches truly complement each other when dealing with "necropolitics" – when the state asserts and reasserts the right to kill its own citizens?*

Bourdieu [thoughtfully]: Paulo's pedagogical optimism requires my structural realism now more than ever. When governments justify school closures citing security threats whilst investing heavily in surveillance technology, this is not educational policy – it is preparation for population control. My field analysis shows how "security" becomes the new form of cultural capital, whilst Paulo's methods might lead communities to recognise and resist this transformation.

Freire: And Pierre's mapping of power fields grounds my pedagogy against fatal naivety. When grassroots teachers resist privatisation or marginalisation, we first use your analysis to identify which officials benefit from such policies. Only then can we design dialogic strategies that protect educators from reprisals whilst fostering critical awareness.

[Apple warns]: But this complementarity risks co-optation under what I call "armed neoliberalism". The very state that kills protesters funds "peace education" programmes. Your combined approaches might be weaponised – Bourdieu's analysis serving counterinsurgency intelligence,

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.15 (2), May-August, 2025 https://ajemates.org

Freire's dialogue facilitating "deradicalisation".

[Mbembe cautions]: This co-optation reflects what I call the "postcolonial public sphere" – a space where democratic discourse is simultaneously encouraged and constrained by necropolitical logics. Educational complementarity must navigate what I term "the postcolonial condition," where liberation discourses can be transformed into technologies of control.

[Oluwole intervenes]: This is why we need epistemic sovereignty. Neither Bourdieu nor Freire fully grasps how Yoruba concepts of àjé (collective power) or Igbo notions of omenala (ethical tradition) provide resources for resisting state violence. When rural communities deploy indigenous governance systems to oppose school closures or educational inequities, they draw on traditions your European theories barely acknowledge.

Nigerian Interlocutor: So how do we forge a complementarity that resists co-optation whilst acknowledging the reality of state violence?

Freire: We must develop what I call a pedagogy of indignation – education that sustains outrage across generations. When parents teach children about Lekki through praise songs, when market women encode protest strategies in trading languages, this preserves revolutionary consciousness through what appears to be cultural transmission.

Bourdieu: And my analysis helps distinguish which forms of cultural preservation actually serve resistance rather than accommodation. Not all traditional practices are liberatory; some reproduce hierarchies that enable state violence. This complementarity requires vigilance against romanticising indigeneity.

[Mouffe adds critically]: Your synthesis still assumes democracy is achievable through education. What if Nigeria exemplifies a "post-democratic transition" where electoral rituals perpetuate permanent emergency rule? Radical democracy might demand discarding educational reforms for more direct confrontation.

[Soyinka thunders]: Chantal misunderstands Nigeria! Every traditional festival, masquerade, and praise-singing session contains seeds of what Bakhtin called carnival – moments when hierarchies are temporarily inverted. These are not just "cultural capital" but rehearsals for revolution.

Nigerian Interlocutor: *Let me attempt a synthesis that acknowledges both complementarity and contradiction. Your combined voices suggest education for radical democratic revolution in Nigeria requires what we might call strategic bifurcation:*

- **Surface Compliance / Underground Resistance**: Using Bourdieusian analysis to navigate elite fields safely whilst employing

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.15 (2), May-August, 2025 https://ajemates.org

Freirean methods to build consciousness in protected spaces.

- **Cultural Camouflage**: Embedding radical pedagogy within traditional practices the state does not recognise as threatening – what James Scott calls "hidden transcripts".
- **Networked Resilience**: Building educational networks that survive state violence through distributed leadership and redundant connections.
- **Intergenerational Memory**: Preserving revolutionary consciousness across cycles of repression through storytelling, artistic expression, and ritual.

Bourdieu: A sophisticated framework, but the state adapts. Today's "hidden transcripts" become tomorrow's surveillance targets. The field evolves to contain resistance.

Freire: But so does human consciousness! Each generation of Nigerian youth discovers new paths to critical awareness. The state cannot kill the questions – only some who ask them.

Nigerian Interlocutor: *Then perhaps the path forward requires revolutionary patience – recognising that radical democracy under state terror unfolds on longer timescales than electoral cycles, requiring resistance forms that persist across generations whilst remaining alert to openings for structural change.*

Explanatory Summary

This dialogue offers a reflection on how Bourdieusian educational sociology and Freirean educational philosophy operate in complementarity each towards advancing critical consciousness and structural change in Nigeria despite pervasive state violence and necropolitics. Bourdieu's structural analysis reveals how educational policies can lend themselves as tools of population control and domination, providing a critical lens for the identification of which cultural practices sustain resistance or reproduce hierarchies. Freire's pedagogy emphasises cultivating sustained outrage and transformative dialogue within protected spaces, fostering revolutionary consciousness transmitted intergenerationally through cultural expressions and grassroots networks. African thinkers like [Oluwole] stress the need to root this complementarity in indigenous epistemologies, whilst voices from [Apple] and [Mbembe] caution against co-optation of education by neoliberal and necropolitical forces. Taken together, these dialogic voices suggest a strategic, patient approach to radical democracy that offsets cautious navigation of oppressive power structures with persistent cultural resistance and critical education looking towards a long-term transformation for the common good.

Conclusion

A dialogical synthesis of Bourdieusian educational sociology and Freirean educational philosophy reveals the complex interplay of structure and agency in the struggle for radical democratic revolution within the educational realities of Nigeria. Their convergence lies in a shared commitment to exposing and disrupting systems of inequality, recognising education as both a site of reproduction and a space for resistance. Bourdieu's diagnostic clarity on habitus, symbolic violence and structural inertia stands in the light of complementarity with Freire's emancipatory pedagogy rooted in critical

consciousness and dialogic engagement. Together, they illuminate how standardised systems operate to obscure deeper inequities whilst offering pathways for critical pedagogical alternatives. Despite divergent orientations – Bourdieu's cautionary structuralism and Freire's hopeful interventionism – their tension is productive, a reflection of the realities of educational transformation under authoritarian governance and necropolitical repression. Nigerian realities such as the #EndSARS and #EndBadGovernmentinNigeria movements serve to underscore the relevance of both frameworks: the capacity for self-organised resistance and the weight of structural constraints. Indigenous epistemologies, articulated through concepts like àjé, omolúwàbí, challenge the limits of Eurocentric theory and offer alternative foundations for education rooted in collective agency and ethical interdependence. Educational practice, in this light, must move beyond compliance or technocratic systems towards a culturally grounded, strategically bifurcated praxis – one that fosters critical capacity within and beyond repressive structures. The pursuit of the common good emerges not as a static ideal but as a process of collective awakening and ethical formation, demanding pedagogies that sustain resistance, honour cultural diversity and foster democratic solidarity. Education, therefore, becomes a reality central to Nigeria's broader social transformation – not as an instrument for conformity but as the Vivitron in the generation of justice, participation and critical hope.

Limitations, Future Directions and Recommendations

Whilst the dialogic methodology employed here represents a compelling theoretical innovation, it in no way provides a substitute for sustained empirical engagement with the lived realities of educational actors in Nigeria. Personified theoretical voices enable a rich exploration of possibilities, but future research must attend to how educators, students and communities actually navigate the tensions between structural constraint and transformative possibilities. Longitudinal and participatory studies are needed to trace the implementation of educational innovations that combine critical consciousness with structural awareness. Furthermore, an exclusive focus on formal institutions risks overlooking the extensive informal learning networks that shape Nigeria's educational realities – e.g., markets, religious institutions, traditional governance structures and digital platforms – which often escape academic analysis yet hold immense potential for radical democratic transformation.

These limitations notwithstanding, the following recommendations are proposed to guide educational transformation for radical democracy for the common good:

1. Federal and state educational authorities should implement decentralised governance systems that empower local communities to sort of lord it over curriculum content and pedagogical practices. National assessment policies must shift beyond standardised examinations in favour of community-based evaluation

methods that reflect local realities and needs.

2. Teacher education institutions must adopt "critical bifocals" – a pedagogical framework that operates in complementarity between Bourdieusian structural analysis and Freirean dialogic engagement – whilst positioning indigenous knowledge systems as the centre, not auxiliary. Continuous professional development should centre on culturally relevant critical pedagogy.
3. Traditional leaders, civil society organisations and community stakeholders should facilitate the establishment of community-managed schools that reflect indigenous norms and values. These schools must be supported by legal protections, financial mechanisms and resilient networks that foster collaboration across local and regional boundaries.
4. School administrators should adopt "strategic bifurcation" strategies – meeting official state requirements on just on a superficial basis whilst cultivating subspaces of critical inquiry within their institutions. These include teacher learning communities, participatory school governance involving local actors and integration of indigenous epistemologies into the cultural operations of the school.
5. Educators must employ instructional methods that centre structural awareness on par with dialogic engagement. This includes incorporating traditional storytelling, oral histories, proverbs and indigenous governance models into classroom realities, whilst evaluating learning through community-centred rather than individualistic criteria.
6. Religious bodies, cultural organisations, media platforms and local governments should build alliances that deepen critical consciousness across the operational spectrum of society. These networks can support intergenerational dialogue, bridge gaps between formal and informal education systems, and safeguard the documentation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge.
7. Academic researchers, universities, youth associations and family networks should prioritise empirical research on educational initiatives that synthesize critical pedagogy with indigenous systems. They must also document the educational functions of informal networks and create participatory research partnerships that serve local transformation efforts whilst fostering cross-ethnic, interreligious and interclass solidarity.

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