



Nurturance for Reading the World: Critical Consciousness in Societies Guided by Unhu/Ubuntu

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Abstract: Critical consciousness is one of the hallmarks for the sustenance of the identity of a people. It is indispensable in developing epistemic rationality which is instrumental in fighting against ethnocentric tendencies of the people of the dominant culture who employ technical rationality to justify their supremacy. During the colonial era the societies guided by Unhu/Ubuntu philosophy engaged in critical consciousness about cultural transformations in order to maintain their cultural identity. The societies had an informal, insidious curriculum that was aimed at making their youngsters enrolled in the formal education institutions become conscious of the fact that the creators of texts and interpreters of the texts used in colonial institutions had ulterior motives that needed to be exposed by one who had been developed to become a critical thinker who could be engaged in critical literacy. A study was carried out about how critical consciousness was fostered in societies guided by Unhu/Ubuntu. A sample of ten elderly people of ages between sixty-five and ninety-five was purposively selected from Masvingo District in Zimbabwe and the informants were interviewed. The research findings are that critical consciousness in these societies was emphasized in their informal education system through philosophical sagacity and introspection on interactions with others in the socio-cultural, political and political spheres. Contemporary hybridized societies can have some insights from Unhu/Ubuntu nurturance of critical consciousness in learners.

Keywords: critical consciousness; critical thinking; critical literacy; epistemic rationality; technical rationality; Unhu/Ubuntu curriculum

1. INTRODUCTION

The nurturance of critical consciousness in societies guided by Unhu/Ubuntu philosophy was considered to be of cardinal importance in the Unhu/Ubuntu education curriculum. The elders who were both the curricularators and educators stressed on critical consciousness to dislodge the ethnocentric, tendencies of Europeans that were aimed at reducing people guided by the Unhu/Ubuntu philosophy to the status of things which were vulnerable to exploitation. There is a derogatory conception by the Eurocentric academics about the indigenous African traditional modes of education practised by the people guided by the Unhu/Ubuntu philosophy. Oral tradition and internship were the main modes of education. The modus operandi of education was not hinged on the contemporary literacy and numeracy of printed text. The contemporary conceptions of literacy and numeracy are desirable for critical consciousness but are not prerequisites. According to Freire (2005) people can be literate and numerate that is being able to read the word but being simultaneously illiterate, that is when they are unable to read the world. Before introduction of formal education by the colonialists, the people guided by Unhu/Ubuntu philosophy, though illiterate in terms of reading the word, they were literate in reading the world. Thus they were critically conscious of their being-ness. The sages of the Unhu/Ubuntu philosophy, the elderly people, had an awareness which had developed through critical thought. They were able to see beyond the superficial, hegemonic and ethnocentric beliefs and practices that estranged the indigenes on their own land.

2. EXPLICATION OF CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Critical consciousness is about the raising of consciousness. It is akin to the term conscientization which was coined by Paulo Freire the Brazilian educator. The term was derived from the Portuguese term *conscientização* (Champeau & Shaw, 2002). Freire was concerned about making the people of Brazil become aware of the then oppressive situation. According to Freire (2005; 2000) a person who

is not aware of the oppressive situation is illiterate. One could be able to read the word which is the first level of literacy but could be illiterate when he or she cannot read the world. Reading the world is a state of in-depth understanding of the world which is characterized as the ability to first perceive social, political, and economic oppression and then to take action against the oppressive elements of the society. Thus critical consciousness is defined as an awareness of the exploitative socio-cultural and politico-economic situation in order to be motivated to create a more humane interactive situation (Mustakova-Possardt, 2003). The over-arching concept in critical consciousness is 'criticality'. For the success of critical consciousness there are synergies with the other concepts that emphasize on criticality like critical literacy and critical thinking.

3. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRITICAL LITERACY, CRITICAL THINKING AND CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Critical literacy and critical thinking place the marginalised people in a questioning frame of mind that develops a critical consciousness. The marginalised are evoked to a search for justice and equity (Cervetti, Damico & Pardeles 2001).

Critical literacy involves critical thinking (McLaren 2002; Sahni, 2001; Vasquez, 2001; Wallace, 2001). Critical thinking focuses on logic and comprehension and critical literacy focuses on identifying social practices that keep dominant ways of understanding the world and unequal power relationships in place (Harste, 2003). There is a symbiotic relationship between critical literacy and critical thinking which is postulated by Hughes (2007);

[Critical literacy is] the capacity for a particular type of critical thinking that involves looking beyond the literal meaning of texts to observe what is present and what is missing, in order to analyze and evaluate the text's complete meaning and the author's intent.

Thus critical literacy and critical thinking are requisite skills for critical consciousness (Literacy Gains 2009). Critical literacy and critical thinking practices encourage the marginalized people to use language to question the everyday world, interrogate the relationship between language and power, to understand how power relationships are socially fabricated and to reflect on actions that can be taken to promote social justice.

4. CONCEPTION OF UNHU/UBUNTU

The term Unhu/Ubuntu has some philosophical and socio-cultural conceptualizations of the livelihoods of the indigenes of southern Africa (Nussbaum 2003). Unhu/Ubuntu is essentially a philosophy, of the indigenes of southern Africa. As a philosophy, Unhu/Ubuntu influences; the way of being-ness, mode of ethics and practices which shape the indigenes' culture. The philosophy is anchored on the collective consciousness of these people in societies that are differentiated more by politico-historical and geographical demarcations than the socio-cultural ones.

Societies which are guided by the Unhu/Ubuntu philosophy are collectivist (Higgs & Smith, 2000). In collectivist societies, the behaviours of the members are socially sanctioned (Coetzee & Roux, 2002). There is observance of socially accepted norms and values, which are safeguarded by the ardent, conservative cultural participants who are mostly the elderly people. The elderly people are considered as the sages (Keevy, 2008). Thus they influence the younger generations in ways they think about certain socio-cultural, economic and political issues.

There are ubiquitous axiological requisites in Unhu/Ubuntu societies which are inter alia; compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity. The requisites are in the interest of building and maintaining societies with justice and mutual caring (Coetzee & Roux, 2002). The consideration of the prime importance of ethics in particular ethnic groups conjures up the misconception that Unhu/Ubuntu is an ethno-philosophy of the traditional indigenous Africans (Higgs & Smith 2000). Unhu/Ubuntu is a philosophy in its own right and does not require prefixes such as 'ethno-' for its apt conceptualisation. The Unhu/Ubuntu philosophy has an axiological emphasis on harmonious living with others and honouring communal relationships (Metz & Gaie, 2010). The emphasis has caused some misconstructions by some scholars who have referred to the philosophy as a moral ideology. Unhu/Ubuntu is not an ideology but has ideologies which can be classified according to philosophical branches just like other philosophies.

In Unhu/Ubuntu societies, the beginning of critical consciousness is realised in the adage in IsiZulu, *umuntungumuntungabantu*, whose variation in ChiShona is *munhumunhumuvanhu*. In Sotho, the adage is *mothokemothokabatho*. The approximation of the adage in English is; a person is considered to be humane because of one’s interactions with other persons (Letseka, 2013). Thus Unhu/Ubuntu promotes humane interactions with others and emphasizes that one becomes complete when he or she considers human worth of other members of society (Letseka, 2013; Ramose, 2006). The Unhu/Ubuntu adherents expect those in positions of authority to consider other human beings as valuable. For example the chief was always expected to lead the people with the advice of the councillors who were considered to be the representatives of the people (Letseka, 2014). The promotion of the humane treatment of the people by the chief was embedded in the adage “*Nyikavanhu*” in ChiShona and has variations in other Unhu/Ubuntu societies. The approximation of the adage in English is, “A chief is a chief by the people” (Letseka, 2014). The people were encouraged to interrogate exploitation and marginalisation which led to the development of critical consciousness.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research methodology was employed in this study and was guided by the phenomenological hermeneutics paradigm. The researcher developed contextual meanings from the informants’ experiences (Creswell, 2007). Thus the study focused on an understanding of the world in which the informants lived (Mouton, 2011). The expressions of the lived experiences of the informants which were generated by interviews were presented verbatim.

There were two stages of the interpretation of situations and experiences which were considered. The stages of interpretation were the *emic* and the *etic* which are the informants’ interpretations of experiences in their own words and the researcher’s interpretations respectively. The *emic* interpretations provided the basis for more accurate *etic* interpretations (Hoberg, 2001). In order to capture the verbatim *emic* interpretations of situations there was audio taping of responses. The thematic approach was employed to come up with the *etic* interpretations (Johnson & Christenson, 2008).

Purposive sampling was employed to select the ten informants. The researcher used his judgement to come up with the information-rich participants. The basic criterion was the age of the informants. The researcher had the conviction that people who resided in rural areas and were of the age range selected, were information-rich about the issue that was under investigation. The sample comprised of five females and five males. The gender and the ages of the informants are presented in Table 1.

Table1. *Community Elders (Informants) by Gender and Age.*

Informant	Male	Female	Age
Informant1		X	76
Informant2		X	69
Informant3		X	85
Informant4	X		90
Informant5	X		65
Informant6		X	75
Informant7		X	68
Informant8	X		95
Informant9	X		82
Informant10	X		91

6. REFLECTIONS ON FINDINGS

6.1. Conceptualisation of Critical Consciousness in Societies Guided by Unhu/Ubuntu

Critical consciousness can be considered as a level of consciousness that is characterized by becoming aware of one’s situation and critiquing it (Windsor, Benoit & Dunlap, 2010).It is realised when one is engaged in reflexivity and critical thinking. Reflexivity is a consideration of self-consciousness that makes one develop a profound awareness of how the socio-cultural and political environments influence self-identity and how one behaves. It involves a person's active analysis of past situations, events, and products, with the inherent goal of achieving an understanding of a situation that can lead to change in perceptions and behaviour (Danielewicz, 2001). A manifestation of the initial stage of critical consciousness was enunciated by Informant 1;

“What is now not proper is that in this community, even the cultural values you well know --- you are forced not to observe them and you are instructed to follow what the chief wants. The chief’s powers are now very different from what used to happen long ago. He got poisonous exploitative powers from the colonialists. But for you to say no ---our cultural traditions had this and that --- you are labelled old-fashioned so you end up being silenced forcefully.”

Confirmatory remarks were given by Informant 2,

“Unhu is about how we think in order to shape our cultural traits as the indigenous people of this land --- that is Unhu. We believe in that there is a supreme being above us all who guides our thinking and practices.

The second aspect for the development of critical consciousness is critical thinking which is about the art of thinking sceptically about information and knowledge that is disseminated in particular socio-cultural and political contexts. One should have the ability to question the source and purpose of information and unveil its insidious uses for the perpetuation of racism, cultural hegemony, and marginalization of some sectors of people (Evans, Prilleltensky, McKenzie, Prilleltensky, Noguera, Huggins & Mescia, 2011). In line with the claim above, Informant 3 posited,

“When Whites invaded our land, they used the Bible to stifle our thinking so as to make us exploitable.”

Informant 4 further explained,

“Unhu is diminishing because of Anglican cultural traits.”

Thus critical thinking enables one to gain an understanding of who creates knowledge and who benefits from that knowledge within systems of oppression. This awareness is a critical dimension of critical consciousness. Thus critical consciousness refers to the process by which one applies critical thinking skills to examine one’s current situation in order to develop a deeper understanding about one’s concrete reality with the ultimate goal of finding solutions to socio-cultural and political problems (Freire, 2005).

The role of critical thinking in the promotion of critical consciousness is realised in two ingredients that are anti-oppressive thinking and anti-oppressive action (Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). The ability to think critically is indispensable to the development of anti-oppressive thinking. Anti-oppressive thinking entails developing a critical awareness of structural and internalized oppression. Subsequently anti-oppressive action requires conscious efforts to do away with the structural and internalized oppression (Kay, Gaucher, Peach, Laurin, Friesen, Zanna & Spencer, 2010). Confirmatory remarks were given by Informant 5,

“There is need for us to refute the socio-cultural traits of the Europeans and revert to ours that are less divisive, less exploitative but more cohesive and humane.”

Informant 5 had a strong conviction of mobilising anti-oppressive action. Thus anti-oppressive action can be initiated by an individual and then spreads to the societal level. The individual can be an advocate against the oppressive system, disseminating information in order to make the community think critically. Anti-oppressive action occurs when the entire society is able to think critically so as to develop societal capacity which refers to the society’s ability to effectively draw upon their existing strengths and resources in order to address societal problems (Neville, Coleman, Falconer, & Holmes, 2005). In societies guided by the Unhu/Ubuntu philosophy, there was deliberate effort to disseminate information to promote critical thinking. Informant 6 remarked,

“The elderly sages had an arduous task of trying to make the youngsters critical about the socialisation they were getting from the church.

Thus the participation of the members of society in societal action is hinged on the extent of societal critical thinking which has a bearing on consciousness of the society’s history and values.

Critical consciousness at societal level is concerned with awareness of shared assumptions about the conditions that gave rise to socio-cultural and political problems of the society (Midgley, Munlo, & Brown, 1998). At societal level there is need to be examining and critiquing shared assumptions in such a way that it is understood that certain socio-cultural and political problems are not primordial but a result of injustice in society (Freire, 2000). In support of the above citations Informant 6 posited,

“At *padare* (a fort where a fire was made and then pedagogical activities were done) *we were assembled by the elders who tried to make us aware of who we were. The content taught was about criticality concerning the seemingly good things that were brought by the Whites*”

Thus societal critical consciousness is the shared awareness of how social institutions, political structures and ethnocentric assumptions create and maintain conditions of oppression (Kagan & Burton, 2001).

6.2. Focus of Critical Consciousness in Societies Guided by Unhu/Ubuntu

Critical consciousness focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the oppressive nature of the socio-cultural and political interactions of people in society. There is need to understand the complex ways through which power operates to dominate and shape consciousness (McLaren, 2002). Awareness of the exploitation was postulated by Informant 7,

“*The Whites made us lose our identity*”.

The corroborative remarks were postulated by Informant 8,

“*The baptism that the people got, detached them from their roots. People were made to change their names – they became strangers in themselves.*”

The informant was aware of the fact that some oppressors use religion as a super structure for estranging people in order to alienate them from their roots. Thus through critical consciousness, there is perception and exposure of socio-cultural and political power structures that perpetuate oppression in society (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, (2011).

Critical consciousness focuses on how members of disadvantaged groups develop an awareness of structural inequality and oppression, and incorporate this consciousness into their understanding of economic, socio-cultural and political realities (Freire, 2005, 2000; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil 1999; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). Thus central to critical consciousness development is that marginalized people learn to “critically read the world” and attribute social problems and inequities to structural forces rather than individual factors (Watts, Diemer & Voight, 2011). The criticality in reading the world was pronounced by Informant 8,

“*Their perception of realities of life is detached from Unhu - Their humaneness is not within Unhu. Their thinking does not serve us we real Vanhu[SIC] Isutirivanhuivovarungu.[Our considerations of humaneness are different].They have their own consideration of humaneness - we copy theirs but they do not copy ours!*”

Critical consciousness is a complex concept that focuses on a range of issues of criticality that include critical reflection, critical efficacy, and critical action (Wattset al., 2011). The marginalized societal groups become aware of their identity through critical reflections on the socio-cultural and political structures imposed by the oppressors (Haaken, Wallin-Ruschman, & Patange, 2012). Confirmatory remarks were given by Informant 8,

“*The Whites indoctrinated the indigenes to believe that White people’s world view was far superior to the indigenes’ world view.*”

The informant was critically reflective of the actions of the colonialist to brainwash the indigenes. Thus critical reflection conscientizes one about the dehumanization of the marginalized people in the socio-cultural and political structures and focuses on actions for social change (Watts et al., 2011).

Critical consciousness is meant for social justice through empowering the marginalized for the transformative practice (Butcher, Banks, Henderson, & Robertson, 2007). Thus it is through this element of critical consciousness that individuals seek to change their situation as the oppressed, or to change the entire societal system.

Critical consciousness theory focuses on the awareness of how oppression and privilege create and sustain social and individual dysfunction. Social dysfunction is the incapacitation of the members of the marginalized society to be actively involved in their development (Kay, Gaucher, Peach, Laurin, Friesen, Zanna, & Spencer, 2010). Thus dysfunction is influenced by structural and internalized inferiority complexes. Awareness of the inferiority complex was explained by informant 9,

“The Whites did not consider us as responsible people. They thought we were far inferior to them and unfortunately some of us accepted that.”

6.3. Antecedents of Critical Consciousness in Societies Guided by Unhu/Ubuntu

Critical consciousness is indispensable when there is structural inequality in society. Structural inequality is a system of power imbalances maintained by social norms, organizations, policies, and individual behaviours informed by Eurocentric ideologies (in colonised states) that prevent marginalized groups of people from enjoying the same rights and opportunities afforded to the general population (Freire, 2005). The antecedents of critical consciousness were confirmed by Informant10 who postulated,

“Unhu is disappearing. It is being destroyed by the mixing of the races. When the whites view the world the way they view it, some people mimic their world views without any discrimination and consequently they become strangers in themselves”.

The dominant class employs the system justification theory as one of the most effective psychological theories in maintaining and legitimizing of structural inequality (Jost & Banaji, 1994). System justification theory provides insights on the motivational tendencies that lead the marginalized people to rationalize and legitimize the system that dehumanizes them (Jost & van der Toorn, 2012; Jost 2011). In other words system justification theory proposes that individuals possess a motive to justify and rationalize the status quo, thereby viewing the existing set of social, economic and political arrangements as fair, legitimate and desirable simply because they exist (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Thus there are hegemonic justifications of the perpetration of the injustices in society. The marginalized people have been made to be actively engaged in system justification (Jost, Banaji & Nosek, 2004; Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, (2003). Thus system justification for the marginalized people is embedded in false consciousness which is perpetrated by the ideological machinations of the powerful groups who have control over education, religion, media, culture and economic systems. The socio-cultural and political consciousness of the marginalized people is false since it reflects dominant groups' interests rather than their own (Freire 2005). Informant 6 who was aware of the ideological machinations remarked,

“I remember a friend of mine when we were young who came one day from church and recited to me the verse, 1 Timothy 4 verse 7. I was really touched by the lack of criticality of my friend. How could one accept the despising of his elderly sages.”

The verse from the New American Standard Bible reads, “But stay away from worthless stories that are typical of old women.”

6.4. Development of Critical Consciousness in Societies Guided by Unhu/Ubuntu

In the initial stages of oppression, the oppressed people are unable to recognize structural barriers to advancement and attribute outcomes to their own personal shortcomings or to supernatural forces. Progressing through the stages, individuals develop an increasing awareness of economic, political, historical and social forces until they arrive at a critical understanding of how these forces have shaped current outcomes, and become poised to take action to redress these disparities (Guishard, 2009; Watts, Williams & Jagers, 2003).

The development of critical consciousness is facilitated through group dialogue, participatory action, and empowerment of the marginalized people (Windsor, Benoit, & Dunlap, 2010). The mechanism employed by marginalised indigenes of southern Africa was explained by Informants 2,

“The fables about Hare and Baboon were meant to make the children critical about issues and not to be docile and gullible in the hands of the Whites”.

It was imperative to apply critical thinking skills to discussions about the systems that are employed by the powerful in society in maintaining the status quo. Through dialogue, it is expected that people will learn about how they are made to acquire false consciousness and how they can develop critical consciousness. Thus during critical consciousness-raising, people are encouraged to challenge the forces of oppression that are identified and channel their feelings of anger, sadness, and frustration into anti-oppressive action. Informant 1 cited an example when some critically conscious marginalised people challenged the forces of oppression,

“Some critical people like Nehanda and Kaguvi and even my father were against being considered as things instead of beings.”

The process of developing critical consciousness requires that people work collectively to achieve societal objectives concerning the overcoming of oppression. When the marginalized people are involved in consciousness-raising dialogues, they are likely to form new identities and begin to change the way they see themselves, the world around them, and their ability to improve themselves and their own communities (Stronge, 2002). The dialogues that are meant to raise critical consciousness require that the participants are reflective and become engaged in the continuous reconstruction of knowledge about power and privilege (Vavrus, 2002). Informant 7 confirmed reflectivity by postulating that,

“We tried to make some people aware of the fact that our socio-cultural inferiority was caused by the political power of the Whites which was enhanced through their education curriculum and indoctrination through their religion.”

Thus the dialogical discussants are encouraged to think critically and introspectively about their situations. Critical consciousness helps to end the "culture of silence" in which the socially dispossessed internalize the negative images of themselves created and propagated by the oppressor in situations of socio-cultural and political oppression. Thus the marginalized should be liberated from being copycats of the powerful.

Liberation of the oppressed people is possible through transformative dialogue and praxis. Transformative dialogue is a discussion where people in a trusting environment develop a new understanding and awareness of who they are in the socio-cultural and political milieu (Watts et al., 2003). The oppressed people are supposed to reflect on themselves and their roles and responsibilities and subsequently, dialogue with others and with society at large.

When communicating with others, the marginalized people get into a state of naive transitivity, which is characterized by an oversimplification of the socio-cultural and political problems (Watts et al., 1999). The state of naive transitivity was witnessed by Informant 5 who posited,

“The Whites brought their culture which was palatable to their Christian converts who became quite unreasonable in perceiving the exploitative situation. It was very necessary to educate each other about the situation.”

Discussions on the problems lead to a more in-depth analysis of problems which is referred to critical transitivity. Subsequently there could be increased agency which refers to the state of being in action. Agency is intertwined with praxis which is the reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it (Freire, 2005). Thus the marginalized people develop the state of critical consciousness, characterized by the awakened critical awareness of the causes of the socio-cultural, economic and political problems.

7. FACTORS STIFLING CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN SOCIETIES GUIDED BY UNHU/UBUNTU

According to Freire (2005), ignorance is the major factor that stifles the development of critical consciousness. He was contented that ignorance is more than a lack of knowledge but it is also a lack of critical thinking skills. Acquiring knowledge without critical thinking skills may lead to indoctrination of a person into an oppressive culture (Jost & Thompson, 2000; Jost & van der Toorn, 2012; Rankin, Jost & Wakslak, 2009). The purpose of such a culture is to uphold conventional, often oppressive, ways of thinking. Informant 4 showed awareness of ways employed to stifle critical consciousness by postulating that,

“The Whites wanted us to be copycats of their culture. The elders stressed on the vices of having a chameleon identity – trying to be white in a black skin. Our blackness is not superficial. It's embedded in our world views and practices.”

Freire was contented that the educational system in an oppressive society endeavours to maintain the status quo. The students are completely denied the opportunity to think for themselves, and therefore can hardly grow and progress through the levels of critical consciousness. The students are trained from the very onset of the educational experience to simply receive, memorize, and repeat the content narrated by the 'educator' (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). They are not actually being educated. They are

instead being groomed, to graduate through this educational system and thus take their appropriate position as the “educated” oppressed in society (Jost & Thompson, 2000; Jost & van der Toorn, 2012; Rankin, Jost & Wakslak, 2009). This situation is referred to by Freire as the ‘banking concept of education’ (Freire 2000). Informant 7 enunciated the environment that was created for the banking concept of education,

“Some very intelligent boys and girls who had the potential to conscientise others about exploitation by the Whites were taken away from their societies under the guise of boarding schools. I think this was done to create an environment which is conducive for brainwashing them.”

During the colonial era, the learners were psychologically coerced to absorb the reflections of the ‘educators’ and were denied the opportunity to be engaged in self-reflection and critical consciousness about their socio-cultural, economic and political situations. Thus the learners were made to justify the oppressive system by blaming individuals for having shortcomings instead of laying blame on the systemic or structural factors (Jost et al., 2003; Jost & Thompson, 2000).

8. ROLE OF EDUCATORS IN FACILITATING DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The educator is expected to be accountable of the learners’ development of critical consciousness. Educator accountability involves being more self-conscious, critical, and analytical of one’s own teaching beliefs and behaviours. Thus the educators need to develop deeper knowledge and consciousness about the content that embrace critical consciousness and how best to teach the learners what is to be taught. The premise is supported by scholars such as Danielewicz (2001), Gay (2000), Ladson-Billings (2001), Schon (1983), and Zeichner and Liston (1996). In line with the scholars, Informant 8 postulated that,

“When we were young, we used to have discourses on the insidious agenda of the Whites towards the indigenes.”

Thus the educators should be conscious of the fact that they are agents of liberation and should understand the contexts in which they teach and interrogate their instructional effectiveness. There should also be emphasis on critical, racial and cultural consciousness through self-reflection which should start with the educator. Self-reflection is requisite for cultural critical consciousness of the students who are marginalized. Informant 9 posited,

“In our culture, a wise person is characterised by self-knowledge and possession of the intrinsic motivation and ability to improve the self.”

8.1. Technical Rationality and Critical Consciousness in Societies Guided by Unhu/Ubuntu

Technical rationality is instrumental in perpetuating ethnocentric tendencies of the dominant cultural group. The adherents of the dominant culture rationalize about their cultural supremacy as if that supremacy was primordially sanctioned. Informant 6 enunciated her awareness of technical rationality,

“I am quite aware of the situation of how the Whites have made my people to believe that they are far from being the equals of the whites. They preached to us that the Creator is White since Jesus Christ is white and that the devil is Black.”

The politico-economically marginalised people are made to accept the situation that dehumanizes them. The approach of technical rationality to explaining some situations is linear since it purports that there is a systematic explanation of social reality by the elite who are considered to be more enlightened on these issues than the marginalized people (Freire 2000). Within technical rationality, oppressors employ instrumental rationality which is concerned with achieving their goals of inculcating an inferiority complex in the marginalised. In instrumental rationality deliberate falsification of reality is useful for the oppressor to perpetuate oppression. Thus to some extent, technical rationality stifles critical consciousness.

8.2. Epistemic Rationality and Critical Consciousness in Societies Guided by Unhu/Ubuntu

Epistemic rationality is rationality which involves achieving knowledge about the socio-cultural and politico-economic situation of a group of people (Kelly, 2003). It involves rationalising on texts in

order to unveil the ulterior motives of the producers of texts. The people who are involved in epistemic rationality always try to expose the hegemony in texts (Raz, 2005). In line with epistemic rationality, Informant 3 posited,

“Wisdom is a cardinal virtue which is shown in questioning the status quo and giving suggestions on how to change the exploitative situation.”

Thus epistemic rationality could be instrumental in making the marginalised people develop critical consciousness. It can be perceived as countering instrumental rationality since it emphasizes on getting knowledge and truth about the spheres of human life.

9. CONCLUSION

Critical consciousness is one of the essences that help to protect the identity of a people. Without it, some politically powerful people coercively and/or ideologically spread their ethnocentric tendencies to the powerless. The people who are powerless become marginalised socio-culturally and politico-economically. The hegemony ingrained in the ideological machinations of exploitation is so strong that the non-critical people consider their situation as primordial. Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator was a critical theorist who advocated for the development of critical consciousness as a requisite for emancipatory education. He postulated that without critical consciousness the so-called educated could be illiterate since they could be able to read the word but failing to read the world. Critical consciousness was not alien to Unhu/Ubuntu societies. When the colonialists ideologically invaded the societies guided by the Unhu/Ubuntu philosophy, some people were not readily gullible. They resisted the socio-cultural and politico-economic invasions. There was a conscious effort to develop critical consciousness in the learners by the elderly people in society, who were considered to be the custodians of values and norms. By employing philosophical sagacity the elderly people developed sceptical attitudes in some youngsters.

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