African Geo-Education: A Panacea for a Sustainable African Development

Ugwu M. Osita
Department of Philosophy, Nasarawa State University, Keffi
e-mail: ugwumatthew5@gmail.com +2348061523069

Abstract: The concept of geo-education is concerned with the idea of education as conceived and managed by different societies at one time or the other. The fact that different societies of the world practice one particular educational style at a given time or the other as conceived workable for them is unarguable. Every society that exists is necessarily been guided by an ideology. The social and political progress of every society depends largely on the existing ideology of the society. The African state has from inception lived under certain ideology. These foundational African ideologies at a time had a clash that almost got it into extinction. It is therefore the thrust of this work to see towards emancipating these ideologies from the strange vehicle that got it into the unfortunate clash, and work towards re-instituting it in its proper order. At such, the aim of this work is to present an educational system that is ontologically African as a basis for a sustainable African development. Finally the paper adopts an expository approach to aid in making this discovery.

Key words: Africa, Geo-Education, Panacea, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

The idea of African Geo-Education presupposes a prototypical African educational system, with its inherent values as distinct from other societal values. Africans are not fully unaware of this reality; however, at a point in time, the African state got herself into an apparently paternal hand that landed her in a mid-high way of obscure identity. Ever since the African world got into this mess, the continent has been wondering hither and thither in a scorch-filled wilderness of cultural, ideological and educational vicissitudes, with little or no sign of any futuristic home-return. We may not understand the depth of the blow vented on us without firstly making reference to some of the events of colonialism.

In the contention of Ekwuru according to Kanu, the first strategy employed by the colonial masters was that of disassemblage, concealed in the exploitative colonial ideology of benevolent paternalism. It is first an ideology of condemnation, which identified everything "good to be white" and everything "bad to be black" (Kanu, 2015).

Colonialism expressed the ethnocentric belief that the morals and values of the colonizer were superior to those of the colonized. This belief was programmatically achieved through the establishment of schools, according to Kanu, which curricula were tailored to achieve the goals of the colonizer rather than train the colonized to be independent (Kanu, 2015). If we must understand the end product of the colonial educational system in Africa, it will be paramount that we try to be intimated with the intended educational goal of the colonizer. In the words of Macaulay cited by Ezeani, the aim of colonial education in the colonies was to train at least a class of persons, Indian or African in blood, but English in opinion, in morals and intellect. The same applies to French colonies, a recreation of persons who are Africans in blood, but French in opinion, morals and intellect (Ezeani, 2013). Still on this, Ezeani asserts, the colonizing European African policy on education required Africans to discard their own world-view and adopt that of the English, French, Spanish, Portuguese or the Arab world, as the case may be. Education thus became an important and effective instrument used to accomplish the mission of Europeanization and Arabianization of Africa (Ezeani, 2013). Consequently, most Africans thus view those western-styles of living to mean 'educatedness'.

Being aware of such prevalent aberrations, the researcher therefore intend to posit a paradigm shift in the existing education system in Africa, thereby moving for a return to the ideal African system of education in a bid to attain a sustainable African development.

Clarification of Concepts

Most philosophical problems do spring up as a result of misuse of language. Being aware of this, it is necessary to provide some clarifications to certain concepts as used in the context of the work.

African

The concept African has been visited by scholars from different perspectives. In the conception of Onyeocha, Africans are people who stem from Africa, and whose experience of life and life's activities are tied to Africa (Onyeocha, 54). Whether these are resident in Africa or abroad, their spirit is in Africa, and their destiny is tied to that of Africa. Africanity, or being an African, is thus a horizon of experience, of life and living, of thought and thinking that centers on Africa as a home and wellspring, as a concept, and as a realm of possibilities. According to the Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English language, 'An African' is seen as a person especially a black person of African ancestry. For Oxford American Dictionary, 'An African' is seen as a native of Africa, especially a dark-skinned person.

Onyeocha further opines, already, the African, in spite of his or her present predicament, has had quite a few things to offer to the world in terms of humanity, crisis management, and conflict resolution (Onyeocha, 224). In the case of humanity, many a visitor to Africa has remarked how people are honored in life and venerated in death. The life and death of each affects all and is never considered a private affair. Speaking on the competence of the African in his world, he affirms, not only does the African speak the language of the west, he or she has also imbided western culture, and can, with creditable temerity, practice practically all their crafts. Most importantly, he or she can now live in freedom and equality with them and among them anywhere in the world. He or she can now acquire or exchange citizenship rights with them, and where applicable, can even vie for, and get into public office.

Geo-Education

The concept 'Geo-Education' refers to the distinctiveness of educational system conventionally practiced by different societies as it pertains to their existential conditions. Different societies have their education system. An education system that works for the Indian may not work for the Russian, an education system that works for the Americans may not work for the Africans. This is because, societal problems vary according to societies, and the purpose of education should be to formulate ideologies that could be used in tackling such problems. In a bid to formulate such ideologies also, every society must have in mind the culture and the values of their environment. Since culture has to do with the way of life of a people, culture ought therefore to serve as a vehicle through which ideologies are cultivated in societies.

Geo-Education is thus a concept that explains how different societies have managed the education of their environment in solving their immediate problems.

Sustainable Development

The Bruntland Commission defined sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs (Bruntland Commission, 1987).

Munansighe defines sustainable development as the process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individual human and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potentials over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental systems (Munasighe, 2004).

Breaking the Bond of Colonial Education

At a first glance of the concept 'colonial education', one may be apt to ask 'what is colonial education'. The concept of colonial education should be seen from the perspective of the educational aim of the colonizer on the colonized. The aim of colonial education in the colonies as we have earlier noted in the words of Ezeani, was to train at least a class of persons Indian or African in blood, but English in opinion, in morals and intellect (Ezeani, 2013). Colonial education can thus be understood as the system of education intended upon to sap the colonies of their identity and to distort the functionality of their original intelligence and subsequently subvert and exert unquestionable authority over the colonized. According to Ezeani, colonial education is taken to mean the totality of influences on and experiences by the colonized in a colonized environment (Ezeani, 2013).

In the conception of O'Connor as cited in Ezeani, education is the process by which society through schools, colleges, universities and other institutions deliberately transmit their cultural heritage (Ezeani, 2013). Going by O'Connor's definition of education, we may then ask if at all there was such a thing as education in the entire process of colonialism. How can one imagine an education in a situation where the culture of the colonized was the main target of destruction? Lamenting on the destruction of the African culture by the colonizers, Kanu remarks, Europeans in general and European missionaries particularly, with some few exceptions, admitted little if any culture of value in Africa, just as many have denied that Africa really has any religion other than fearful superstitions. They came with their culture which includes their language, religious customs, morals and ways of praying and acting which defines their identity and imposed it on Africans. In this way, they killed our culture and denied us of our true identity and uniqueness. The African culture in any of its manifestations was the bull's eye for attack. The Christian church working hand in hand with the colonial masters declared an all-out war on African culture, regarding them as primitive, savage, pagan, barbaric and the like.

To this, Achebe as cited in Kanu, questioned,

> does the white man understand our custom about land? Asked Okonkwo, How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? Responded Obierika, and then he continued, but he says our customs are bad, and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act as one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart (Kanu, 2015).

The worst of the damages incurred by the African in the hands of the colonial masters was not the condemnation of the African cultural heritage, but the conviction of the Africans themselves on the fetishness of their value-system. Consequently, most Africans see the white man as a model of goodness and invariably, a role model.

It can be obvious that one of the worst calamities vented on the Africans in the whole process of colonialism is the de-Africanization of the Africans: an existential situation where one sees himself as better being 'another' than 'self'. Regrettably, this very effect has left the Africans in the state of self-abasement, and a continue pangs of inferiority complex. Africans consequently have been living hitherto as slaves in their father's palace: and slaves in their home land. Our negligence of the African cultural heritage has brought us to a situation of mixed and almost unidentifiable identity, in such that most of the new generation African children hardly possess nor display any African traits, not because they are really antagonistic of our values, but because they are not informed about our identity. Consequently, we begin to take pride in living a western life-style, worst of it; some of us perceive our values as being vile in the face of the western influx. This is obviously exemplified in most families, especially in Igbo land where parents take delight in parading a shameful, but seemingly socialization,

where their children are not able to speak their dialects and the parents will be proud about it by defending them that they studied abroad. Consequently, the children begin to see their dialect as being anachronistic, and thus as a sign of illiteracy.

Chinua Achebe, citing an Igbo proverb in his book entitled *There Was a Country*, tells us that 'a man who does not know where the rain started to beat him cannot say where he dried his body.' Leveraging on the above assertion, with an understanding that the rain has long drenched the African world, which had almost succeeded in eroding all that she holds dear, we rise therefore in defense of our (the black) nationality which has almost been blown off existence by the storm of Europeanism.   An Igbo proverb says that 'when a snake stops doing what makes it a snake, women and children will begin to use it as a rag.'

 We have been long misrepresented to an extent that our humanness is being doubted by these strangers (colonizers). If we do not wake up in defense of our identity, these strangers may end up equating us with the inanimate.

Educational Ideology for a Sustainable African Development
Ideologies are set of ideas, worldviews, which serve to explain, justify and sustain the existing social order and its institutions. Admittedly, every society has a dominant ideology that serves as a parameter in dictating and guiding the working modality of the society. Different societies formulated ideologies according to the prevalent challenges of their environments, which served a great deal in curbing the challenges. There are numerous instances of nations of the world that have used the weapon of education as an instrument for solving their societal challenges.

In the ancient military state of Sparta, education was utilized for the primary function of producing the warrior citizen to take his place in the military state as the guardian of the state. In the Athenian democracy, the emphasis was on producing intellectual development or the cultivation of the intellect, thus, the Athenian education stressed ability to read and write Greek. In Japan, during the Meiji restoration, education was employed as an instrument for national policy and was therefore utilized to cultivate the cardinal virtues of the Shinto philosophy of filial piety, benevolence, justice, propriety, intelligence, and fidelity. In Germany, during the second Reich, the nation was faced with the problem of national unity; thus, education was used under Bismarck as an instrument for the unification of the diverse elements within the Empire. In contemporary Britain, the emphasis is on the training of character for the success of the monarchical welfare state. In turkey, Kemal Ataturk utilized the power of education to modernize an Islamic state. In France, the emphasis on education is largely the sharpening of the intellect and the transmission of culture generally. In the United States of America, because of the frontier and immigration problems, education has been and is continuing to be utilized for the development of democracy. The central focus in all educational activities is the preservation of American democracy. In Russia, the main thrust of education is the advancement of communism; the doctrines of Marx and Engel pervade all educational thought and action.

Our concern from the above instances of nations that have used educational ideologies for the purpose of societal development goes a long way to show us that no nation can be proud of having a sustainable development without having recourse to a particular educational idea. We therefore posit that, the hope of attaining a sustainable development in the African continent depends largely on our ability to arrive at a particular ideology that is ontologically African: an educational idea that will be African context-relevant.

Africa has long been inculcated with an educational system that is in real sense mis-education. Our lives and values have long been interpreted by strangers who know little or nothing about us. Consequently, we have not been able to achieve any meaningful development as far as our continent is concerned. We have often been addressed as the third-word, or under-developed by the western counterpart, and rightly so, this is because we have never taken our time to look

critically into the course of our existence. The educational system we have been operating upon is of alien origin, so for us to learn in real sense of it, we must firstly start by learning the culture, language and values of the strangers before coming to learn the original content of education. This has in a great deal contributed to the stunted growth and development in our world. To that effect, we shall be presented with an educational system that is in real sense ours.

The Ideal Education for the African Nation

The notion of ideal education for the African nation is meant to present us with the type of education that we enjoyed as Africans prior to the influx of the westerners. It is intended upon to re-awaken in us the sense of the original African worldview. Our focus here is to look into an educational system that is African by origin, free from the western influence. It is a known fact that different people have different purposes for education. For example, the Greek city state channelled their education towards the direction of mental sufficiency as well as the physical fitness. While the Romans on the other hand emphasized on oratorical and military knowledge as the mark of an educated person, the Africans on the other hand emphasized on good character, knowledge of a specific skill and integration with one's community as the meaning of educatedness.

Education in the context of the pre-colonial era was fashioned with the objectives of forming the 'whole man'. Its objectives are quite different with the educational objectives of the colonial period, where education was economic-based rather than in forming the whole man. There are three basic objectives of the pre-colonial education as presented by Ezeani:

1. *Ima Ihe* (wisdom-knowledge)
2. *Ima Nke m* (own-knowledge)
3. *Ima Akwukwo* (book-knowledge or erudition).

The three essential perspectives of knowing as stated above summarized the main objectives of the ideal African educational system. A brief explanation will be made further to enable us visualize comprehensively the dimensions of knowability in the context of the African educational system.

Ima Ihe (wisdom-knowledge) – The concept '*ima ihe*' implies wisdom acquisition. In the conception of Mohanan as cited in Ezeani, an educated and wise person is someone who possesses the general knowledge needed for making informed rational decisions and inferences on familiar and novel situations in personal and intellectual life, who is capable of making informed intelligent decisions, estimates, assessment, and inferences (Mohanan, 2008).

Ima nke m (own-knowledge) – The concept '*ima nke m*' refers to the knowledge of 'self' and the immediate environment. It thus means that, as an educated person, one is expected to have a sufficient knowledge of himself, his environment, his culture and societal ethos of his people before aspiring for the foreign knowledge. According to Chinweizu in Ezeani, the idea of *Ima nke m*, does not mean ignorance of foreign traditions, and so does not preclude knowledge of other people and whatever pertains to them. It simply advocates that education must start from the basic unit of the subject (Ezeani, 2013).

Ima akwukwo (book-knowledge) – The concept '*ima akwukwo*' is a form of knowledge that is confined in the class-room situation. In this case, one may be the best student in the class-room in terms of academic performance. He/she may always be known for taking first position in virtually every academic session, but when called upon outside the class-room for any extra-classroom delivery, may not have the needed idea.

By and large, African education is based on a philosophy of education which emphasizes learning by doing, respect for elders, lifelong education, training on the job, learning to live and living to learn.

The above dimensions of knowability as analyzed above are the three main objectives in the ideal African education. While we can lay claim to the three objectives as belonging to the African educational system, we can only talk of the latter "*Ima akwukwo*" as the main objective in the colonial education. The goal of colonial education is best described in the words of Jefferson as cited by Ezeani, "money, not morality, is the principal commerce of a civilized nation" (Jefferson, 1998). To this, Duschinsly cited in Ezeani, added "Improvement in education need not lead to the elimination of corruption but to its perpetuation in new, sophisticated form" (Ezeani, 2013).

It was the reign of colonial education that brought to Africa such acts as corruption, rugged individualism against the traditional African habit of communalism and communal interest, criminality and the use of sophisticated weapons for mass destruction. This is because the type of education promoted by the colonial masters is such a type that ends in producing half-baked humans: an educational system that is separated from virtues and morality.

Africans found it difficult to liberate themselves from this colonial bondage simply because the education introduced to the Africans colonized their minds in line with the needs and interest of the colonizers. Thus, Africans see nothing bad in anything that has the western emblem, consequently, they gave in to the colonizer's deceptive ideology that posits everything 'white' to be good, and everything 'black' to be bad, paganistic and anachronistic.

The Quantitativism of the European Education

Culture stands as the main medium of transmission of knowledge from one generation to the other. It implies that the educational system of any nation will invariably depend largely on the type of culture prevalent in such society. Therefore, the European educational systems proceeded from their life-style. The objectives of their education must also be in line with the values of their society. The white man came to us as a missionary, colonizer, and trader, carrying his culture and beliefs with him. We accepted him in the spirit of our African brotherhood, where we see everybody as one. Unfortunately, the white man raised his axe against our cultural heritage, shattered and buried them, and in turn presented his cultural values and belief-system to us as the only option. This whole process was programmatically achieved according to Kanu, through the establishment of schools, which curricula were tailored to achieve the goals of the colonizer rather than train the colonized to be independent (Kanu, 2015).

From the above presentation, one may be moved to ask; what are the goals of the colonizer as stated above? It was the goal of converting the mind-set of the colonized to think like the colonizers; the goal of making the colonized believe that his values are worthless and fetish; the goal of making the colonized to hate his language in preference of the language of the colonizer; the goal of making the colonized believe he is lesser human and the colonizer a super-human.

It was the colonial conquest that imposed on us such alien educational system which objectives are of little or no relevance to the African nation, thereby depriving us of what we had. What then are the objectives of the colonial education? The objective of the colonial education is summarily in a few words "to attain academic excellence". It obviously implies that this type of education has no place for morality, virtues and wisdom. What matters in this system of education is to acquire academic excellence which may have little or nothing to relate with the society. In the European education, how you live in the society, how you live at home and how you live your personal life is never a concern. What matters is that you are able to read, write and speak foreign languages, whether you can speak your dialect or not is never a concern. It is this practice of separating education from the society that makes people suffer what Ezeani called 'social misfit'; a situation where one joins society after passing through the four walls of the academic institutions and not able to relate humanly with the people in the society. This is one of the reasons why we have the instances of people that could be best described as

'educated illiterates'. They could be academic doctors or professors produced from the European educational system, yet they lack the knowledge of their society and the societal ethos: they lack the sense of morality, and are living almost in the state of nature, with the 'survival by fittest' mentality.

The European education has no place for the inculcation of wisdom and the knowledge of self and the immediate environment. St. Jose State University presented the first characteristic of an educated person as the person that is able to advance from knowledge and understanding to real wisdom. According to Ezeani, "wisdom is the highest form of knowledge" (Ezeani, 2013). He further posited that, wisdom is being aware of the moral consequences of the exercise of book. The negative influence of education under Hitler best describes how education without wisdom and morality can be dangerous. Any education devoid of wisdom is like an education without substance: it is thus quantitative and not qualitative because it lacks the essentials of education.
According to Philips and Siegel, education can be referred to as a means of transmitting one's culture from one generation to the next and a process of bringing about reasonably enduring change in human behavior (Philips and Siegel, 2013). Leveraging on this assertion by Philips and Siegel, we may be just to conclude that the European education is in real sense 'mis-education' and this kind of education could be highly detrimental to the human society.

Africology and the Task of African Pedagogy
Africology is a discipline that deals with Afro-centric study of African phenomena. Its major concern is on solving African problems using African method. According to Uzong, Africology is a name used to designate that department of African studies that deals with African social and economic problems and development. He further asserted that Africology is mainly the study of the common factors and common problems of pre-historic and literate Africa, their interconnection, the explanation of African psychology in terms of human actions and their relevance to human conditions and progress today: Africology is therefore that part of African studies which reveals the nature and degree of those interconnected factors which underlie the whole body of events and human actions in past and present Africa.

In line with the on-going analysis on Africology, we tend to posit a pedagogy known as the Revolutionary pedagogy. Revolutionary pedagogy is a philosophy of education that seeks to overturn ordinary thinking, methods, and practices of creating and delivering knowledge to children by employing Africological, Kemetological and rhetorical techniques to reset the instructional focus for children. Africology refers to the study of African and African-American history, cultures, and phenomena from the standpoint of African people as subjects. By Kemetology, we refer to the origin of the African narrative in classical Egyptian, that is, Kemetic society.

One of the reasons we find it difficult to learn under the European educational system is simply because we are taught of foreign values in the schools instead of our values, and when we are even taught about our own values we do not get it well simply because we are taught of our values using foreign method. In this case, we are burdened with the task of learning the foreign method first before learning properly the content of the teaching. This has contributed immensely in the retardation of educational growth in Africa, and placed the continent in a perpetual dilemma of developmental puzzle.

The study of Africology opens the door for the young African into the study of his/her culture and the social and economic development of his/her people. For the first time he/she is being taught how to solve his/her problems by his/her own methods. He/she is taught, like any other person to develop interest in his/her own affairs and to work towards the development of his/her native land and the progress of his/her people. Africology stands as a sure route towards the rediscovery of our Africanness. In the words of Uzong, education in Africa must be reoriented to address the needs of African people not the demand of the world on Africans.

Conclusion

The concept of African geo-education encompasses all that is involved in the education of Africa. It emphasizes on remaking the African education to suit the African ideals. We have lived too long under the European educational system which has so far yielded little or nothing of relevance to the African context. We are therefore called upon to revisit the ideal education which we enjoyed in the African nation prior to the influx of the westerners. The idea of a sustainable African development will be far-fetched unless we realize our mistake and have a return to the educational system that is African context-relevant.

References

Bruntland Commission Development Report on Sustainable Development, (1987), New York.

Ezeani, Emefiena, (2013), A *Philosophy of Education for African Nation.* London: Veritas Lumen Publishers.

Kanu, Ikechukwu Anthony, (2015), A *Hermeneutic Approach to African Traditional Religion*, Jos Plateau state, Nigeria: Augustinian Publications.

Munasighe, S. (2004), *Effective Instructions through Dynamic Discipline*, Ohio: Charles, E. Mesil.

Onyeocha, Izu M. (2007), *Africa the Country, the Concept and the Horizon.* Owerri: Imo State University Press.

Philips, D.C. "Philosophy of Education," in *International Encyclopedia of Education.* Pp. 3859-3877.

Uzong, E. (1969), "Africology", *the Union Academic Council Series, African Studies*, Vol. 1. London: United Kingdom: Union Academic Council for African Studies.