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Implications of Indoctrination for Nigerian Educational System: A Philosophical Appraisal

N. H. A.Nwafor, Ph.D

Department of Educational Foundations, Rivers State University, Westend, Old Port Harcourt Twp, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

***Corresponding author**
N. H. A. Nwafor

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Abstract: Educational systems all over the world have acceptable and justifiable best practices necessary for impartation of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and modes of thinking to learners by teachers and those who occupy similar positions in society. But it is evident that there are also some objectionable methods employed in the classroom, and similar places, among them are drilling, conditioning, indoctrination, instruction, and so on. This paper casts a critical look at indoctrination: its sources, the necessary conditions for a person to be indoctrinated, and an assessment of indoctrination vis-à-vis education. The paper finally examined the implications of indoctrination for education in Nigeria, and made recommendations to ameliorate perceived deteriorating trend in the system.

Keywords: Indoctrination, teaching, moral education, ideology

INTRODUCTION

One of the cardinal goals of Nigeria's educational system is production of the needed relevant manpower for all sectors of the economy through effective teaching and learning, which could bring about desirable change in the individual in particular and the society as a whole. But there is an aspect of the teaching and learning process which is often ignored or neglected. This often overlooked aspect is one of the teaching methods adopted advertenly or inadvertently in the classroom (the pedagogical theatre) for the grooming of potential work force and patriotic citizens.

The problem of teaching methods adopted in the classroom in Nigeria seems to have taken a critical dimension with the recruitment of "cut-and- nail" or "road-side teachers" for political reasons. This crop of teachers who had never been schooled in the fundamental principles and practice of education do not only teach with anyhow method, but also openly and brazenly display laissez-faire attitude without considering the consequences on both the learner and the society at large.

However, the recruitment of non-professional teachers has been part of the system for a long time. At the moment, it has been heightened by the economic realities in the country, coupled with acute unemployment, which has driven many unwilling horses to the river of teaching. However, taking them to the river is one thing, but forcing them to drink is another issue. The results of this "imposition" on the education system have negated the philosophy of Nigeria's education based on a set of specific beliefs, which among others, states that education should maximize the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-development and general development of the society [1].

Arguably, if the philosophical basis of Nigeria's education system is relegated to the background, it therefore implies that some educational goals enshrined in the National Policy on Education such as the "development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen" [1], among others, would be a mirage and therefore unattainable. The implication therefore is that the desirable change in terms of acquisition of knowledge and skills, behavior and attitude expected of the beneficiaries of the teaching-learning process would be absent. In essence, by extension it would mean that good education has not taken place, and for that reason society will bear the ultimate consequences. The effects however could be multi-dimensional, touching virtually on every facet of society. This is the scenario in Nigeria at present: a situation where things are not working as expected.

In this regard, a critical analysis of the education system and its processes may elicit some

mind boggling questions: why do we have many drop-outs from the school system at all levels? Why is it that many students who graduated are unemployed and/or unemployable even when there are vacancies? Why do some employers of labour terminate or fail to retain some of their newly employed staff before or after the period of probation? Why do we experience rising incidents of violence and terrorism? The answers to these questions lie so much on the education system and its operators, especially the teachers, who adopt, in most cases, morally objectionable teaching methods, which directly or indirectly result in indoctrination.

Conceptual Clarification

The main concept that underlies this discourse is indoctrination-a teaching technique used in our schools either consciously or unconsciously to the detriment of the learners and the society.

The Concept of Indoctrination

Indoctrination, as a teaching-related concept, is a contentious term because according to Callan and Arena [2] it is a teaching that produces closed-minded individuals, who are unable and unwilling to give due regard to reasons that are available for revising their current beliefs, and are invested in the truth of some belief that an open mind regarding that belief would threaten.

This is because, according to Okeke [3], indoctrination by its nature is authoritative and dogmatic. Hence Uche [4] views it as an unintelligent way of holding and establishing beliefs, which are kept away from the associated truth, explanation and facts. In other words, indoctrination is unlike teaching in the real sense of the word, which should be unfettered from all forms of impediments that could pose barriers to effective learning. It is in this connection that Taylor [5] emphatically sates that: Today, indoctrination is widely accepted as a type of "bad education." In ordinary usage, the term is used to raise concern about types of teaching that are thought to harm students (p. 38).

The fertile grounds for indoctrination therefore are: religion, moral education, ideology, values, political, beliefs, among others. For Okeke [3], indoctrination has to do with doctrine and beliefs, and not with facts or truths, which are objective statements and as such could be verifiable. Beliefs, on the other hand, are assumptions, views or subjective statements. Similarly, doctrines are more of religious dogmas, political creeds or article of faith, which cannot be subjected to any scientific proof. In other words, doctrine and belief are, in some contexts coterminous, and by their nature they are speculative, rigid, hypothetical and ideological. It is against this background that indoctrination as a way of teaching in the above scenario is viewed as "bad teaching" because it can only engender closure of the mind to alternatives and to independent, divergent and critical thinking.

Hence, it is unarguably right to say that indoctrination is incompatible with the development of critical thinking, or associated with what Tan [6] describes as lack of an uncritical spirit. It is on this basis that Wagner [7] views indoctrination as "causing individuals to hold belief which they cannot justify on rational grounds. Essentially, Talters in Tan [6] holds that indoctrination is a means of getting children to accept a fixed body of rules by the use of techniques which incapacitate them from adopting a critical autonomous attitude towards them. For Siegel [8], an indoctrinated person is incapable of inquiring into the worthiness of the belief he/she holds.

A critical examination of indoctrination and its consequences had led Akinpelu [9] and Uche [4] to submit that indoctrination is more subtle than conditioning but an unacceptable means of changing the beliefs or behaviours of individuals. To indoctrinate a person implies robbing the individual the freedom to exercise his intellectual power to reason as well as the will power to act rationally. Hence, Akinpelu further outlined the features of indoctrination which make it distinct from teaching. The characteristics include:

- Inculcation of beliefs which are controversial as though they are absolutely true and not open to doubts. Such beliefs may involve political ideology, religious dogmas or economic doctrines.
- The method is that of propaganda, or presentation of a one-sided view of things in a way that prevents the learner from doubting it, and from asking questions to clarify his doubts and in a way that shuts out his reason and his intelligence.
- To be indoctrinated is to hold on to beliefs, dogmas and doctrines whose truths are not subject to possible doubts or modification in the light of evidence; and to hold such beliefs dogmatically and unshakably in spite of evidence in the contrary, and against all reasons or justification (pp.198-199).

Sources of Indoctrination

In spite of the level of scientific and technological development of this age, expectations are that the level of reasoning would follow this new trend. But it does appear that the reverse is the case as indoctrination holds sway in the teaching and learning of some important subject areas such as moral education, religion, mathematics, politics, history, science education, etc. For example, the teaching of moral education and values begins with parents. It is quite obvious that children in their formative years are impervious to reason, and as a result would accept every moral injunction handed down to them by parents. In this regard, indoctrination is inevitable. Hence the paradox of moral education, which

compelled Wagner [7] to assert that educators generally agree that the learner must be indoctrinated into appreciating those character traits that one will subsequently adopt freely as a member of the life form of educated persons. In effect, the issues of child development make the inevitability of the use of indoctrination imperative and successful in moral education. This, however, has its implication later in the life the child and society.

In the sphere of religion, indoctrination is very much pronounced in Nigeria in a manner that engenders unhealthy and competitive rivalry. In reality, most organized religious groups instruct their adherents (old and new) in the fundamental principles of their denominations. For them, this method of teaching cannot be seen as indoctrination, neither do they think of or consider its likely consequences because of the negative connotations the term has acquired. For example, a religious denomination in this country taught its members that blood transfusion is evil, even when it could be used to save life. The use of indoctrination is glaring in the teaching of multiplication tables, mathematical theorems and formulae, which must be accepted and applied as rules without alternatives.

Other areas steeped in indoctrination are economic doctrine, history, and political ideology. For example, in a capitalist system, it is quite difficult if not impossible to contemplate a socialist economic doctrine or theory as a substitute without stiff opposition and social upheaval. Similarly, a political system that is deeply entrenched in a particular ideology, as in the manifestoes of different political parties, tends to produce political ideologues and demagogues, whose activities stoke the embers of confusion and social instability. Indoctrination in this regard, is not limited to the classroom, it has been a social phenomenon used in different settings. By implication, religious leaders, the political class, parents, government, etc., are not the only indoctrinators: there are many others, especially among teachers in our educational system. The products of our educational system who have been brain-washed are now a serious threat to national peace and security. For example, the Boko Haram insurgency is a brain child of religious indoctrination, the Shiite Muslim sect disturbances are all rooted in indoctrination and in the system in which the individuals live.

Philosophical Accounts of Indoctrination

The core area of indoctrination which engaged the attention of philosophers of education has been the exploration of boundaries of acceptable educational practices [10]. In effect, their concerns basically have to do with the ethics of teaching. Philosophical accounts of indoctrination have put forward a number of types of necessary conditions for a learner to be indoctrinated. For example, Woods and Barrow [11]; and White [12] proposed three criteria of indoctrination, thus: intention of the teacher; method employed by the teacher, and content of what is being taught. But Taylor [5] observed that others have added the outcome which the teaching produces in the learners. The limitation of earlier definitions of indoctrination ignored the outcome based- criterion. Hence, outcome –based definition has gained ground recently as Kleinig [13]; Bechler [14], Tan [15], and Callan and Arena [2] have held that any definition that fails to accord recognition to the outcome of indoctrination, i.e., the indoctrinated person, is not only insufficient but unrealistic, because the object of indoctrination cannot be divorced from the learner.

However, for Taylor [5] the outcome-based definitions are not without flaws. First, they focused exclusively on a particular type of intellectual outcome of indoctrination, i.e., the undermining of true belief and knowledge. Again, they narrowly focused on the dyadic relationship between the indoctrinated person and the indoctrinator while ignoring the social system in which the individuals live. She further argues that the flaws in the outcome-based account should be rectified and broadened to make for a better understanding of the implications of indoctrination for educational policy and practice. Against this background, she further proposes system-based account of indoctrination, which should include:

- a careful recognition of the outcome of indoctrinatory systems;
- a recognition that indoctrination occurs within complex social systems; and
- avoidance of focusing narrowly on the indoctrinator – student relationship.

In addition to considering other possible conditions for indoctrinatory system vis-à-vis the requisite outcome, Taylor [5] states that her account of indoctrination provides an account of what it is and why it is harmful, as well as a framework for understanding the responsibilities of teachers and other actors in the system to avoid negative outcomes. In view of the above, she sees indoctrination as "a complex system of teaching, in which actors with authority contribute to the production or reinforcement of closed-mindedness.

In effect, philosophical accounts of indoctrination seem to be evolving with the passage of time. Initially, there were three accounts: intention, method and content, but later, outcome based and subsequently system-based accounts were added because of their possible consequences on both learners and society that are constantly experiencing changes in all spheres of human life.

Indoctrination and Education in Nigeria

Among the earliest methods of teaching in the Nigerian schools such as drill, memorization, conditioning, etc., indoctrination appears to be the most prominent. The schools in this regard include missionary and Quranic schools as well as the indigenous school, especially in the area of religion, moral, values, and so on. This is evident in the curricula emphasis of the schools. For example, the missionaries employed indoctrination to a great extent in their quest to capture the hearts of their converts, as Ayandele in Nwafor [16] observed.

> Naturally, to all missions, the main object of all education was religious instruction, especially of the young children who could be weaned easily from the pagan ideas and prejudices of their unyielding parents (p. 67)

On the other hand, Quranic schools strove to implant Islamic ideals in the pupils. Hence, early missionary movements to the North were stoutly resisted to ensure that Islamic teachings were not countered. This accounted for the slow pace-development of education in the North, because Islamic religion is by nature very conservative, rigid and dogmatic. As a result it was not predisposed easily to external influences that were considered antithetical to its tenets and ideals. According to Enueme [17, the African traditional education used many methods in teaching the young ones, and one of them was indoctrination –a method in which ideas and beliefs about some events or duties are imparted into the learner, who accepted them unquestioningly and without modifications.

Indoctrination, in essence, is not alien to Nigeria educational system even before the advent of formal western education, but it has assumed as frightening dimension recently; the achievements and wide-spread knowledge of science and technology of the twenty first century notwithstanding. In this connection therefore, it would be necessary to briefly highlight the implications of indoctrination for Nigerian educational system.

Implications of Indoctrination for Nigerian Educational System

The process of teaching and learning that takes place within and outside the classrooms goes on in most cases unconsciously, while the learners absorb the contents of what is being taught like sponge and internalize them uncritically. This scenario is similar to "the banking concept" in education espoused by Freire in Aggarwal [18] in which the teacher turns students into depositories. This scope of education therefore allows students only to receive, file and store the deposits. The banking system reduces the creative power of the students to view things differently and rationally.

This has had some negative implications on national development. First, the educational system at all levels has produced graduates who are grossly deficient in critical thinking and creativity: individuals who cannot think for themselves, individuals who accept the teachings or pronouncements of their authority figures without reasoning and questioning. These individuals are often used as dogs of war: tools easily manipulated for selfish reasons. It is glaringly clear that such persons used against the general good indirectly contribute to socio-economic retardation and underdevelopment. These economic saboteurs, by all stretch of imagination, are all educated men and women. For example, no rural illiterate farmer or artisan has been arraigned before any tribunal or court by Economic and Financial Crime Commission. The culprits arraigned, prosecuted and detained by the courts are usually persons whose education is devoid of moral scruples creativity and critical thinking; persons whose sense of enquiry has been beclouded either by political ideological stance or religious dogmas, and persons bereft of moral scruples. In effect, the children of such persons come to the school system with the attitudes of cheating, truancy, indiscipline and other social vices learnt at home.

Nonetheless, the school system cannot thrive without teaching and this involves to some extent indoctrination. As Usman [19] observed:

> While we may not be able to do much about indoctrination in the child's home and larger society, we may be able to avoid indoctrination in our schools, to some extent. A common worry about indoctrination is that it undermines autonomy by limiting the individual's ability to think critically and rationally.

Indeed, the Nigerian educational system is deeply infested by indoctrination; hence Nigeria has failed to tackle her developmental challenges. In recognition of this hard-truth, Ogbimi [20] emphatically stated that the educated Nigerian, today, is an indoctrinated individual and that this is the major reason why we cannot solve our socio-economic and political problems. He characterized the intellectuals, educated politicians and wealthy businessmen as shallow-minded, who are unable to reason and provide superior arguments as grounds for sound decision-making, and who take irreversible decisions or positions on critical national issues on the basis of regional, religious or tribal considerations. This has been the Achille's heel in Nigeria's national development.

Consequently, the presence of indoctrination in the various fields of our national life has given birth to radicalization, a relatively new concept which has

gained currency among government official, media practitioners, security agencies, and scholars. Radicalization at any level involves total rejection of the status quo by adopting extreme religious doctrine and/or political ideology, as well as employing violence as an inevitable means of achieving religious or ideological goals and objectives. The Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflicts, for example, which have claimed several lives, property, and rendered thousands of people homeless were born out of radicalization, which cashed in on the prevailing weaknesses and inadequacies inherent in the policies and agenda of the present government. These extremists, who lay claim to a cause(s)/ideals and demands resort to terrorism. Although, not every radicalized individual engages in terrorism, as Borum [21] observed that radicalization does not equate with terrorism because not all those who hold radical ideals engage themselves in violence and terrorism. While this may be correct, the situation in Nigeria where human beings are slaughtered, and referred to cows, houses burnt, villages and farms are devastated could be seen as the products of religious radicalization and terrorism: a situation likened to ethnic cleansing and genocide that will stagnate educational programmes and activities in the affected areas, as well as other socio-economic and political development.

According to Nwafor [22], religious radicalization in Nigeria is traceable to the early 1980s' Maitasine uprising that claimed so many lives. He further maintained since the turn of 21st century religious extremism by an Islamic sect- Boko Haram, has declared a holy war against Nigeria. Apart from complete disruption of educational activities and programmes in the affected areas in North - East Nigeria, it has created a strong erroneous impression that western education is evil, and it is capable of discouraging young ones from schooling. It could be argued that this could be responsible for children of school age allowing themselves to used as suicide bombers.

The implications of indoctrination and its fatal consequences such as radicalization, violence and terrorism call for educational reform, which would aim at reconstructing and redesigning Nigeria's security architecture and addressing new problems that threaten the foundations of this country. The emphasis here is on value judgment, which invariably implies a transformation of the entire social system from a less satisfactory state to a more satisfactory status of equilibrium; a change that can positively impact on the political and social spheres. Educational reform should focus on curriculum review, pedagogical re-orientation, citizenship education and moral value education. In effect, educational reform should take into consideration the problems of school drop-outs, qualitative education that can help its recipients to be employable and self-employed. Such education will minimize youth unemployment and incidents of criminal activities through great emphasis on both entrepreneurial and vocational education. The emphasis therefore must be matched with adequate provision of the facilities and equipment that could make both of them practical, realistic and beneficial.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is obvious that indoctrination has gained ground in the teaching of some subject areas, thereby making it difficult to completely avoid it even though it has been viewed as "bad education". Though, a reprehensible form of teaching, the philosophical accounts of it seem to be evolving with the passage of time from the initial three criteria to outcome-based and system-based indoctrination respectively. All of them tend to depict the consequences of indoctrination on the individual and the society as well as the intention, content and method used by the indoctrinator. It is in this connection that the implications of indoctrination on the Nigerian educational system and the society were to some extent, highlighted so that the frightening dimension it has assumed in terms of destruction of lives and property, and disruption of academic programmes and activities can be greatly minimized. It is for this reason that urgent educational reform is advocated to salvage the fast deteriorating situation, bearing in mind that the outcomes of education take a long time to manifest and make its impact felt on the socio-economic and political spheres.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion so far, it is necessary to make some recommendations to ameliorate the situation in the classrooms and others similar places.

- One of the most important factors in the indoctrinatory process is the teacher, who commands a lot of influence over the students, as well as authority in the content of what is taught. This situation should be discontinued and de-emphasized, and be replaced with child- centred education, which gives the child freedom to think and exercise his/her creative essence. It is in this regard that education can make it impossible for someone to be enslaved. Child-centred education will engender autonomous individuals, who will not accept anything unquestioningly, but rather who would be imaginative, critical and rational in thinking.
- Teachers generally ought to have a good understanding of developmental psychology to enable him pursue and follow how students develop into autonomous persons. This will enable him design guidelines which could give him a better understanding of students' abilities at various developmental stages. With this in mind, the teacher should be able

to avoid indoctrination as much as possible and where necessary.

- Moreover, it is very important for teachers to have a good knowledge and understanding of the environment in which they are teaching, because students may have been indoctrinated by the system (society) into which they were born. The teachers' uphill task and objective should be to develop in the students the capabilities to discriminate between different beliefs and values in a critical and rational manner.
- Furthermore, educational institutions (Universities and Colleges of Education) should thoroughly school student-teachers in different teaching methods, especially in the dangers inherent in indoctrination. If this is done with special emphasis on indoctrination-prone subject areas, the prevalence of indoctrination in schools and their harmful effects would be greatly reduced.

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