



DECOLONIZATION: TOWARDS AN IGWEBUIKE TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY



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Abstract

The slave trade, both trans- Sahara and trans-Atlantic trades, and colonialism have had perennial consequences on the future and development of the African continent. Colonialism as a historical event had positive impacts on the African people, which include the introduction of new government ideas, creation of large political units, political parties and elections, the introduction of money and banking system, modern transportation and communication systems, common legal and civil service system, etc. This notwithstanding, several other impacts were severely negative and under-developing. These negative consequences of colonization led to the

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emergence of the concept of decolonization, which is an effort to reverse the negative impacts of colonization. While the concept of decolonization has been discussed over the years by scholars, there is no literature on pedagogy for decolonization. The present work, therefore, distinguishes itself by focusing on the development of an African pedagogy for decolonization. To achieve this, it employs the Igwebuiké theoretical framework for the generation of this transformative pedagogy. The thematic, historical and hermeneutic approaches would be used for the interpretation of data. The paper discovers that it is only at the point of developing a pedagogy for decolonization that concrete effort is made towards achieving indigenous sovereignty.

Keywords: African, Philosophy, Decolonization, Igwebuiké, Transformative, Pedagogy

Introduction

Colonialism had several impacts on the African continent, and a good number of this was positive. One of the main positive impacts of colonialism was the introduction of new government ideas. Another, was the creation of large political units, political parties and elections, which became the formal way of choosing political leaders. Trade by Barter was the only way of transacting business in Africa until the introduction of colonialism. The colonial masters introduced money and educated Africans on how the money currency could solve the problems of trade by barter. It also introduced the banking system to Africa and the central

2 Edeh Samuel Chukwuemeka, Positive and Negative Effects of Colonialism in Africa. Retrieved from <https://bscholarly.com/positive-and-negative-effects-of-colonialism-in-africa> on 7th May 2023.

bank that provides regulatory policies. Colonialism introduced a modern transportation and communication system, a common legal system and a civil service system₃. All these contributed to the development of Africa at different levels.

This notwithstanding, several other impacts were severely negative and under-developing. Africa was exploited during the colonial era and made economically dependent on her colonial masters. Wealth and resources from Africa were taken to the country of the colonizers, and the local people were taxed to generate funds for building colonial structures. The colonizers were in-charge of all the metropolitan industries, thus making Africans perpetually economically dependent on the colonizers. They created disunity through their merging of peoples, treated African culture as inferior and theirs as superior, a form of cultural imperialism. African traditional leaders were threatened, humiliated and exiled, therefore, destroying the traditional political system in Africa, the system of education introduced by colonial masters to Africa was not as good as the foreign education system₄. It was basically to enable Africans learn how to read and write the language of the colonial masters with an intentional de-emphasis on science and technology.

³Edeh Samuel Chukwuemeka, Positive and Negative Effects of Colonialism in Africa. Retrieved from <https://bscholarly.com/positive-and-negative-effects-of-colonialism-in-africa> on 7th May 2023.

⁴Edeh Samuel Chukwuemeka, Positive and Negative Effects of Colonialism in Africa. Retrieved from <https://bscholarly.com/positive-and-negative-effects-of-colonialism-in-africa> on 7th May 2023.

The consequences of colonization on the colonized has led to the emergence of the concept - decolonization, thus decolonization becomes the anti-thesis of colonization. If colonization is a process of the subjugation of people, decolonization becomes the process of pursuing freedom from subjugation. While the concept of decolonization has been discussed over the years by African scholars, the present piece distinguishes itself by focusing on the development of a pedagogy for achieving decolonization. To achieve this, it employs the Igwebuike theoretical framework for the generation of a pedagogy for decolonization.

Specificity of Decolonization

In a territorial sense, decolonization means the process by which colonies become independent of the colonizing country. This process was sometimes gradual and peaceful, and at other times violent, especially where native rebellions were energized by nationalism⁵. Going beyond territorial conception, Haverford University specifies the concerns of decolonization as:

Cultural, psychological and economic freedom for Indigenous people with the goal of achieving Indigenous sovereignty — the right and ability of Indigenous people to practice self-determination over their land, cultures, political and economic systems⁶.

Within the parameters of philosophy, the concepts

⁵ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "decolonization." Encyclopedia Britannica, Invalid Date. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/decolonization>.

⁶ What is decolonization, why is it important, and how can we practice it? <https://globalsolidaritylocalaction.sites.haverford.edu/what-is-decolonization-why-is-it-important>.

colonization and decolonization are employed in relation to the influence of foreign thoughts and patterns on the development of the philosophy of a particular people. On the one hand, colonization is used to refer to the marginalization and neglect of the philosophical traditions of colonized peoples, while the philosophical traditions of the colonizers are deemed as the only valid form of philosophy. On the other hand, decolonization is used in opposition to the pattern of hegemony and exclusion and seeks to enrich the understanding of philosophy by displacing the European canon as the normative center of the discipline of philosophy⁷.

Decolonization within philosophy, therefore, involves expanding the discipline of philosophy beyond the colonial paradigm and replacing it with universality. This does not necessitate the rejection of canonical figures in philosophy but rather entails a philosophical practice that transcends the colonial paradigm. Mladjo describes how the colonial model repressed the forms of knowledge indigenous to colonized peoples:

Europe's hegemony over the new model of global power concentrated all forms of control of subjectivity, culture, and especially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony... They repressed as much as possible the colonized forms of knowledge production, the models of the production of meaning, their symbolic universe, the model of

⁷ University of Memphis conference on 'Decolonizing Philosophy' held on 28-29 September 2018. <https://www.memphis.edu/philosophy/news-events/spindel/spindel-monahan.php>

expression and objectification and
subjectivity⁸.

The consequence of this is that the conception of philosophy that has been widely accepted, along with the criteria that determine its validity, have historically been disproportionately influenced by Western thought and ways of existing in the world⁹. Based on the colonial mindset, knowledge produced by the Western system was regarded as superior to that generated by other systems due to its supposed universality. This consequently led to the exclusion, marginalization, and dehumanization of non-European philosophies.

Igwebuike Philosophical Perspective

Igwebuike in African philosophy provides an approach that interprets the puzzle of our complex relationships. It is transcendent, complementary, comprehensive and systematic in its provisions of answers to questions for the purpose of selfless enlightenment¹⁰. The concept Igwebuike is an Igbo proverb and also a typical Igbo name. Igbo proverbs and names are among the major traditional vessels where African philosophy, religion and culture have continued to be preserved. They contain the wisdom

9 Dreyer, Jacob S., [Practical theology and the call for the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa: Reflections and proposals](#). *HTS Theological Studies*. 73 (4): 1–7, 2017, 2, 3, 5; Zavala, Miguel, *Decolonial Methodologies in Education*. In Peters, M.A (ed.) . *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Springer, Singapore, 2017. pp. 361–366 [362].

10 Kanu, I. A., Igwebuike: An operative condition of African philosophy, religion and culture. Towards a thermodynamic transformative ontology. Maiden Inaugural Lecture delivered on 22nd February at Tansian University, Umuaya. Autograde: Abuja, 2021, pp. 10-11.

and experience of the African people, usually of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression¹¹. Igwebuike is a combination of three Igbo words. It can be understood as a word or a sentence: as a word, it is written as Igwebuike, and as a sentence, it is written as, Igwe bu ike, with the component words enjoying some independence in terms of space. Literally, Igwe is a noun which means number or multitude, usually a large number or population. The number or population in perspective are entities with ontological identities and significances, which are, however, part of an existential order in which every entity is in relation to the other. Bu is a verb, which means is. Ike is a noun, which means strength or power¹². Igwe, bu and Ike put together, means 'number is strength' or 'number is power'¹³.

Beyond the literal understanding of Igwebuike lies a deeper meaning. It is an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations¹⁴. Igwebuike at this level means *otu obi* (one heart and one soul) – *cor unum et anima una*. In a metaphoric sense, it is used within the Igbo linguistic setting to refer to relational engagement in the world, accomplished in solidarity and complementarity, and the powerful and insurmountable force therein¹⁵. The closest words to it

11 Kanu, I. A., *Igwebuike as an African Integrative and Progressive Anthropology*. *NAJOP: Nasara Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 2. No. 1. 2018, pp. 151-161.

12 Kanu, I. A., *Igwebuike Research Methodology: A New Trend for Scientific and Wholistic Investigation*. *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities (IAAJAH)*. 5. 4. 2019, pp. 95-105.

13 Kanu, I. A., *Igwebuike and the logic (Nka) of African philosophy*. *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. 3. 1. 2017, pp. 1-13.

14 Kanu, I. A., *Igwebuike as an Igbo-African Hermeneutics of Globalisation*. *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 2 No.1. 2016, pp. 61-66.

in English are complementarity, solidarity and harmony. Igwebuike provides an ontological horizon that presents being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations; one that can only survive through complementarity.

Igwebuike Principles for Decolonization

The major principles that must be put into consideration while decolonizing, from an Igwebuike perspective, include the following:

- a. **Historical:** Decolonization is the product of a historical experience as decolonization must be a response to a colonial experience. Both colonization and decolonization are historical processes and not a one-time event. This, therefore, requires patience during the process of decolonization.
- b. **Humanistic:** Decolonization should promote the human person. The human person has a high value, and should be at the centre of any true human venture.
- c. **Equality:** Decolonization is based on the understanding that human beings of all races are equal to each other in dignity. This becomes a foundation for decolonization, given that every people have a right to an identity and survival.

15 Kanu, I. A., *Igwebuike and Question of Superiority in the Scientific Community of Knowledge. Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Vol.3 No1. 2017, pp. 131-138.

- d. **Wholistic:** Decolonization is based on an integrated concept of life and the universe.
- e. **Reconciliation:** Decolonization is a process of reconciliation which must be based on truth. Reconciliation is fundamental as the colonized struggle with memories of pain or hurt. It is through reconciliation that balance is restored to the universe.
- f. **Place-Based:** Decolonization must focus on place-based knowledge and the preservation of the cultural heritage of a people. In this way, people can form their own identity rather than have an identity forced on them.

Towards an Igwebuike Decolonization Pedagogy

The concepts colonization and decolonization from an Igwebuike perspective are understood as processes, and by this I mean series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end. In this sense, colonization becomes a series of actions by the colonizer to achieve the subjugation of the colonized; and decolonization, the series of actions on the part of the colonized to achieve freedom from the subjugation of the colonizer.

The aim of an Igwebuike perspective is to generate a transformative pedagogy of decolonization particular to the African experience. The objectives for the Igwebuike pedagogy for decolonization is to:

1. ensure the respect of the identity of particular peoples in our world of globalization;
2. remove from indigenous cultures those aspects of their historical experiences with foreign cultures that undermine their humanity and identity;
3. provide people the opportunity to freely share, exchange and interact with other peoples and cultures without being undermined.

This perspective of colonization and decolonization as processes is borne from the Igwebuike concept of history, which understands history as connecting the past with the present and the future. In the sense that the past gives birth to the present and the present gives birth to the future. The past becomes the lbe of the present and the present the lbe (a part of) of the future. Therefore, the way I mould the past will determine what the present will become and what I do with the present will shape what the future would be. It is also a concept of history that shows that one cannot talk about the present without reference to the past, neither can one plan towards the future without building a base for such a future in the past.

This presents colonization and decolonization as two aspects of history. Colonization, therefore, becomes a basis for understanding decolonization. Colonization, therefore, complements decolonization in terms of understanding.

Therefore, the Igwebuiké perspective requires that I understand the process of colonization before I can initiate a process of decolonization. Why many decolonization efforts have failed is because it was preceded by a poor understanding of colonization. There is an African proverb that says: “If you do not know where you are coming from, you will not know where you are going to”. Another says: “If you do not know where the rain started beating you from, you will not know when it will stop”; this is not just an African proverb but the source of the Igwebuiké philosophy of history. There is, therefore, the need to understand the process of colonization, which is the first stage in the Igwebuiké pedagogy for decolonization. Without understanding the process of colonization, one cannot generate a process for decolonization.

The Process of Colonization

There are several phases in the process of colonization. In the Igwebuiké spirit of inter-connectivity, interrelationships and complementarity, the phases are not always distinct phases but can be experienced at the same time. The process of colonization begins with denial and withdrawal¹⁶:

a. *Denial and Withdrawal*

When the colonizers came among the African people, the first thing they did was to deny that the African people have any culture, religion, morals, social or

16 Laenui, Poka (Burgess, Hayden F.) “Processes of Decolonization.” [Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision](#). Ed. [Marie Battiste](#). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2000, pp. 150-160.

political system, this provided a basis for colonization and thus presents colonization as a charity to the colonized who cannot govern themselves. Also, many of the indigenous people who form alliance with the colonizers began to ridicule their cultural heritage.

Within the parameters of philosophy, this stage of denial and withdrawal was when African philosophy was denied existence and even African thinkers, especially those trained in the west to ridicule their own philosophical heritage as non-existing.

b. *Destruction and Eradication*

This is the stage in the colonial process when the colonizer gains more courage and begins to destroy or eradicate the heritage of the colonized. This courage is partly fueled by the fact that the colonized are weak to respond, and that some of the members of the colonized have endorsed the position of the colonizer. There are times when the indigenous people, having been indoctrinated, lead in the fight against their cultural heritage. This includes the burning of artifacts, symbols and sacred places.

This stage in the history of African philosophy was when African thinkers joined the colonizers to argue that there is no such a thing as African philosophy.

c. *Denigration and Belittlement*

As the colonizer becomes more established, with social and religious structures emerging, these structures will now contribute further in the denigration or belittlement of the African heritage. Such structures

include the hospitals or clinics, law courts, political offices and sometimes churches. These structures begin to belittle the African previous standards or patterns as inferior and worthy of nothing but being faced out. And so the hospitals look at the traditional healthcare system as fetish; the courts relegates the decisions arrived at traditional courts as inconsequential; the colonial political officers consider the traditional heads as irrelevant; the new religion considers the traditional as superstition; capitalism better than African economic institution; democracy better than African political institution.

Western philosophy and its standard of philosophizing was considered absolute; and because African philosophy follows a distinct pattern or logic, it was considered non-philosophy.

d. ***Surface Accommodation/Tokenism***

After several years of efforts to destroy the indigenous heritage, whatever remains is given a surface accommodation. Some of the thoughts that survived are called folkloric, and in philosophy, ethno-philosophy.

e. ***Transformation and Exploitation***

Knowing fully well that the remnant of the cultural heritage is weakened after several years of denial, destruction, belittlement, etc., the remnant is now celebrated as the heritage of the people. Given that it is the popular thing to do, it is promoted by the colonizer, even though its only a relic.

With the emphasis on interculturality, African philosophy is accepted and exploited as the achievement of the colonizer and not the colonized.

The Process of Decolonization

The process of colonization is a basis for generating and understanding the process of decolonization, and thus, this introduces the next phase of this research. The first stage in the decolonization process is.

a. *Discovery and Recovery*

This is stage where the colonized lives in a colonial or neo-colonial world. He thinks he is free, but speaks not his language, is educated outside of the parameters of his culture, eats not his own food, reminding the colonized of the overwhelming superiority of the colonizer. As in the case of the allegory of the cave of Plato he wakes up to the reality that he has been in a deceptive and unreal world, and then decides to wake up.

This stage is at the base of the emergence of African philosophy; some make this discover and recovery early enough, while others make theirs in the evening of their lives. This notwithstanding, an African proverb says: “When a person wakes up, that is his morning”.

b. *Mourning*

This is a stage when people lament their victimization, which is an important process in achieving healing. While some spend a greater time mourning, others mourn just for a short period of time. The length of time

spent mourning is dependent on the presence or absence of the next phase of action. When there is no step ahead people mourn longer, but when there is a next phase in sight, people move on.

During this period, the colonized lashes out on the colonizer in words and action, a deep expression of anger, hate, pain and sometimes violence. This is a stage where some persons can get stuck, and, therefore, spend the whole of their time glorifying their victim-hood. Many have also made profit out of this stage.

c. *Dreaming*

This is a very crucial stage in the decolonization process. It is the stage of possibilities, where the colonized dreams of a better future which becomes a basis for the creation of a new social order. He explores his own culture, political system, economic institutions, etc., which encompasses and expresses the hopes of the indigenous people.

This process must be allowed to run its course. If it is rushed, it could become disastrous and only translate into the colonizer and the colonized switching positions rather than ideologies. This has happened in places where the missionaries were simply replaced by the indigenous clergy; the change from a western colonizer to an African colonized without a change in constitution; a change from white teachers to African teachers without any change in the curriculum. The result is a disaster.

This can also happen in philosophy, that is, when African philosophy simply becomes the recopying of western thoughts and patterns by African thinkers.

d. *Commitment*

This requires the articulation of the voices of the people into one voice; a voice that becomes a clear statement of the direction of the people.

Within the parameters of African philosophy, there is yet to be one voice, even though there is sufficient voice to drive a dream to reality.

e. *Action*

This stage can only be achieved when the voice of the people has been articulated into one or sufficient voice-a basis for action. If this voice is not well articulated as the voice of the people, then the stage of action might end up not being the will of the people.

Action must go beyond the choices made during the quest for independence; this is now a moment for survival and organization of society. Even here, sufficient effort has been made within the parameters of African philosophy.

Conclusion

The events that took place between 1945 and 1960 will always be remembered. More than three dozen new states in Asia and Africa achieved autonomy or outright independence from their European colonial rulers. This marked the beginning of the process of decolonization in the territorial sense, and later conceptually. Several

factors were responsible for the new development.

The first was the Second World War, which took place between 1939 and 1945. It was the bloodiest conflict in human history. It split the world's nations into two opposing military alliances. The Allies, led by Britain and her Empire, the United States, the Soviet Union and France, united against the Axis Powers of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan. The end of the war led to several agitations for freedoms, especially the independence of colonies from their colonizers. It was at this time that many African colonies began to seek for independence, and thus decolonized.

The second factor is the emergence of the philosophy of personalism. It is a school of thought, usually idealist, which holds that the real is the personal, i.e., that the basic features of personality—consciousness, free self-determination, directedness toward ends, self-identity through time, and value retentiveness—make it the pattern of all reality. The emergence of this philosophy improved the understanding of the value of the human person, irrespective of race. It, therefore, understood colonization as a dehumanization of the human person, and thus, the need for decolonization.

The beauty of this work is that it has studied decolonization from an Igwebuiké perspective. It did not only develop principles that should guide the decolonization process, but also developed a transformative pedagogy for the process of decolonization. It would remain a very important step in the development of decolonization ideologies as it

places an emphasis on a concrete and systematic path towards decolonization.

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