

A REVIEW OF IGWEBUIKE AS AN IGBO-AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Mary Amanda Nwagbo, IHM, Ph.D

School of Education

Brandman University (Chapman University)

Irvine California, USA

amandanwagbo@yahoo.com

This paper argues that colonialism as a system of western rule over regions of the world in which it fanned its influence did more than control the resources of the societies that were subjected to it. It upended their social structures and educational systems. Under the assumption that colonized communities inhabited people who were illiterate or uneducated, colonialists positioned themselves as heralds of a value that was utterly lacking. The effect was the introduction and enforcing of an educational system that stripped the student of conscious rational thought, rather turning him/her into a depository of mechanized thought patterns. In place of authentic dialogue with the totality of the individual experiences and culture of the recipients, colonial educationists handed ossified learning techniques that ignored the dynamic nature of education. Kanu writes:

In Africa, following the colonial standard ... the teacher is understood as having the full responsibility for making decisions about what will be learned, how it will be learned, when it will be learned, and if the material has been learned. This is based on the assumption that learners need to know only what the teacher teaches them and that the teacher has nothing

to learn from the student... The result, is a scenario that actively promotes dependency on the instructor: dependency of the colonized on the colonizer. The teacher-student relationship is one of 'a narrating subject (the teacher) and patient, listening object (the student); the contents, whether values or empirical dimensions of reality, tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified'. The student is charged with the primary responsibility of memorizing mechanically the narrated content. (p. 93).

Writing Further, Kanu avers that:

Most times, the teacher expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the student. His task is to fill the student with the content of his narration-contents which are detached from the totality that engender the student. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated and alienating verbosity. This process of receiving, filling, and storing the deposits limits the entire process of education. The student is turned into a robot or an automaton and denied his right to the ontological vocation of being human, since the automation of the human person is irreconcilable with the vocation to be fully human. The end result of this misguided system is a galaxy of impotent literate men and women filed away through lack of creativity and transformation. They cannot be said to be truly knowledgeable since true knowledge comes about through intervention and re- intervention. (p.94).

As a solution to the lopsided form of education brought by the colonialists, this paper presents a nurturing educational tool based on the Igbo-African philosophy of *Igwebuike*. Coined by Professor Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony from an Igbo expression that suggests the idea of solidarity or complementarity, *Igwebuike* is presented as a veritable educational model, which draws from African cosmology, philosophy, and religion. He writes that:

As a philosophy of education, *Igwebuike* stands for a dialogical pedagogy that gives proportionate places to the teacher and the student. It is inculturated to fit into the African category which is realistically oriented to qualitative humanism. It sees the teacher and the student as a community of inquiry; a community in the search for knowledge. Education and the educator are understood as mid-wife who is humane, self-effacing, caring, non-authoritative, collaborative and academically unassuming. It recognizes the rights of the human person in their proper perspective. (p. 95).

The paper further argues that the Igwebuike model possesses the potentiality to add value to African education, harnessing a retinue of African values, like hospitality, friendship, solidarity, complementarity, honesty, respect for life, and respect for elders. This, the paper argues, can galvanize both teacher and student for a dynamic education that is in line with African ontology and spur an educational system that is authentically human and African. He argues that:

Igwebuike provides the basic atmosphere for free high extension capacity thinking. The teacher is not placed at an intimidating ivory tower; he is part of this community of inquiry, and they work together for the overall good of the whole through a critical and creative thinking that eliminates biased, distorted, provocative and prejudiced reasoning. (p. 95).

Kanu did a great job of highlighting the inadequate form of education passed on by the colonial masters to the colonized Africans. While the colonial masters have a share in promoting dependency of the colonized to the colonizer, one wonders whether they are completely to be blamed? For example, Kanu writes, “there are graduates of computer science with strong theoretical foundation but without much practical import” (p. 96). This situation appears to be the case even today, long after the colonial masters left. This paper challenges Africans to “break away from the educational system instituted by the colonial masters and move on to a system that would advance [...] a bigger, better, and richer future for Africa (p.95). In addition to proposing Igwebuike as the Igbo-African philosophy of education, Africans are called upon to be the narrator of their own story. As Chimamanda Adichie pointed out in her TedTalk, “The danger of a Single Story,” many Africans go through education reading books and pieces of literature that have nothing in common with their existential experience or environment. Unfortunately, globalization and technology seem to have continued where the colonial masters left off. Young Africans are bombarded with images, news, and lifestyles from the West presented as “the” way things should be, with anything different from the western ways as deficient.

Bibliography

- Kanu, I. A. (2016). Igwebuike as an Igbo-African Hermeneutic of Globalization. *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 2 no. 1 (March, 2016):1-6.
- Kanu, A. I. (2017). *Igwebuike as an Igbo-African Ethic of Reciprocity*. IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities. 3. 2. 153-160.
- Kanu, I. A. (2014). *Igwebuikology as an Igbo-African philosophy for Catholic-Pentecostal relations*. *Jos Studies*. 22. 87-98.