

**THE IMPLICATIONS OF INHERITED COLONIAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN
WIREDU'S CONCEPTUAL DECOLONIZATION IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY**

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Abstract

One of the tripods of Wiredu's conceptual decolonization in African philosophy is the liberation of the minds of the African people from western imposed ideas and system through the process of colonialism in the continent. These clearly have several implications in educational thoughts, ideas, and practices. To effectively achieve, implement and practicalize the Wiredu's template demands and requires a radical transformation and reformation of the entire educational system and framework as presently found in Africa. It calls for an educational framework anchored on a philosophical foundation that will recognize the diversity, admit the reality of the African experience and systematically confront and dismantle the potency of the western hegemonous structures and system of universalization of knowledge. In this paper therefore, effort will be made to critically assess the effects and implications of the inherited colonial educational system towards the effective implementation of Wiredu's conceptual decolonization on African Philosophy. We will evaluate how the present system of education in Africa, which has its taproot from western colonial system, can be deconstructed to develop an educational system and structures that will drive the conceptual decolonization process. Also, we will make conscious effort to discover the positive and negative impacts if any on the African value system. The method of analysis will be employed in this work. At the end, we will show and conclude that conceptual decolonization as postulated by Wiredu may not be a viable tool that can aid the development of African philosophy especially in 21st century educational system in Africa.

Keywords: Inherited educational system, decolonization, African philosophy, concept, implications.

Introduction

It is an established historical fact that colonialism laid the foundation for the present educational system(s) in Africa. The implication of this is the indispensable argument that Africa inherited her educational system(s), structures and educational philosophy(ies) from western colonial system. This accordingly resulted in the complete destruction of African values in relation to African education, which in diverse ways led to the massive westernization of educational system that include educational theories, researches, ideas, thoughts, philosophies and practices. The result of this has been the establishment of functional educational epistemologies that are devoid of African cultural root and practices. This therefore directs all research epistemologies and methods towards western cultural system and practices. These attitudes and practices have successfully laid ideological foundation for cultural superiority of the west to the detriment of Africa in the aspects of development and contributions to global power and the benefits of equality, legitimacy and the recognition of cultural diversities, epistemologies, metaphysics, cosmologies, ecologies and sciences.

The manifestation of these has been the result and products of historical distortions that project Africa as a conquered and discovered territory through the process of colonialism. It was on the basis of colonialism that Wiredu and Romose argued strongly that colonialism created the various avenues for the systematic exploitation, subjugation and domination of the scientific, religious, cultural, economic and social life of several people of African origin. These processes of exploitation, subjugation and domination have severe impacts on the ways and manners the Africans act and behave generally. These culminated in the identity problem and confusion that plague Africa till date. In concrete terms, these have contributed to Western Eurocentric mindsets of most educated Africans. These socio-cultural and historical conditions necessitated several efforts to reconstruct uniquely African styles or patterns of thought and relationship with the rest of the global community. These attempts found expression in decolonization through various African scholars in which Kwasi Wiredu's version is referred to as conceptual decolonization.

The struggle for decolonization of the African continent emerged within the period of two to three decades of the celebration of political independence in Africa. Decolonization as a process generally highlights the ways, means and methods through which Africa and Africans can clearly provide a definition of itself and themselves within certain parameters of Africanness devoid of any western Eurocentric influence or importation. Indeed, decolonization is not a single lane traffic that all Africans must follow or drive. This can be seen in the view of Ngugi wa Thiong’O when he described independence as the struggle of the people to create their space, define their right to see the world in their own ways without influence and the borrowed lenses manufactured in Europe.¹

To Walter Rodney, who was mostly influenced by socialist doctrine and ideology, he sees decolonization from the historical perspective, what made him to follow the “Marxist methodology” in creating and raising the awareness and consciousness of the black people about the harrowing conditions they found themselves as a result of the ravages of colonialism and the persisting diverse kinds of explication of the continent of Africa. To overcome the terrible conditions of underdevelopment of the African continent created by colonialism, Rodney employed his intellectual versatility and mobility to show how ethical parameters could be used in appraisal of the phenomenon of colonialism, which he sees as engine of underdevelopment of Africa. He identified “the Christian Church” as a potent tool of “cultural dominance” of the Africans by the West.

Frantz Fanon is seriously influenced by political and violence opposition to colonialism. His decolonization is different from Wiredu’s conceptual decolonization. This is anchored on the fact that Wiredu’s “Conceptual Decolonization”, is clearly an intellectual engagement and an approach in stopping the widespread invasion of the African space by imperialism. However, in Fanon’s perspective, decolonization is a necessity for all Africans since it is “a programme of complete disorder”² which implies that decolonization is a programme of violence in several senses.

In this work therefore, we will make effort to see how conceptual decolonization as postulated by Kwasi Wiredu is an intellectual project to halt imperialism in Africa, which is made possible through the educational system inherited from colonialism. We will evaluate the cost and practicability of conceptual decolonization in African philosophy within the context of inherited educational structures found in Africa presently.

The Destroyed Heritage of Africa through Colonization

It is a general belief among western intellectual circle that Africa has no history and as such has nothing to contribute to global development. This malicious fallacy and falsehood concerning Africa has been tacitly spread through western scholars in the fields of history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy among other distorted historical account of all disciplines such as medicine, science and even technology. To the western minds, Africans do not possess the intellectual capacity to meaningfully engage in the art and science of philosophizing, which according to the western minds is very rigorous. The implication of this is that Africans, have no sense of Aesthetics, Ethics, Epistemology, Logic and Metaphysics that constitute the core branch of philosophy. This naturally therefore makes the issue of “African Philosophy a misnomer and controversial topic of discourse even among philosophers of both western and African descent. This has persistently pose a serious challenge to the development of the philosophical enterprise in Africa due simply, to the fact that most of the African scholars invest their intellectual energies in an effort to just rediscover African identity that has been damaged and destroyed through colonization. This fundamental problem is aptly captured by Ekanem and Okolisah thus:

African philosophy is plagued by several problems that are self-inflicted. These problems seriously divert the intellectual rigour and energy of Africans from the core issues of philosophy. This has in diverse ways hindered the development of African philosophy. Indeed, African philosophers have erroneously pursued the shadow of philosophy instead of philosophizing in the strict and technical sense of the word. The foundation for this diversion was through the process of colonialism that Africa encountered around the second half of the 19th century. Through colonialism, the Europeans exerted so much influence on the African continent and promoted “political

subjugation and economic exploitation”. This is because colonialism was an ideology developed to legitimize the denigration of “African beliefs, values, cultures, practices and institutions”. The fundamental idea of this was because “Africans were primitive, superstitious, uncivilized” and so are inferior. Colonialism was therefore, projected as a mission to civilize Africa.³

What can be deduced from this well designed, orchestrated and systematized European ethnocentrism is the evidence that it was an articulated colonial policy marshalled out purposely and significantly “to create confusion in the minds of Africans about what is African and what is European”.⁴ This approach fundamentally harmed and affected the entire aspects of African life especially education and philosophy. This way, the colonization process was made to deliberately discredit and destroyed the three core pillars (that is the tripod) of African identity and heritage which are African culture, religion and language. Ekanem and Okolisah explained this more graphically when they state that:

Colonialism introduced the problem of language into African philosophy. Again, the response of emerging African philosophers to the denigration and attack of African culture and people needed to be responded to in the language the European will understand and these European languages include English, French and Portuguese. So, the very first way African philosophy was eclipsed by colonialism was through the killing of the African languages. Through colonialism, Europeans created philosophical confusion in Africa through the taking away of African languages, African religions and African cultures. This triad constitutes the philosophical source of any groups of people or continent.⁵

Indeed, this “triad” or “tripod” fundamentally constitutes the real identity and any group of people. The destruction and dismantling of the language, religion and culture of Africans simply and directly implies the total collapse of their existential identity and values. This is due to the fact that it is from these that the social neophyte of a given race or people can tap and internalize the norms and values of their cherished cultural heritage as a people. This comprehensive and fatal destruction is further espoused by Maathai (1995) as cited by Ekanem and Okolisah thus:

This was partly possible because the colonial administration deliberately destroyed and discredited the traditional forms of self-government in Africa. Until late 1950s when the inevitable wave of decolonization swept across Africa, natives were not allowed to practice their own form of governance, culture, religion, traditions and customs. While the colonial forms of governance was being put in place, western religion and values were imposed on those who converted into Christianity. Whatever provided guidance was banned or condemned by the western missionaries as being incompatible with the teaching of Christ and Christianity.⁶

This clearly reveals how the cherished heritage of the African people was systematically and totally destroyed through colonialism, which tactfully enthroned and imposed European eurocentrism through their political system, religion, culture, customs and traditions. All these were achieved through western system of education. So, colonialism therefore, is a comprehensive ideological process of subjugation, exploitation, manipulation and slavery that involves physical and mental methods of indoctrination to make Africans see things through the tainted perspective of the West. The most lethal subtle means to achieve such colossal disorientation of Africa was through European system of education that has remained an inherited legacy for the whole of Africa.

Sources and Means of Mental Colonization in Africa

The colonization of Africa can be described as a part of European process that tilts global equilibrium in several diverse and dramatic manners. This process of colonization actually involves the political, social and cultural control and deprivation of other societies or territories. Colonization in Africa was clearly designed for specific purposes, which prominent among these was the basic economic interest of Europe that geometrically expanded on the basis of the industrial revolution that enhanced and

expanded the industrial capacity of many European countries. So, “the foundation and inspiration of colonialism was the fundamental changes of the mode of production in Europe”.⁷ This was largely due for the urgent need to invest the large capitals generated and the need for raw materials to keep the European industries running. This did have direct and severe consequences on Africa in several ways. However, in this section of the work, we are to look at the sources and means through which mental colonization of Africa was carried out or is still being carried out, which could be seen as the inspiration of Wiredu’s conceptual decolonization in African philosophy. To achieve the aims of mental colonization of Africa, the colonialists needed to be in direct and total control of the African economy and political structures or system so as to reorganize the economy and the market with the sole intention to integrate it into the “world market and international economy”.⁸ This is because the African economy before colonization was characterized by the trade by barter system and as such was regarded as being primitive by the Europeans. To achieve the goal and objectives of colonization therefore, the colonialists have to adopt and employ certain strategies and methods that forced Africans to succumb to colonization and its administration. These methods and strategies according to Ocheni and Nwankwo include “the use of conquest, forced labour, taxation, monetization of the economy and payment of wages”.⁹ The first method adopted by the colonialists to colonize Africans in all aspects including mental colonization to ensure “effective occupation and administration of African territories” was through conquest. Again, the various African states or territories were conquered politically, economically, culturally, socially and enslaved.¹⁰

The success of this strategy is anchored on the logic that politics determines the functionality or otherwise of every facets of life of every country and this include educational system. So, this total conquest of the Africans in all facets provided a veritable tool for the mental colonization of Africa especially through the educational system. So, the fundamental question becomes; how and by what means were the colonialists able to colonize Africans mentally? The sources and means of mental colonization of Africa are very diverse and subtle that includes but not limited to the following:

Commerce/Economy

The very first subtle but most potent tool of mental colonization of Africa was the introduction of commercial activities and organized economic system, which the Africans saw as a means of improving their economic wellbeing, welfare and material conditions. This was effectively and strategically achieved through the introduction of monetary economy that eventually put an end to the “primitive” barter system, which was in place before the advent of colonization. This monetized economic system was presented as a better economic alternative that could help the Africans develop their economy and have a system of store of value that will not perish and depreciate easily. This western economic system was projected as being very beneficial to the Africans, and a means through which they could accumulate material wealth.

This in several ways altered the economic system in Africa as there emerged an exchange system that was alien to the Africans that promotes diverse economic and commercial activities, which killed the African barter system permanently. So, the payment of money for the agricultural products of the Africans subtly introduced the idea of capitalism into Africa. This capitalist idea came with its specific value system of profit maximization, monopoly and primitive accumulation of material wealth. This promotes individualism as against the African communalism. It was through this that the tax system was also introduced.

Taxation

The tax system was a direct and natural fallout of the new economic system (capitalism) that replaced the trade by barter system. With the monetary economic system effectively in place, it was easier and possible to calculate the volume and value of every economic activity through which the Africans could be made to pay tax to the native authorities. Chinweizu Ibekwe (1978) as cited by Ocheni and Nwankwo described the entire process thus:

... in response to pressure from their traders, the Europeans began systematically to interfere with the sovereignty of African states and to intrude upon their internal affairs. The Europeans began to help some faction to

depose a ruler and instate another, and to bestow honours, titles and recognition upon those who rule they found it in their interest to support. The officially trumpeted goals of such interference were to suppress the slave trade and to promote “legitimate trade”.¹¹

It is evidently clear from the above analysis that the colonizers systematically gained access and control of the minds of the colonized Africans without the Africans realizing that the economic structures were not designed for their benefits but for the colonialist countries. The European insistence on dominating and controlling the economic and commercial activities in the colonized countries or territories led to what has been generally described as the “gunboat diplomacy” that emerged in Africa.¹² This led to the undermining of the sovereignty of the colonized people without any strong resistance. The general effect of this was the total weakening of the rights of the Africans to “determine the rules and limits of their trade within their domains” since this wither away under the “Shadow of British guns”.¹³

With the guns as their weapon of destruction and control, the European traders became emboldened and so openly challenged the authorities of African countries and their sovereign powers. This way, they (Europeans) started the process of displacing African traders from the control of the African portion of the Euro-African trade pact. With this, the Europeans were able to compel and impose unequal trade terms and treaties on the Africans and pushed for the Africans to open their markets in the hinterlands after conquering to coastal states. On the realization of the tactics of the colonizers, the Africans put up a feeble resistance, which resulted in trade wars and shootings that automatically suppressed the resistance of the Africans and their rulers. This eventually led to the use of brute force and the conquest of Africa, which sustained the direct control and domination of African economy and political system.

Politics

Another source of mental colonization of Africa by the colonialists was politics. As revealed in our earlier analysis of commerce/economy and taxation, it could be argued that these were the building blocks for the eventual political domination of African countries and territories. With the subtle way through which the colonialists made Africans to accept the economic and tax systems as that, which are aimed at improving the economic and material wellbeing of the colonized, they systematically and surreptitiously enthroned their political system by first using and getting the support of the native authorities. When the native authorities saw the benefits of political administration, the colonialists started using the native authorities to replace the original rulers, until they effectively took over the political structures and system in Africa.

Indeed, the domination of the political system was not achieved with one stroke but rather was a gradual process that involved the use of the natives through a system of both direct and indirect rule. This system was carefully designed for the optimal benefit and convenience of the colonialists. This was also due to enormous challenges posed by administering the entire colonial territories around the world. The first solution to this problem was the direct rule system that involves establishing a centralized colonial authority as the territory and administered by colonial officials.¹⁴ In this system of direct rule, the natives were excluded but were used at the lowest echelon of the colonial government. Mahmood Mandani sees direct rule as a centralized despotism in which the natives were not relevant and considered citizens. Indirect rule on the other hand, was a system that integrates previously established local elites and native institutions into the colonial government for the purpose of easy administration. Indirect rule sustains good pre-colonial institutions and assists in fostering development within the context of local culture. However, to Mandani indirect rule is a kind of “decentralized despotism” that makes use of the local chiefs for the daily administration and operation of the colonial structures, while real authority is with the colonialists.¹⁵

All these were achieved through the marketing of the idea of the benefits of these political structures to the colonized. It is the effect or result of the mental process of colonization that has exposed the entire African continent to foreign political domination and forced the Africans to abandon their old political systems and embrace the western-European political system of democracy that Kwasi Wiredu seeks to address in one of his triadic project of “conceptual decolonization in African philosophy”. However,

Wiredu did not consider the impact of the inherited system of education from the colonialists on his project. This is basically the central focus of this paper.

Education

Education was one of the most potent and effective tool or weapon of colonization, which Wiredu did not consider in his project of “conceptual decolonization in African philosophy”. This assertion is anchored on the logic that education involves directly the colonization of the minds, which has been described by some, as one of the “forms of epistemic violence”¹⁶ that needs to be x-rayed by philosophers. The potency of education as a means of colonization is graphically depicted by Marcelo Dascal in what he referred to as “the Metaphor” “colonization of the minds”¹⁷ in which he listed the characteristics of this phenomenon to include; (a) the intervention of an external source of the ‘colonizer’ in the mental sphere of a subject or group of subjects – the colonized; (b) this intervention affects central aspects of the mind’s structure made of operation and contents; (c) its effects are long lasting and not easily removable; (d) there is a marked asymmetry of power between the parties involved; (e) the parties can be aware of the role of colonizer or colonized, and (f) both can participate in the process voluntarily or involuntarily.¹⁸

These characteristics as outlined above are distinctly shared by various processes of mind colonization notwithstanding whether these occur under socio-political situations that could be termed as “colonial”.¹⁹ So “colonization of the Mind” could be carried out “through the transmission of mental habits and comments by means of social systems other than colonial structure”.²⁰ This implies that “colonization of the mind or mental colonization could be achieved through various means such as the family, tradition, cultural practices, religion, science, language, ideology, political regimentation, the media, education, etc”.²¹

It must be stated here that all these are the sources of mental colonization in Africa. As explained earlier, the deliberate destruction of African heritage such as African culture, language and religion made it possible for the colonizers to impose theirs on the Africans, which in several ways brought into the continent of Africa and Africans’ consciousness their science, technology, ideology and fashions as all these became sources of mental colonization of Africa. However, we will focus mostly on education here to show and establish how these categories listed here functionally played the role of mental colonization in Africa.

Paulo Freire provides the reasons why education is or could be regarded as a typical mind (mental) colonizing educational paradigm that he referred to as the “banking” model. Through this paradigm, a particular item (knowledge) is “deposited” by those that have it (the teachers) on the minds of those (the pupils or students) who do not have it, and their task here is fundamentally and predominantly passive due to the fact that the teachers transmit while the students absorb “knowledge”.²²

From the above analysis, it can be argued that education plays the role of an act through which knowledge of various kinds are deposited in the students who are the depositories, while the teachers are the depositors. In the sense of banking of education, knowledge is seen or regarded as the gift that is bestowed by those who see themselves as knowledgeable and those who see themselves as knowing nothing. So, in this classical model, there is a distinction between the teacher and the students as the teacher represent the possessor of knowledge while the students are those that lack knowledge.

Clearly, the banking model portrays the “characteristic epistemic nature” of mental (mind) colonization. What tends to give the colonizer (who is the teacher here) the right to access or intervene in the mental faculty (mind) of the student or pupils so as to colonize it, is because the former has what the later does not have, which is knowledge. This is an article or item that everyone desires and wants largely because of the “virtue of its epistemic properties”, which is “truth and universality”, hence, “its applicability and utility”.²³ This in comparative terms is succinctly captured by Dascal thus:

... parents have the *experience* their children lack, customs and *traditions* embody *protein methods* of survival in natural and social environments, religion grants *transcendental validity* to human behaviour, language provides

reliable tools for mental operations such as identification, conceptualization, classification and inference, science supplies the basis of *technologies that work* and ideologies of *policies that are presumed to work*, the expressions in italics refer to epistemic warrants that yield epistemic legitimacy and endow teacher, family, traditions, religion, language, science or ideology each with its brand of *epistemic authority*.²⁴

What can be gleaned from this is the fact that it is through education and the educational processes that all other sources of mental colonization was successfully activated and achieved in Africa. The reason or rationale for this is that education, which is formal, informal and non-formal is very broad and the tenacity and capacity to affect and influence the entire socio-cultural, economic and political spectrum of the society. This can be seen in the indoctrinational manifestation and impact of religion on the adherents. Such indoctrination can even inspire ideological radicalism as can be seen in the typical case of Boko Haram in North East Nigeria, which has become very difficult or may be impossible to control. The case of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) otherwise known as Shiite is another example that can validate the logic of our argument here. It could therefore be stated that, it is indeed a sound and valid logic that, it is through the process of education that the legacy of colonization was entrenched and successfully sustained in Africa, and it may become extremely difficult if not impossible to eradicate or uproot it from the African fertile soil upon which it has grown to stand as an iroko tree. So, the fundamental question here becomes; what are the likely implications of the colonial system of education as inherited in Africa on Wiredu's conceptual decolonization in African philosophy?

Implication of Inherited Educational System on Wiredu's Conceptual Decolonization on African Philosophy

The experience of colonialism in Africa has various and severe consequences that will be very difficult to completely erase from the African consciousness and developmental trajectories and discourses. The reason for this difficulty in the obliteration of the effects of colonialism in Africa is due to the very fact that colonialism in Africa was not just about the seizure of lands. Colonialism in Africa involves the religious, political, moral and socio-cultural domination of the Africans. With the firm control and destruction of the African cultural heritage, the colonialists consciously explored and exploited the minds of the Africans through western educational system. This was achieved through the instrumentality of religion (the missionaries), which led to the establishment of various missionary schools across Africa. With the attainment of independence (only political), the continent of Africa has not been the same since there have been a new map to geographically indicate or express the new political status. This equally inspires political restructuring that has thrown up certain dynamics that comprehensively altered the focus of both the colonizer and the Africans that were colonized.

Imperialism is fundamentally an off-shoot of colonialism, and this has persisted long after political independence through the inherited educational system, and the seeming decolonization process. This is aptly captured by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his book *Moving the Centre: Struggle for Cultural Freedom*, where he states, "The conquest and subjugation of the entire labour power of other countries by the concentrated capital, or money power of another country... could never be complete without cultural and hence mental and spiritual subjugation".²⁵ This suggests that imperialism transcends just the control or resources and capital but permeates every facets of life of the people especially Africans, through the educational system that was established and handed over to the Africans. Thiong'o puts this more succinctly when he argues; "it is of course true that imperialism, in whatever form and guise, aims at the complete ownership, management and control of the entire system of production, exchange and distribution of the wealth in its home base and those of other nations and territories. This was perfectly clear in the old colonial system".²⁶

From here we can clearly establish the nexus between colonialism and imperialism. However, it must be stated here that imperialism persists and outlives the era of colonialism to present day history. This survival traits of imperialism can be found within the colonial system itself as far as the history of idea(s) is concerned; and the inherited educational system of the west. So, with this clear economic colouration of imperialism, why should philosophy as an academic discipline be involved in such

matters of economic concern? Philosophy has its origin as a discipline traceable to the Greek-city-states, but as a professional discipline, according to Osha (2004) can be effectively traced to Western Europe through the works of Kant and Hegel in Germany, when colonialism was still a trending socio-political activity. This is graphically captured by Osha thus:

... the slave trade and colonialism not only led to physical subjugation and humiliation of black people, it also resulted in unprecedented mental and intellectual assaults in which an astonishing range of academic disciplines were assembled and deployed for the purpose. In other words, there was intellectual denigration of black people in the dominant academic disciplines of the time, of which philosophy was one. Anthropology and literature were also involved in this crucial connection. We are also familiar with the now discredited notion that primitive people or preliterate societies have a pre-logical mentality. These erroneous anthropological notions were encouraged within the gamut of Eurocentric academic discourses, including philosophy. Thus, a radical deconstruction of the longstanding Eurocentric and racist bias of philosophy becomes necessary for an African or a Third World subject engaging philosophy.²⁷

It is evidently clear from the above that it was and is very pertinent for philosophy as an academic discipline to be employed in tackling these issues through deconstruction of Eurocentric and racial thinking as represented by certain classical cases. First by David Hume who alludes that “the Negro is naturally inferior to the Whites. They were scarcely ever, a civilized nation that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent in action or speculation. No indigenous manufactures among them, no arts, no science”.²⁸

Although this Eurocentric and racial view of David Hume is contrary to the view generally held that Egypt is the cradle of civilization, it did and does have great impact and consequences on the history and intellectual competence of the Black Race. Indeed, David Hume’s assertion and allusion do cast great aspersion on the competence of Africa to contribute to global development. The several consequences of this Eurocentric and racial view point inspired the deconstructive process of decolonization as championed by several African scholars like Ngugi wa Thiong’O, Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, Kwasi Wiredu among others.

Decolonization can therefore be validly described as Africans’ response to the problem of colonialism in Africa. It can be said to be a reactionary or revolutionary process to rediscover Africa and restore her to the path and trajectory of Pan- Africanism in contents, actions and characterization. As an idea, it has been given variety of meanings or definitions and then there exists a common thread that runs through these variant needles of restoration and redefinition of African true identity. This is anchored on the firm and singular belief that colonialism was very destructive. Colonialism was perceived to be destructive of Africa, and eroded valuable things that could characterize and reflect the authentic heritage and identity of Africa especially in those vital aspects of culture, language and religion. These three canons or pillars of African threshold identity were affected during the era of colonialism in Africa.

It is on the basis of this that African scholars like Ngugi wa Thiong’O, Frantz Fanon, Uhuru Hotep and Kwasi Wiredu see decolonization as a veritable and potent, practical and theoretical (intellectual) tool or weapon towards dismantling of colonial structures in Africa in all its ramification. The confluence point of these intellectual endeavours of decolonization movement is characterized by total rejection and resistance to all traits and trends of colonialism. Although these are not the only types of reaction but these are seen as being very widespread and equally “instinctive” or “natural”.²⁹

However, the widespread nature of decolonization process cannot push Africa out of the stronghold of colonialism and imperialism due to their entrenched “spirits” in Africa through the inherited educational systems, philosophy and structures, which have deep historical foundation in the development and emergence of 21st century Africa. This can be seen in Hotep’s decolonization model as can be seen in

the information provided by Chinweizu, which focuses or aims at the “psychology of African Liberation”, and for this very reason, he sees the entire structure and techniques designed by European educational system as having the sole aim of creating the authority “that have the capacity to subjugate the African minds as a “method of psychological manipulations”, which must be uprooted and overthrown but the very obstacle to this liberation that he correctly identifies and wants to uproot or overthrow seems to be the same with what Dascal described as the “epistemic authority”, as earlier stated in this paper. To Hotep, colonialization was designed to ensure the control of the African minds through the process of disconnecting Africans from their “heritage and culture”, which would achieve the colonizer’s purposes from their heritage and culture are more easily manipulated and controlled”.³⁰

This process of deculturalization which can be termed “brainwashing” or “indoctrination” depending on the modules of engagement (such as ideology or religion) contains three distinct and major steps which are “feel ashamed of yourself, admire and respect the whites and be rewarded with more indoctrination if successful in the former steps”.³¹ This shows that Hotep’s target is to effectively rescue and change the destruction of black minds that was achieved by the colonizers through deculturalization and “mis-education” through schools that uses a pedagogy and curriculum that purposely removes, distorts or renders insignificant the role or place of “African people in and their seminal contributions to the world history and culture”.³² With this therefore, decolonizing the African mind will surely demand a systematic reversal process of “psycho educational” model that will cleanse African minds of European cultural infestation.

However, Kwasi Wiredu’s conceptual decolonization in African philosophy, which is in chapter ten of his book *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*, is seriously deficient in systematicity, logicity and consistency in the process of decolonization. Although we totally agree with Wiredu in his accurate identification of the sources of mental colonization in Africa, which is not the focus of this particular article, we expected him to constructively and concretely build on such a solid historical identification paradigm and foundation to erect a potent and all-encompassing philosophical programme that will embolden, encourage, motivate and inspire strong and viable opposition that will have the capacity to upturn and reverse such monumental and terrifying superimposition just like Hotep did. But instead of Wiredu following the systematic and rigorous intellectual path or system of Hotep, and put forward a philosophical fangs or sledge hammer that could dismantle what he rightly identified as an imposing “monster” of destruction of African cultural heritage, he freely blundered when he posits that he “... *can only touch the tips of these three tremendous historical icebergs*”.³³ Here, Wiredu, clearly abandoned his programme or project at the foundational stage. He displayed his unwillingness to be thorough, systematic and confront what he rightly identified as the roots of African problem. Again, the words in italics emphasize Wiredu’s admittance of lack of intellectual vigour to carry on his conceptual decolonization programme to its logical conclusion. This weakness or inability of Kwasi Wiredu can be directly traced to his educational background as a British trained analytic philosopher that was highly influenced by such British philosophers like David Hume, Ayer, Bertrand Russell, etc.

This is largely due to the fact that much of the historical facts on Africa has been dominated and influenced by colonial occupation. According to Wiredu and Ramose, colonialism in Africa presented and provided the framework for the systematic and organized subjugation of the cultural, scientific and economic life of many on the African continent. This subjugation impacted on African people’s way of seeing and acting in the world. In fact, “African identity to all intents and purposes, became an inverted mirror of western Eurocentric identity”.³⁴

What can be gleaned from this is the fact that Africans see themselves through the “eyes” of Eurocentric minds made possible through the inherited system of education, in which all African philosophers including Wiredu are products. So, the inherited educational system from the west has made it clearly difficult for Africans to distinctly reaffirm their identity and think uniquely in an African pattern which hampered the effective renaissance of Africa long after decades of political independence. This indeed established the educational system in post-independence era on the foundation of self-discovery and struggle. This can be seen in the words of Hoppers when he states:

The African voice in education at the end of the twentieth century is the voice of the radical witness of the pain and inhumanity of history, the arrogance of modernization and the conspiracy of silence in academic discipline towards what is organic and alive in Africa. It is the voice of ‘wounded healers’ struggling against many odds to remember the past, engage with the present, and determine a future built on new foundations. It invokes the democratic ideal of the right of all to ‘be’ to ‘exist’, to grow and live without coercion, and from that to find a point of convergence with the numerous others. It exposes the established hegemony of western thought and beseeches it to feel a measure of shame and vulgarity at espousing modes of development that build on the silencing of all other views and perceptions of reality. It also seeks to make a contribution to the momentum for a return of humanism to the centre of the educational agenda, and dares educators to see African child-learner not as a bundle of Pavlovian reflexes, but as human being culturally and cosmologically located in authentic value systems.³⁵

The implication of this is the fact that the inherited educational system cannot allow an authentic African Renaissance in terms of education. This is anchored on the logic that inherent in the inherited educational system are mechanisms and obstacles that prevent Africans from truly being free and reflective of authentic African realities. Any effort at such African self-discovery will certainly be tainted by Eurocentric ordering. It is on the basis of this that Teffo (2000) and Vilakazi (2002) see education in Africa as being essentially a total reflection of Eurocentrism in the continent of Africa. This tends to suggest that Africans have no indigenous idea of value that can be systematically employed for the development of Africa.

The Fallacy of Kwasi Wiredu’s Argument and the Problem of Education

There is an inherent contradiction in Wiredu’s argument as already discussed. His argument clearly indicates premises without any logical conclusion. This is identifiable in his two categories of ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ of his conceptual decolonization. This is largely due to lack of proper conception of the entire project or programme, which results in the invented law of opposites manifestly created by the unconstructive nature of his thought. Also, his ambition and arguments on the prospect of “reversing all the foreign philosophical traditions that have had an impact on African life and thought”, was neither here nor there. He did not educate or tell us how his conceptual decolonization can assist contemporary African philosophers to identify and recognize such foreign philosophical traditions. This in diverse ways created a logical vacuum or lacuna in terms of standard principles in the application and utility “value” of conceptual decolonization, which in itself is foreign (conceptual decolonization are two English words). This logical problem has created epistemic confusion in the effectiveness and efficacy of decolonization. This prompted Osha to argue that:

There is however a fashionable dimension of the question of decolonization that is now engaging the attention of Third World scholars and researchers on Third World issues. As we know, the end of colonialism in Africa and other Third World countries did not entail the end of imperialism and the dominance of the metropolitan countries. Instead, the politics of dominance assumed a more complex, if not subtle form. African economic systems floundered alongside African political institutions, and as a result, all manner of major and minor crises have been engendered, which will still have to be addressed for a long time to come.³⁶

There is manifest evidence from here to show that conceptual decolonization lacks an established logical standard principle(s) to achieve its goal or purpose with the structure of the inherited educational system. Conceptual decolonization was designed or conceived to tackle the problem of colonialism superimposed on Africa, but because it was not well thought out, these problems persist in a more complex and subtle manner, thereby compelling African scholars (including Wiredu) to still employ the same colonial tool such as the inherited educational system, foreign language and some other logical alternatives to solve the same problems that conceptual decolonization was supposed to tackle.

Another identifiable fallacy contained in Wiredu's argument is the logic of discretion. In Wiredu's logical template, the whole process or exercise of "avoiding or reversing" was left in the hands of the African contemporary philosophers to make use of their rational or logical discretionary process through "self-awareness". This exposes conceptual decolonization to diverse rational and epistemic vagaries. The result of this will certainly lead to both logical and rational inconsistencies that will breed epistemic failure and worsening crises in African philosophy. So, the problem will result in the difficulty if not the impossibility of the African contemporary philosophers to completely purge and reset their minds of the imprimatur of the inherited educational system. This will be comparable to formatting a computer system that has been infected by viruse(s). At the end of the formatting process (in the case of Wiredu's conceptual decolonization will be "reversing all the western philosophical traditions", which is the viruse(s) in Wiredu's programme of conceptual decolonization). The pertinent questions here will be: what will be the new software (that is the intended African education or indigenous African terms, ideas or concepts) in conceptual decolonization? Who are the people that will be the African software engineers? Who will train these software engineers? What will be the source and inspiration from their training? Who will fund such training? Where is the hardware that will store this new software? The questions here could be endless.

What could be taken from the above analysis is the fact that the use of the word(s) "reversing" or "avoiding: by Wiredu in his conceptual decolonization is a clear logical inconsistency. This is anchored on the premise of his argument that language was the "most fundamental, subtle, pervasive and intractable circumstance of mental decolonization inherited, planted and well rooted in the fertile land of Africa. This premise was a follow up to the premise that African "philosophical education" was mostly done or carried out through "the medium of foreign language" of the "erstwhile colonizers". Again, if we are to follow Wiredu's advice and reverse or avoid all foreign ideas in our African "Philosophical Meditations", how will we be able to read and understand his conceptual decolonization, which are expressed in the same foreign language that he wishes us to avoid and reverse? And if we are to reverse it, what parameters will we use to achieve such enormous task? If the response will be to reverse and replace it with African language, then the next question will be; which African language in the multiplicity of African languages? This is a serious problem and fallacy that even Wiredu himself acknowledge when he testifies: "until Africa have a lingua franca, we will have to communicate suitable parts of our work in multifarious vernaculars, and in other forms of popular discourse, while using metropolitan language for international communication".³⁷

This is a manifest fallacy because he requires us (contemporary African philosophers) to avoid or reverse all foreign languages in one breath, and in another, he is asking us to use it for "international communication". Also, the use of "multifarious vernaculars" in African philosophical discourse is not feasible within the context of the inherited educational system, which is highly westernized. Just like Wiredu rightly states "our philosophical education" is basically in foreign language of English, French and Portuguese, etc. The problem with Wiredu's "avoiding" and "reversing" will be that this cause collateral damage to African philosophy because of the structures of the inherited educational system. It is a fact that if we follow Wiredu's suggestion, there may likely be two possible situations, which will never be palatable for the growth and development of African philosophy within the present inherited educational structures. The first one may be that we may end up confused as the builders of the biblical "Tower of Babel". This will lead to the collapse of the entire structure or enterprise of African Philosophy and the educational system if we chose his "multifarious vernacular" approach. The second option of continuous "reversing" will imply that we will end up replacing the entire words or concepts in philosophy and education including philosophy itself and education, and at the end this will lead us to the land of no philosophy, no education, hence no African philosophy because there will be no "school, which is a foreign term to teach it.

Education and Conceptual Decolonization in African Philosophy

Education in Africa and generally seen as an instrument par excellence, which aim is to inspire and promote development. The educational system reflects a complexity of organization that involves interaction between various organs that attempts to achieve educational goals. Historically, the

educational system(s) is traceable to colonialism, which is to say education in Africa is of western origin and is also structured to promote western ideas.

Colonial education is clearly the era of western education in African countries. The agents or instruments of this kind of education were the missionaries. This epoch also represents to the period of pre-statutory system of western education and the statutory system. The pre-statutory system of education emerged due largely to the activities of Christian missions and other religious bodies. The major goal of education then was religious it was meant to equip the new converts read the Bible, Qur'an, sing the hymns and study the prayer books. This way, the missionaries were able to produce out of the raw materials of the African children and adults, catechists, teachers, clerks and interpreters. The Africans so equipped with the limited and selected western education became effective instruments or agents through which colonialism was established and justified, and this is what was inherited as African educational system(s).

A cursory look at the above historical analysis shows that Western education was championed and promoted in Africa through the major religions of Christianity and Islam. This type of education, which is what was inherited also influenced the doctrines and philosophies of these religions. It is on the basis of this that idealistic thinking and fundamentalism is very dominant in Africa. This has made Africans to be so deep in spirituality instead of the physical that would have provided an effective platform for scientific inquiry, which would have resulted in technological development and innovativeness in Africa. So, the prevalent or inherent gap that exists in Africa due to lack of technological development is traceable to the foundation or origin of the colonial system of education inherited from the west or Europe.

The development of education in Africa has been the project, programme and design of western trained minds of African origin especially in the 21st century Africa. Kwasi Wiredu and his contemporaries are all products of this western educational system, which is a product of colonialism. So, Wiredu's conceptual decolonization, which is heavily linked with analytic tradition and positivism cannot in all honesty produce any effect or system that will eradicate the very system that produce it.

Kwasi Wiredu's conceptual decolonization is a product of analytic thinking and is not written in Akan language of Ghana where he hails from, neither is it written in any other African language. Indeed, "conceptual decolonization is westernized postulation of positivist-analytic spirit or tradition to rejig colonial mentality and refresh the African minds about their colonial experience. All the books written by Kwasi Wiredu are all in English language is a colonial symbol (language), and so how can you use the same tools that destroyed you to seek for 'safety'? what Wiredu's conceptual decolonization illustrates is a preacher telling his congregational members to only listen to what he/she says but not do what he/she does. Put differently, Wiredu's conceptual decolonization is clearly westernized foreign "philosophical tradition", and yet he is asking African contemporary philosophers to avoid and reverse same.

All the departments in African universities have lecturers that were trained in western thoughts and systems through the western inherited educational system. All the books in these universities are written to promote western thoughts and ideas. It will therefore not be possible to achieve the goals of Wiredu's conceptual decolonization within the context of the inherited educational systems in Africa which are clearly inherited legacies of colonialism and imperialism in Africa. So, the inherited educational system is a major obstacle to Wiredu's project of conceptual decolonization. All his books consulted for the writing of this paper are masterly written in English, and it is believed that you write in the language you can understand very well. Wiredu did not show us the way his project could be achieved but through the language of his writings, he confirms that he was merely carrying out an analysis of western issues which are "concepts" and "colonialism".

Conclusion

Our focus has been to examine the implications of inherited educational system on Wiredu's conceptual decolonization. In our analysis and discourse, we discovered that there are various obstacles that the

inherited educational system can pose to the actualization of the goals of Wiredu's conceptual decolonization in African philosophy. Basically, Kwasi Wiredu's conceptual decolonization is an intellectual programme designed to awaken the consciousness of Africa as a ravaged, exploited and imprisoned continent that needs to be liberated from the grip of colonialism and imperialism. His programme also added value and analytic flavour to the relevance and importance of philosophy as a potent academic discipline or intellectual tool that can be harnessed and effectively employed in the liberation of Africa. It is indeed a valuable contribution to the content of African philosophy. This is further strengthened by the nationalistic spirit and Africanness of the content of Wiredu's efforts. However, we cannot allow such nationalistic spirit to capture our emotion, imprison our intellectual sagacity and becloud our philosophical sense of objectivity, which should guide our analytic skills as contemporary African philosophers of the 21st century. It is on the basis of this that we come to the inevitable conclusion that Wiredu's conceptual decolonization although laudable and a positive contribution to Africa but it is a wrong prescription to the need of African philosophy in this contemporary epoch. Also, his programme of conceptual decolonization is characterized by fundamental problems as can be seen in the manifest contradictions, logical fallacies and epistemic complexities as found in conceptual decolonization. Indeed, these logical lacunas, lack of consistency, standard principles and epistemic confusion combined to render conceptual decolonization ineffective and inefficient philosophical need for the 21st century contemporary African philosophy.

Again, the very tripod upon which Wiredu's conceptual decolonization was erected clearly lacked the localized African taproots and nutrients to sustain the spontaneous and steady growth of the conceptual decolonization "Iroko" tree. Wiredu too did not assist in the provision of the necessary epistemic framework for the sustenance of his intellectual programme or project within the context of the inherited educational system. It could be rightly argued therefore, that he tactically abandoned his project for the subjective vagaries of individual contemporary African philosophers. This is not the right approach to promote a consistent systematic principle and epistemic framework for a novel intellectual idea designed for the purpose of liberation struggle. It must be stated here that Wiredu ought to have been aware of the entrenched system he was articulating his conceptual decolonization to confront. Colonialism and imperialism are strong and potent forces that are thoroughly thought through, systematized and institutionalized through the inherited educational system in Africa. These are practical steps consciously taken, and these are well oiled and lubricated by intellectual vitality and mobility in both foreign and African personnel through education, history, science, technology, psychology and even politics are also included. These constitute the kind of force or system that Wiredu's conceptual decolonization seeks to "reverse" and "avoid" in his determination of liberate Africa and African philosophy.

To confront such an orchestrated and institutionalized system made possible through the inherited educational system that is well spread and entrenched required superior and more formidable systematized epistemic framework that is thorough, consistent, logically sound, comprehensive and rigorously synchronized for effective result-oriented purpose or goal. However, Wiredu completely failed to do this with his conceptual decolonization in African philosophy. Rather, what conceptual decolonization brought to African philosophy in contemporary time are lame duck arguments that generate and create logical contradictions, fallacies, epistemic complexities, confusions, ideological lacunas, intellectual and impracticable ideas that tend to retard African philosophy.

Also, it is our position that Wiredu did not reflect thoroughly on his historical realities of Africa. He seems not to have realized the enormity and impacts of colonialism and imperialism in Africa. He made very little effort in the consideration of the historical inheritance of African educational system, the institutions of religion and politics, and he did not seriously reflect on the enormous damage done to the cultural heritage of Africa both in the area of distortion of historical facts and language in articulating and designing his programme or project of conceptual decolonization. It is our humble view that Wiredu did not do a thorough reflection on the coherency of his logic and the likely challenges his conceptual decolonization may face especially within the context of inherited educational system. To him, perhaps it was just a conference idea that could be debated there and then.

In conclusion, we assert that Wiredu's conceptual decolonization is not what African contemporary philosophy needs to develop. His conceptual decolonization is fraught with self-destructive logical and epistemic viruses that can make it not to survive the 21st century post-colonial philosophical atmosphere. The institutional parameters and frameworks, which have the contemporary African philosophers involved in religion, politics and use of foreign languages as means and modes of philosophizing cannot allow for the flourishing of conceptual decolonization. Again, the inherited educational system in Africa is a major obstacle to conceptual decolonization, and this is the actual reason for its failure in African philosophy.

We hope that the path for the development of African philosophy and the flourishing of conceptual decolonization can be achieved if certain things are put in place. On that note, the paper suggests that instead of isolating Africans from the rest of the world by completely heeding to Wiredu's project of conceptual decolonization in African philosophy, Africans should rather embrace interdependence and integration that globalization ushered to humanity. Contemporary African philosophers must not waste their intellectual energies in trying to find ways to completely put away the existing or inherited educational systems which Wiredu's project suggests rather we should develop a mindset that will objectively attempt the development of indigenous concepts devoid of western thought systems. This will promote scholarship and help improve the quality of African ideas and thoughts. There is also need to develop various African languages so as to enrich it for the purpose of philosophical discourses. This will enable the conceptual decolonization to be carried out to some extent within the geographical space of a particular philosopher.

Endnotes

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