



# **Nnamdi Azikiwe's Neo-Welfarism Socio-Political Ideology And Its Implications For Education In Nigeria**

**Nwafor, Alozie H. A. PhD**

**Department of Educational Foundations  
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria  
[aloziedgreat@gmail.com](mailto:aloziedgreat@gmail.com), 08063283638**

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper examined the implications of Neo-Welfarism for education in Nigeria. The political ideology a country adopts has profound effects on the socio-economic and political development of the people. Neo-welfarism is a political ideology that is premised on the fusion of salient elements of capitalism, socialism and welfarism into a single workable system that is blended with the ideals and ways of life that are indigenous to the people. It encourages the attainment of the good or welfare of the greater part of the society rather than that of a smaller minority. The adoption of Neo-Welfarism as propounded by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe is likely to have a profound impact on education in Nigeria because among others, it will bring about equal access to educational opportunities thereby enhancing educational attainment, encourages the participation of private individuals or corporations in the education sector under the supervision of government, and it also encourages the practice of separation of powers, and upholding the rule of law as stipulated in the laws of the land. It was however, advocated that Neo-welfarism be adopted by Nigeria as her socio-political philosophy because of the far reaching effects of its ideological basis on education which will in turn affect other aspects of the nation's life economy, trade, commerce, agriculture and so on.

**Keywords:** welfarism, political ideology, capitalism, socialism, education, neo-welfarism

## **INTRODUCTION**

The ownership and administration of schools in Nigeria is currently vested in the three arms of government (Odeleye, Oyelami & Abike, 2012). The achievement of this should be through the instrumentality of the ministry of education at the state and federal levels, while the Local Government Councils discharge this function through the Local Education Authorities. From time past, this has been complemented by the efforts of private entrepreneurs, philanthropists and communal efforts, especially in the establishment of private schools. This has resulted in an exponential increase in the number of schools.

Ironically, the geometric increase in the number of schools at all levels of education is yet to translate into an improvement in the quality of education, neither has it engendered a reduction in the number of out of school children in Nigeria, which stands at 13 million (Adeigba, 2018). This situation is quite appalling especially when there is abundance of human and material resources that can be deployed to ameliorate the pitiable situation. It is against this background that this paper examines the influence neo-welfarism philosophy of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe could have on education in Nigeria.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

Attempt will be made to x-ray the key concepts that underlie the topic of this discourse. These concepts are political ideology, Neo-welfarism and education.

**The concept of political ideology**

Ideology according to Britannica (2020), is a system of ideas or theories that is intended to explain the world and to change its outlook. It is a set of beliefs that have the ability to influence the way we view, do or react to things. Every aspect of human endeavours is guided by ideologies, thereby giving rise to political ideology, economic ideology, and so on. Therefore, political ideology can be said to be the ideals or beliefs that stipulate how a political system should run bearing in mind the attendant effects it would have on the people. Some of the universally recognized political ideologies are based on capitalism, socialism, welfarism, communalism, among others. The first three are sophisticated western-oriented ideologies.

After independence, Nigeria was faced with a myriad of problems that ranged from directionless government, political instability and gross underdevelopment, because there was no identifiable operational political ideology (Okaneme, 2018) to form the framework or core of government policies. The fact that Nigeria is made up of groups with conflicting traditional and cultural ideologies, and hence different socio-political philosophies, made the situation worse (Kanu, 2010). As a result, different political ideologies that are not rooted in the culture of the people were tinkered with, but they failed to engender the needed development and socio-economic stability. It is against this backdrop that Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe called for the adoption of Neo-Welfarist socio-political ideology for Nigeria.

**The Concept of Neo-welfarism**

Neo-welfarism is socio-political theory which was propounded Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, as a rejection of capitalism, socialism and welfarism. It was an attempt at establishing a philosophy for the decolonization and emancipation of Nigeria, (Haaga & Sasa, 2019), and Africa in general. Omeregbe (2010), observed that Azikiwe found each of the three systems wanting, but despite the fact that each of them had some good attributes. The good attributes of the systems were brought together and merged with ideals (culture) of the traditional African society, which gave rise to Neo-welfarism. Azikiwe believed that a new political system can be forged for Nigerians by combining the best from these three political ideological systems. Azikiwe in Kanu (2010) defined neo-welfarism as:

*...an economic system which blends the essential elements of capitalism, socialism and welfarism in a socio-economic matrix, influenced by indigenous Nigerian mores to enable the state and private sector to own and control the means of production, distribution and exchange, while simultaneously enabling the state to assume responsibility for the social services in order to benefit the citizens according to their need... (p. 186).*

Its ability to galvanize the good characteristics of the three systems into a single workable system makes it eclectic in nature. Azikiwe therefore believed that any system that would work in Nigeria must be rooted in way of life the people. Hence, neo-welfarism was the outcome of a political ideology that favours the greater population rather than a small section of the population.

To Enoh (1996), neo-welfarism was propounded because:

*...the capitalist system tends towards affluence of a few who manipulate the laws of demand and supply... the socialist system which tends towards the affluence of not-so-many, through economic planning, is predicated on the dubious ground that those at the helm of affairs are both super human and infallible (p. 40-41).*

It was the consequence of Azikiwe’s finesse in blending three different philosophical ideologies into one, taking into perspective the circumstances and socio-political climate of his time, believing that it would usher in a lasting political culture at a time Nigeria needed a national ideological identity and political stability. Neo-welfarism therefore, required the joint effort of the state and private or the corporate sector to achieve utilitarianism, i.e., the greatest pleasure of the greater number.

Some of the primary objectives of neo-welfarism according to Kanu (2010) include:

1. to reform and review the instruments of power according to the Nigerian political experiences;
2. to insist on the rule of law;

3. to bring a total restoration and reinforcement of the fundamental rights of all citizens according to the constitution;
4. to bring into reality the universally accepted principles of the separation of power; and
5. to bring about a sincere and reliable organization and administration of public utilities, welfare services, education, agriculture, recreational facilities and entertainment, etc.

In addition, Okaneme (2018) posited that neo-welfarism which has its roots in the African ideal of democracy and collective ownership of resources was a fitting response to neo-colonialism which constituted obstacles to human freedom and happiness. Its interest is the attainment of happiness of the greater number as opposed to the happiness of a few selfish individuals, and the establishment of a humane society where there can be abundance and a guaranteed reasonable minimum standard of living for everyone.

### **The Concept of Education**

Scholars all over the world have spilt much ink to explicate the concept of education. Going by the vast array of available literature, the concept means different things to different people depending on the context of usage. It is on this premise that Aggarwal (2002), used diamond to describe the concept of education. Diamond appears to have different colours depending on the angle from which it is viewed. To buttress the dynamic nature of the concept of education further, Nwafor (2016), describes it as a chameleon that takes on the nearest colour to it at any particular time. Therefore, education could mean different thing to different societies and situations.

For Haralambos and Holborn (2008), education is an aspect of socialization that ensures the transmission of society's norm and values. It is through education that people acquire appropriate behaviours and norms of the society. It is a learning process that brings about the acquisition of knowledge, grooming of faculty and development of skills (Farrant, 1980). In other words, education brings about the all-round development of the individual, i.e., the cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Over the years, the society has used it as a tool to teach its members specific skills necessary for future occupation especially in industrialized societies that require complex and specialized skills (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). It serves as a means for the preparation and selection of individuals for the future roles they will play in the society, and can be used to solve societal problems.

### **Implications of Neo-welfarism for Education in Nigeria**

Attempts will be made here to examine ways Neo-Welfarism political ideology can impact education in Nigerian. This will be done by looking at some salient attributes of neo-welfarism.

1. **Democratic nature:** Neo-Welfarism by its indigenous nature is highly democratic as it encourages the participation of everyone. This means that fundamental human rights of all citizens as enshrined in the constitution will be enforced and respected. As a democratic socio-political system, it would affect every facet of the society including education. It will also encourage democratic learning which makes the learner an active participant in the learning enterprise. This can be achieved by ensuring that the curriculum is planned based on the needs, interests and aspirations of the child. This will make the curriculum flexible and dynamic rather than a rigid and straight-jacketed one that the teacher will be expected to shove down the throats of his learners. Again, schools will uphold and teach the principles and tenets of democratic governance. This will go a long way in making the society more democratic.
2. **Open mindedness:** The eclectic nature of neo-welfarism makes it one that encourages tolerance and open mindedness which are attributes education tends to pass on to the learners. Open mindedness in the long run will encourage critical thinking, and questioning of the status quo, which would enable the learners to sieve and sift the good or useful attributes of everything, instead of accepting everything one hears or comes across hook, lines and sinkers because of their ability to reason (Nwafor, 2016). Therefore, gullibility will be eliminated from the minds of the learners.
3. **Utilitarianism:** Neo-Welfarism was propounded as a result of neo-colonialism that constituted obstacles to human freedom and happiness (Okaneme, 2018). Utilitarianism is a moral theory that is

after the happiness of the larger society rather than a smaller section of the society. Education has been globally recognized as a tool for economic, social and political development and empowerment for the poor and socially marginalized groups (FGN, 2013). Education should not be accessible to only the upper and middle classes, as it would not only be cheaper and affordable for the poor, but also should be better equipped to meet the educational needs of all.

4. **Partnership:** Neo-welfarism encourages the participation of the private individuals and corporate organisations in the running of every aspect of life. This is in line with the provision of the National Policy on Education that calls for collaborative partnership with stakeholders in order to achieve qualitative education needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (FGN, 2013). This would ensure that good policies capable of standing the test of time are collaboratively formulated. Since all stakeholders would be part of the policy-making process, it would be easy to implement such policies because the public school managers and private school owners will have no reason not to implement policies they participated in their formulation.
5. **Equalization of Educational Opportunities:** Social class has been identified as one of the factors that influence educational opportunities and attainment of educational goals (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). This has continued to encourage and entrench social stratification in the educational system, as well as inequality and injustice in the society. Provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens, will minimize social stratification in the educational system, thereby increasing the individual's educational attainment. This therefore would imply that education will be treated as a right of all citizens and not as a privilege.
6. **Good organization and administration of schools:** Neo-welfarism socio-political philosophy will greatly enhance the achievement of a sincere and reliable organization and administration of schools. Since government will be saddled with the responsibility of supervising the activities of schools whether private or public, it would curb the excesses of private schools. It could also bring about upgrading of the facilities and infrastructures especially in public schools.
7. **Harmonized curriculum:** It will go a long way to ensuring that all schools in the country would adopt a uniformed curriculum that would be a product of the collaborative partnership between government and private investors in the education sector at all levels. This would change the present situation where most private schools operate different curricula from that obtainable in the public schools. Most private schools even import and implement foreign curricula that are not rooted in the culture, tradition, societal needs and ideals of Nigeria. Since neo-welfarism assigns supervisory and coordinating role to government, while allowing for the participation of the private sector, it would ensure that a uniformed curriculum that is truly Nigerian in nature and content is implemented in every school in the land.

### **Criticisms against Neo-welfarism**

Neo-welfarism as a socio-political ideology has some shortcomings that call its ability to achieve the intended aims into question. Chief among these criticisms is its eclectic nature. Neo-welfarism was propounded as a synthesis of two radically different and opposing ideologies (socialism and capitalism) into a single ideology. This blending according to Haaga and Sasa (2019) would obviously result in incompatibility because of their divergent views and approaches towards human predicaments. Such divergent views could make the implementation of neo-welfarism extremely difficult. This is in addition to the fact since the constituent ideologies are borrowed from the western world, neo-welfarism cannot be said to be an indigenous political ideology. As result, it will not be able to solve the problems associated with education in Nigeria.

Again, the chances of neo-welfarism succeeding in present day Nigeria is another drawback of the ideology. This is more worrisome considering the fact that capitalism has been globally accepted as the best socio-economic system. Adopting neo-welfarism would have amounted to adopting the trial and error method since there is no record of a country whose political ideology was premised on neo-welfarism. Hence its ability to bring about the intended good and make up for the defects in capitalism and socialism largely appears to be unrealistic. It is on this basis that Irabor, Olufowobi and Ola-Obitusin

(2020) observed that even though the suitability of an idea cannot be dismissed simply because it has not been used, but it's a serious concern as to how relevant the ideology would be in contemporary Nigeria. Therefore, Zik's neo-welfarism could be regarded as a hypothetical utopian ideology or a paper tiger, which will not make any visible impact on the socio-economic and political life Nigeria, and by extension her education sector.

These criticisms notwithstanding, the anticipated aims of neo-welfarism to the socio-economic and political growth of Nigeria makes it imperative for her to adopt it as her philosophical ideology. This would definitely have ripple effects on every facet of the nation's life, especially the education sector, as it will engender equalization of educational opportunities, as well as making education cheaper and affordable.

## **CONCLUSION**

Neo-Welfarism as a socio-political philosophy credited to Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was predicated on his rejection of three of the universally recognized ideologies and systems of government: capitalism, socialism and welfarism. In rejecting these three systems, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe synthesized the good characteristics of each to form a single system that is not alien to the Nigerian culture, but rooted in our communal way of life. This gave rise to a system that did not encourage the accumulation of wealth by a small section of the society, by allowing them to control the forces of demand and supply. It rather encouraged utilitarianism i.e., a distribution of wealth that favours the greater population of the society.

Every socio-political system has a way of rubbing off on other facets of life of the people. Neo-Welfarism ideology has some implications for education in Nigeria. This could be seen from the fact that it has the intention to foster partnership between the public and private both in terms of the formulation of education policy, and the management and administration of educational institutions. The democratic nature of neo-welfarism would engender growth of democracy within the school in terms of selection of instructional materials and methods, and also in the society in which the school is situated. Finally, it would fast track the adoption of a uniform curriculum that is peculiar to Nigeria for both the private and public schools.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Having examined neo-welfarism and its implications for education in Nigeria, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

1. Nigerian Socio-Political ideology should be based on Neo-Welfarism which was formulated bearing in mind the Nigerian experience. This will go a long way to affecting every sector of the country in line with the ideals of neo-welfarism that is strongly averse to the affluence of a small section of the society.
2. Both private school owners and the government should work collaboratively in order to achieve quality education at all levels, especially in the formulation of education policies that drive the programmes of the sector.
3. Government through its relevant agencies or bodies should leave no stones unturned when it comes to supervision of schools. Otherwise, profit-minded private school owners will cash in on the situation to maximize profit at the expense of quality education.
4. Government should equally intensify efforts in ensuring that liberalisation of educational opportunities is its cardinal goal by putting in place measures that would guarantee the application of utilitarian principle.

## **REFERENCES**

- Adedigba, A. (2018). Nigeria now has 13.2 million out of school children – UBEC Retrieved 20/03/2020 from [www.premiunetimes.com/news](http://www.premiunetimes.com/news).
- Aggarwal, J. C. (2002). *The theory and practices of education, philosophical and sociological bases of education* (12<sup>th</sup> Ed). New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, PVT Ltd.

- Britannica (2020). Ideology. Retrieved 22/03/2020 from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ideology-society>
- Enoh, A. O. (1996). *Main currents in Nigeria Educational Thought*. Jos: Midland Press (Nigeria) Ltd.
- Farrant, J. S. (1980). *Principle and Practice of Educations* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed) Essex: Longman.
- FGN (2013). *National Policy on Education*. Abuja. NERDC.
- Haaga, P. T. & Sasa, M. S. (2019). A philosophical reflection on the nature and relevance of Azikiwe's political ideology of neo-welfarism. *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation (IJHI)*, 2(4), 152-157.
- Haralambos, M. & Holborn M, (2008). *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* (7<sup>th</sup> Ed). London: Harper Collins Publishers Limited.
- Irabor, B. P., Olufowobi, O. O. & Ola-Obitusin, D. G. (2020). Nnamdi Azikiwe's eclecticism, pragmatism, neo-welfarism and the quest for a pedagogical and self-reliant template for Africa's development. *Nasara Journal of Philosophy*, 5(1) 136-155.
- Kanu, I. A. (2010). The political philosophy of Azikiwe as an ideology of political regeneration for Nigeria. *Bassey Andah Journal*, (3), 178-189.
- Nwafor, N. H. A. (2016). *The Fulcrum of Philosophy of Education* (6<sup>th</sup> Ed) Port Harcourt: SAMBIS Publications
- Odeleye, D. A., Oyelami, O. & Abike, O. O. (2012). Private ownership and educational management in Nigeria: Issues and challenges *Journal Of Research In National Development* 10(2)33, 223-228.
- Okaneme, G. (2018). A critique of Azikiwe's political philosophy of Neo-Welfarism. *Nnamdi Azikiwe Journal of Philosophy* 10(1), 118-138.
- Omoregbe, J. I. (2010). *Socio-political philosophy: A systematic and historical studies*. Lagos: Joja Educational publishers.