Socialization and Religious Indoctrination in Nigeria: Implications for Peaceful Co-existence

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ABSTRACT

Every religion serves as an agency of socialization and indoctrination. As long as religion teaches its adherents ethics and holds strictly to its beliefs and doctrinal practices, it is socializing and indoctrinating its adherents. But as soon as its doctrinal teachings shake the basis of peaceful co-existence, harmony and religious tolerance in the society, indoctrination becomes dangerous and offensive. This study therefore sets to look at how religion (mostly Christianity and Islam) could serve as good agent of socialization and indoctrination without hampering peaceful co-existence in Nigerian society. The study observes that religion forms the bedrock of norms and values of any society in which a child is socialized. Adding credence to the above, it is then that the state would not undermine the importance of religion and religion would endeavour to raise the social and moral standards of the state within her process of religious indoctrination and socialization. Hence, the study calls for the revival of a better socialization and religious process if the hope of an effective national peace is to be achieved in Nigeria.
Keywords: Socialization, indoctrination, peaceful co-existence, religion

INTRODUCTION

Man is a social and religious being that has knowledge, skills and disposition which develop his personality as a follower of a religion. Religious indoctrination is enhanced through the process of socialization. Through this process, man is capable of adjusting to the changing patterns in society and to fashion himself into a sincere adherent of a religion to meet the social and religious needs of society. Sometimes, the required personality is developed against a background of conflicting agencies of socialization, and indoctrination, thereby creating infinity of confusion and conflicts which expose the person to violence in society. Consequently, the religious people who are in constant conflicts with the family, church and the school become purposeless, miserable and hopelessly disorganized due to conflicting influences of socialization and religious indoctrination.

Socialization is the process by which a person acquires the knowledge, skills and disposition that make him/her more or less able member of society (Ushe, 2005). Odumuyiwa (1988) also posits that socialization calls for the development of a type of personality that can adjust to the changing patterns to meet the needs in the society. Thus, in the above context, socialization becomes an interactive medium where people in society exchange values and norms with others; the experience of emotional acceptance and symbolic communication through language. However, in the context of this study, the term

socialization simply refers to "the process by which one internalizes the attitude, belief and values of one's culture" (Odumuyiwa, 1988). The term indoctrination comes from "doctrine" which is derived from *"docco"*, meaning "to teach". Indoctrination therefore, denotes both the act of teaching and the subject taught. It is the study of theories in which there may be differences of opinions or even disputes. Stenhouse (1978) describes indoctrination as the questionable means to cause a pupil to reach a premature opinion. According to him:

> *To talk of indoctrination is to suggest that the teacher uses unfair means to induce the child to come to conclusion which himself/herself intends to make, but which the subject does not necessary demand.*

Another characteristic of indoctrination is that it is something that takes place over a period of time. One might see a teacher as being stupidly ignorant, if he tries to get a class to accept an untrue and ill-advised belief which one disagrees. But one would not call him an indoctrinator, unless he/she continues to do this over a space of time in order to change the attitude, judgment and opinion of his class. Religious indoctrination implies teaching without making available to the learners the reason for what is being taught or the reasons why they should accept it (Obilom, 2000a). Religious indoctrination is therefore; teaching with the intention that the pupils (learners) will believe what is taught in such a way that nothing will subsequently shake his/her belief (Verduin, 1968). However, this study submits to Wilkins (1975) who views religious indoctrination as "the essential teaching of every religion to help the adherents of such a religion to comply with the doctrinal practices".

Socialization and Religious Indoctrination in Nigeria

Socialization and religious indoctrination are essential elements for the development of human personality. Socialization is built upon religious indoctrination because human sentiments and language are fashioned during religious indoctrination. Thus, any religious adherent who remains indifferent to his or her religious doctrine could not be counted as an adherent of such a religion, particularly Christianity and Islam. This is because religious indoctrination is anchored on of belief system. Christianity accepts the Bible as the authoritative revelation of God to man of the truths which could otherwise, be known no matter how trustworthy his source of knowledge is. In Islam, the Koran (Qur'an) is believed to be a sacred book which contains the revelations received by Prophet Mohammed (Montgomery, 1976). It is the word of God incarnate, eternal and uncreated (Hitti, 1979). The Koran contains 114 chapters of 6,236 verses of 77934 words and of 323,621 letters, which are sacred that none but the most purified shall touch it (56:78). The Muslims are religiously indoctrinated to believe that the Qur'an is God's revealed words dictated to Prophet Mohammed (Hitti, 1979). Thus, Islam teaches the doctrine of God that is Muslim profession of faith that "there is no god but Allah" (*La ilaha illa ilan*). It is an absolute monotheism that admits either filiations or the personification of love between the father and the son that is the spirit. Islam does not talk of unity in God but unity which is strict "*Tawheed*", the doctrine that God is just one in an absolute sense. Islam makes the doctrine of God oneness very central in its doctrine and practice. This religious indoctrination is similar to the Christians teaching that God is the beginning and the end of existence, and

that both man and things were created by his decision and through his action (Lockyer, 1976). Hence, Odumuyiwa (1988) noted that there are three main stages in the development of the dominating scriptures; the revelation of God in Christ; and the record of revelation by the Holy Spirit in the sacred word. To this end all Christians and Muslims believe in the doctrine of God who has absolute powers and is omnipresent, eternal and immutable. He is God who possesses intrinsic and transcendent holiness. He is God of love and justice with infinite existence (Nell, 1984 and Lockyer, 1976). Christianity and Islam emphasise religious ethics which the Holy Books (the Bible and Qur'an) summarize, for example, both the Bible and the Qur'an encourages inter-personal relationship between God and human beings (Brandon, nd). In Christianity, the first four commandments of God emphasize the relationship between God and human beings, while the remaining six commandments are termed the bedrock of ethics and nucleus of social integration among the Christians. Islam also emphasizes the fact that the Qur'an is the basis of their religion as well as cannon of ethics and moral life.

Thus, there is tendency among the Muslims to exaggerate the claims that since all Muslims are true believers, whereas the vast majority of Christians are nominal adherents, Islam is by far the target religious community in the world. The Muslims are also made of the divine revelation according to Prophet Mohammed. Therefore, every Muslim must learn the obligatory prayers in Arabic as the only language that should be used in public worship. It is for this reason that Muslims are made to known the Qur'an by heart and could endlessly repeat it to themselves to exercise hypnotic powers on the minds of those who understand the meaning. Christians maintain that the miracle of the Bible is that part of it that has been translated into more than 1,700 languages and which coveys essentially the same message to the speakers of these myriad tongues (Nell, 1984). The Muslims asserts the exact opposite that the Qur'an is so excellent that it can never the same in any language other than Arabic language given by Allah himself. It was translated into many languages by those who were not Muslims (Nell, 1984). The Muslims further claim that though Christians believe that Christ has made the whole world one in him, the brotherhood which Islam has established is far deeper and more real than anything which Christians have achieved (Nell, 1984). This unity finds visible expression in the pilgrimage to Mecca, which adult male Muslim ought to accomplish at least once in the life time. The Christians also emphasize the necessity of its faithful to go on pilgrimage to the holy land, Jerusalem where Christ was born (Lockyer, 1988). All the aforementioned facts show that socialization and religious indoctrination seek to transmit rationally the religious.

Socialization and Religious Indoctrination: Conflicting Agencies

There are many conflicting agencies of socialization and religious indoctrination that could hinder peaceful co-existence in Nigeria due to disagreement and lack of cooperation among them to work harmoniously as social and religious factors of development. Consequently, the youths see the family, school and Church/Mosque as major influences that are working at cross purposes with socialization. Thus, many strict homes may not be comfortable with sex education, play, stories and novels given at schools to their children because of religious indoctrination (Stenhouse, 1978). Parents who are strict disciplinarians may regard the

teachers as too weak and permissive, and may threaten to remove their children from such schools. However, children reared in fundamentalists' homes, schools and Church/Mosque may be taught conservative doctrines and strict ways of living which can hinder peaceful co-existence in society (Brim and Weeler, 1965). Conflicts in socialization and religious indoctrination develop when there is no consistent pattern in relationship between parents and offspring's due strictness (Odumuyiwa, 1988). Socialization and religious indoctrination that is influenced by less peaceful agencies such as schools, Churches/Mosques and the family could throw an individual off balance with others, because the individual is being influenced by unrecognized agencies (some featuring sex and violence), new type of companions, and general awareness of a world of bright light or frivolous pleasures. All kinds of new contradictions come into the teaching of the individuals through these agencies. Ambivalence on the part of the society towards violence becomes common conflicts that accompany the socialization and religious indoctrination of the individual in the society. Exposure to violence through the media also contribute to aggressive tendency in youths.

Inter-Relatedness of Socialization and Religious Indoctrination in Nigeria
Socialization and religious indoctrination work hand in hand to make man fit into his society, both secular and religious. They emphasize development of moral ideals. In order to maintain peaceful co-existence of citizens in a secular or religious community. Thus, one may claim that socialization is to secular society what religious indoctrination is to religious society (Maher, 1976). Socialization of one society may result in conflicts with another society and during this stage; children and adult are taught how to be socialized, just as conflicts could exist within the religious indoctrination of various religious. For example, Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God, while Muslims do not hold such belief. According to Muslims God has no wife and so has no son (Lockyer, 1976). Hence, the religious indoctrination given to Christians and Muslims are different from African traditional religious beliefs which see nothing wrong in approaching God through the divinities, intermediates of God. Thus, both Christianity and Islam oppose worshipping any graven image of divinities (Nell, 1984). Thus, in post-colonial countries (like Nigeria and Ghana), socialization and religious indoctrination have been grossly abused due to influence of western civilization.

Traditional beliefs and practices such as dressing, greetings and interaction with families have been thrown overboard. By reading the Holy Books (the Bible and the Qur'an) and interpreting them wrongly, they have misled many youths to "religious madness", this make them unfit to live harmoniously with members of other religions in the society. Such religious fanatics in Christianity and Islam have done more harm than good and should therefore be condemned. This in a way will lessen the problem of Nigeria. Socialization and religious indoctrination are concerned with the creation of a congenial atmosphere for rapid development and transformation of personality that will enhance the development of the society. This paradigm for understanding the society and religious needs involves certain knowledge about societal and religious values. Although socialization and religious indoctrination aim at achieving effective national development and harmony, it has contributed only marginally to Nigeria's development due to abuse by extremism,

and handicapped roles of parents, teachers and religious leaders. It is a pity that the family, school, and the Church/Mosque have wrongly employed methods of indoctrinating Nigerian populace on values and religious doctrines that could enhance development and peaceful co-existence among the three major religions in Nigeria, (African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam). This form of indoctrination is not only given to the youths by the extremists, but also to those who have misconceptions about other tribes and cultures, thereby retarding peaceful co-existence in the nation (Obilom, 2000b). Consequently, communism and religious tolerance appear to be issues of menace to Nigerian citizens, especially as most youths have become fanatics who are too hard. The products of this kind of socialization and religious indoctrination are mass breeders of fundamentalists, and criminals who create havoc in society in the name of protecting their religion. Socialization and religious indoctrination in Nigeria need to be stabilized to curb the violent fanatics who are filled with terrorist's ideologies, western mentality and civilization.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Religious indoctrination from the basis of socialization is adherents in Nigeria, because religion is part of culture into which one is born, and it is within that culture that one is socialized from childhood to adulthood. Religion form the bedrock of norms and values of any society in which a child is socialized. The religion of any family influences socialization of its children to an extent that it permeates them through the agencies of socialization. Socialization and religious indoctrination perform nearly the same functions. Socialization helps religious indoctrination, just as religious indoctrination helps; socialization and both are needed for the all round development of mankind. But where one overrides the other, then such situation leads to an imbalance in social development of humankind.

Before religion and state could harmoniously work together, socialization and religious indoctrination must be seen as helpmates. It is then that the state would not undermine the importance of religion and religion would endeavour to raise the social and moral standards of the state within her process of religious indoctrination and socialization. This could be best achieved in Christian and Muslims religions in Nigeria if over simplification of religious tenets as found in Christianity and Muslim indoctrinations are dropped to the minimum of not eradicated. The wrong socialization and religious indoctrination given to the youths by their parents, teachers (at school and church/mosque) does not presuppose hope for future youths neither does the decaying situation give a clear sign that things will soon change because Nigerians look more helpless and religiously more violent than in the past. This pessimism, however, does not write out the hope that an effective national peace can be achieved in Nigerian if the process of better socialization and religious indoctrination are revived. The Nigerian government and the populace must be willing to channel their methods of indoctrination and socialization toward development. This will not only change the attitudes of Nigerian extremists, but also enhance religious tolerance, inter-faith dialogue and brotherliness in the Nigerian society. This is a task that parents, teachers and secular/religious leaders must be co-opted to be involved in.

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