Education

# Analysis of the Marxist Theory on the Abolition of State: Its Implication to Nigeria Educational System

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Article History Received: 13.07.2020

Revised:

29.08.2020

**Accepted:** 30.08.2020

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**Abstract:** Certain factors necessitated man's thinking especially, if it focuses on alteration of their desire and wants. It is on this, that some years back some philosophers propounded a theory which stated thus: the abolition of a state. The Marxist theory on the abolition of the state asserted that society's classes are the cause of struggle and that society should have no classes. An example of Marxism is replacing private ownership with cooperative ownership. The researchers of this work will adopt an analytic method in order to find out if the theory should be a paradigm in the Nigeria education or not.

Keywords: Abolition, Marxist, State.



#### 1. Introduction

Marxism is the political and economic theories of Karl Marx and Friedrick Engels, later developed by their followers to form the basis of communisms. The definition of Marxism is the theory of Karl Marx which says that society's classes are the cause of struggle and that society should have no classes. An example of Marxism is replacing private ownership with cooperative ownership. Marxist theory of state, besides liberal state, is perhaps the most prominent theory. Marxist theory not only challenges the basic concepts of liberal state but also emphasizes that it enslaves majority for the realization of its aims, it is to be abolished or smashed without which the emancipation of common men will never be possible. Marx (1818-1883) and his friend Engels (1820-1895) have made different comments and statements which constitute the fabric of state theory.

The researchers shall first deal with the definition of state. In the communist manifesto (it was written by both Marx and Engels). They have said that the state is the 'political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another". Again, that the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie". On the basis of this, Hal Draper in Karl Marx's theory of Revolution defines in the following words: 'the state is the institution or complex of institutions which bases itself in the availability of forcible coercion by special agencies of society in order to maintain the dominance of a ruling class, preserve the existing property relations from basic change and keep all other classes in subjection [1]. In the same vein Lenin conceived that the state is used by the bourgeoisie to exploit the common people and in that sense it is machinery for exploitation (Lenin 2014). This paper attempts to analyze the Marxist doctrine of the abolition of state: its implication to Nigerian education.

## 2. Brief Biography of Karl Marx

Marx was born on 5 May, 1818, in Trier, a small, originally Roman, city on the river Moselle [2]. Many of Marx's ancestors were rabbis, but his father, Heinrich, a lawyer of liberal political views, converted from Judaism to Christianity and Marx was baptized with the rest of his family in 1824.

#### 2.1. Origin of State

Marx, Engels and their followers (particularly Lenin) had no faith on the social contract theory as the origin of state. They have viewed the origin from a materialistic standpoint which emphasizes that though the state is the creation of man, behind this there is no emotion idea but the influence of material conditions which they termed as economic conditions. They have divided the development of society into old communist social system, slave society, feudal society and industrial society. In the old communist society there was no state because there was no existence of private property [3]. System of private property worked as a potential cause of the rise of state. The owners of private property felt insecurity as to its protection and they felt the necessity of a super power which could provide protection ultimately. How the system of private property helped the creation of state? As soon as there was private property, two classes of men there appeared — one was the owner of property and the other was without property, the conflict between them became prominent. Property owners wanted to subjugate the other class [4], and property owners created a force within the society and this force ultimate assumed the status of state.

From the study of history of Marx and Engels have that the state- for all practical purposes – was set up in the slave society. Because in the slave society there were mainly two classes- owners of slaves and the slaves themselves. The owners of the slaves required an organization to control and dominate slaves. Engels in his; the origin of family, private property and state has elaborately analyzed the origin and development of state. The state is not something coming out of the society. It is rather the product of the society.

# 2.2. Marxist Doctrine of the Abolition of State

Karl Marx, a German communist and a journalist had a lot of experiences. He had conflicts with the state authority concerning the status of the government and its citizens; he also made to face the law of the land.

The doctrine of the abolition of the state first appears in Marx's early text, the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, written in 1843 and published only posthumously. A principal object of criticism in this text is the separation between civil society and state, which Marx takes to exist both in Hegel's thought and in reality. It is in this context that the claim about the abolition of the state emerges. Essentially, the abolition of the state signifies here the overcoming of this division and the dissolution

of the state as an entity alien and opposed to society. This, however, requires fundamental changes in the structure and content of public participation and representation. A key component of the separation between the state and civil society has to do with the alienation of legislative power.

Marx believes that the overcoming of the division between state and civil society would take the form of the extension and universalization of participation in legislation [5]. As Marx writes, "the striving of civil society to turn itself into political society, or to turn political society into actual society, appears as the striving for as general as possible a participation in the legislative power". When participation in legislation is truly generalized, civil society becomes political society, the latter ceasing to exist as a separate and antagonistic entity. From these lines, it might appear that Marx proposes universal suffrage as the means through which participation in legislation is extended and the state abolished. As Marx comments:

As if the hierarchy were not the chief abuse, and the few personal sins of the officials not at all to be compared with their inevitable hierarchical sins. The hierarchy punishes the official if he sins against the hierarchy or commits a sin unnecessary from the viewpoint of the hierarchy. But it takes him into its protection whenever the hierarchy sins in him; moreover, the hierarchy is not easily convinced of the sins of its members [6].

For the bureaucracy to truly become a universal estate it has to become "the estate of every citizen". This would mean the "the abolition of the bureaucracy". While Marx does not specify what this involves, he gives a few clues. He makes clear that the opportunity of all to become part of the bureaucracy is not sufficient to abolish it as an alien force, just like the fact that every Catholic can join the clergy does not make the latter any less of an "other-worldly power". Therefore, Marx vehemently rejects civil service examinations, which are nothing but the "bureaucratic baptism of knowledge".

In Marx's conception of the abolition of the state in the Critique, and his treatment of both elected representatives and the bureaucracy, two elements can be discerned. The first is that the state becomes a truly universal sphere, working towards the general interests and not particular ones. This is the material sense which Marx refers to in the Critique. This by itself is consistent both with a parliamentary democracy and with a state/civil society division. At this stage Marx had no class analysis; he had not yet realized that private property is the reason that neither the legislators nor the bureaucrats serve the general interests [5]. Nominally, therefore, his comments on the state being abolished by coming to truly represent the universal interest are compatible with bourgeois parliamentarism. It is the second element, that having to do with the formal aspect, which is the more radical. This second thesis involves the thorough-going involvement of civil society in both legislation and administration, through a revolution in the form and content of participation and representation in both these domains.

Marx adopted a different conception of the abolition of the state. But this is not to say that he abandoned the conception outlined above. It most prominently reemerged in Marx's account of the Paris Commune in his 1871 Civil War in France, almost thirty years after the Critique. Marx commends the commune's formation out of municipal councilors, "chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms" [7]. In view of these radical changes, Marx describes the commune as "the reabsorption of the State power by society, as its own living forces instead of as forces controlling and subduing it". In terms reminiscent of the Critique, the state is described here as a parasite, an alien force standing over and above society. What the commune did was to restore to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by the state parasite feeding upon, and clogging the free movement of, society". Marx merely puts here in different words the same doctrine put forward in the Critique.

There, it was the overcoming of the division between civil society and the state through the politicization of civil society. Here, it is the reabsorption of the state into society. Like in the Critique, this change is considered here as tantamount to the dissolution of the state itself:

This was a Revolution not against this or that, legitimate, constitutional, republican or imperialist form of State Power. It was a Revolution against the State itself, this super naturalist abortion of society, a resumption by the people for the people, of its own social life. The first act by virtue of which the state really constitutes itself the representative of

the whole of society – the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society – this is, at the same time, its last independent act as a state [8].

Eric Hobsbawm is correct in noting that what Engels says here is that "in representing the whole of society, the public power is no longer classifiable as a state" [9]. The same approach is evidenced by Engels' claim in a letter to Bebel that the Paris Commune "ceased to be a state in the true sense of the term". This is an admittedly thin expression of the conception of the abolition of the state outlined above, limited to the material aspect only, but it is an expression of it nevertheless. By expressing the universal interest of society, says Engels, the state ceases to be a state.

According to Marx, the state exists to serve the interest of the bourgeois only [10]. The proletariats are the working class, and at the same time the means of production. The fact remains that the bourgeois use them as tools to achieve their aim. The preliterate are the only members of the population that face ultimate oppression in the society, is the majority of the poor masses who are popularly referred to as proletariats. The oppression in turn promote the interest of the bourgeois i.e., the 'haves'.

Operating in such a state is therefore, an expression of the class conflicts, which leads to the struggle for power and the control of the economy. Marx therefore, advocated that the class distinction should be eradicated and the state authority abolished. There should be armed conflicts between the 'Haves not' (oppressed class). It is through the conflict that classless society will come up. He preferred that the working class or the oppressed should take over control of the state for simple and classless administrative functions.

## 3. Critique

Robert Tucker argued that "Marx's normative position with regard to the state was anarchism" [11]. On the process, Richard Adamiak referred to the view that "the eventual goal of Marxism is Anarchism" as "virtually unquestioned", although he himself did go on to challenge it [12]. In the same vein, Hans Kelsen [13] described classical Marxism as having "a thoroughly anarchistic character", claiming that the only difference Marx's anarchism and other forms of anarchism has to do with the question when the state disappears. "So far as the social ideal is concerned", he wrote, "Marxism is anarchism", and indeed he considers Marxism to be "the most important of all anarchistic doctrines". French Marxologist Maximillian Rubel [14] went further than most, taking Marx's anti-statism as an indication that Marx was in fact a full-blown anarchist. "Under the name communism", Rubel wrote, "Marx developed a theory of anarchism; and further, that in fact it was he who was the first to provide a rational basis for the anarchist utopia and to put forward a project for achieving it". Shlomo Avineri's influential interpretation differs from those mentioned above. While accepting the view of the abolition of the state as a substantive and radical notion, he attempts to show that it is based on Hegelian philosophical concepts and has nothing to do with the mechanistic act of destruction associated with anarchist anti-statism [13].

This family of interpretations did not however go unchallenged. Some exponents either downplayed the importance of the abolition of the state in classical Marxism, or even outright denied that classical Marxism is anti-statist in any significant sense. David Lovell [16] referred to Marx's vision of the future society as state-less only "in a superficial sense". Bloom likewise considered Marx's anti-statist remarks as mere "anarchistic concessions, delivered on polemical occasions", and concluded that Marx was "closer to the liberal tradition than to formal anarchism". An extreme position on this matter is taken by Richard Adamiak [12] in his study on the Marxist view of the fate of the state in post-revolutionary society, Adamiak [12] concludes that contrary to appearances, Marx and Engels were in fact "aiming at a rather extreme variety of statism". Their phrases about the disappearance of the state in post-revolutionary society are not to be taken literally, for behind the surface rhetoric lies rabid statism and anti-anarchism. Quite astoundingly, Adamiak [12] suggests, Marx and Engels' apparent support for the abolition of the state is only the result of an attempt to coopt some of their ultra-radical rivals' slogans, without at all compromising their extreme statism. This is said to have been a "spurious anarchistic facade" constructed by Marx and Engels intentionally. The relation between the two progenitors of classical Marxism on the issue of the fate of the state has also drawn some interest. It has generally become fashionable among academic scholars to strongly differentiate Marx from Engels, and their treatment of the abolition of the state is usually presumed to be a locus of disagreement between them. Thus, Avineri [9] claims that Marx and Engels' ideas on the fate of the state come from two distinct and opposed intellectual lineages. Bloom likewise spots

significant differences between them, and Adamiak has even taken their positions on this matter to be entirely irreconcilable.

Again, in view of Karl Marx argument concerning the abolition of state due to unnecessary oppression by the rich and those in control of the state authority, there are still a lot of criticisms in this regard. The implication of the general statement is that the state is necessarily oppressive. Is it possible for a whole state to be deliberately oppressive to its citizens? To inflict deliberately untold hardships to the less privileged class just for the sake of it? This statement is not convincing at all, especially to rationally incline people in the society.

More to this, the generalization of statement that all bourgeoisies oppressed the mass cannot be accepted as true and ideal. There is no society that all the rich have been discovered to be oppressors of their working population. So many of the proletariats have confessed that their conditions of service are attractable and conducive for their status.

However, it is not every state that is oppressive. The proponent of this ideology never made known to us the states that are involve in oppression and those that do not. If at the time of Germany was found to be oppressive, was this condition the same in France, Britain, Russia, China, Italy, U.S.A, Canada etc.

Who are those that would reform the state to simple administrative function, will they not constituted authority and will they not after all turn out to be the bourgeois and oppressors of the same people that brings them to power? In Nigerian for instances, there have been so many examples of people who were poor but once at the corridor of power, they turned out to be more oppressors of the people than their original godfathers who bring them to the corridor of powers [17][18][19][20]. There are governors, ministers, senators, local government chairmen, etc. who were once activists but today they are lions who feed on the flesh and blood of their citizens and workers. A classical examples of totalitarian system of government, not democracy again as practiced by other developed countries.

Marx interest is to protect the weaker members of the society, is it possible for such revolutionary measures to take care of the weak in the society? Note that the revolutionary measures were aimed at violently over throwing the government and installing a new functional government headed by the proletariats. This means, also the poor that would be protected will be casualties of the revolution. The well to do may not suffer the effects as much. In this case, the weak will be defenseless and not protected as he has claimed. Any attempt to take over government anywhere, it is the masses that suffer the effects most not the bourgeois.

Marx was ideally talking of a classless society. A society that is devoid of class hierarchy, what of those, who may in charge of the state security? If they assume leadership of the various security units, like the Head of the Army (Army Chief) Head of the Police (Inspector General) Head of Navy (Chief of Naval Staff) and Head of the Air Force (Chief of Air Staff). Once these various positions are occupied, the heads in question cease to be ordinary people on the streets. Automatically, they will find themselves in the corridor of power. Any next moves by these people in question remain unknown, they may be the worst oppressors of the people.

In the communist world, after all, more state authority is firmly entrenched more than any other system. Germany, then was a communist government during the life of Marx. It was because of the firm entrenchment of the communist ideology in Germany that Marx became frustrated with the government and advocated for conflicts between the ''haves'' and 'have not' in order to cause Chaos for eventually overthrow of the communist government to provide for a classless society as he claimed. To him, only conflicts can make for social change. Resolution by the masses against the Bourgeois and talking over all state apparatus is the only way to maintain stability and good governance for the interest of the working class. How far this can be achieved remains a mirage. Conflict can change things for good and can equally change things for worst depending on how it is being managed by the parties involved.

# 4. The Impact on Nigeria Education

On the basis of Karl Marx theory, the school as an authority should not exist. The school authority exists to oppress the staff and the students. The authority of the school should be democratized and all decisions should be centrally taken to avoid conflicts.

The consumers of education or the students should have a majority say or control of the school (Irek 2016; Irek 2018). Since most of the elective positions will be done by students, the control and management of the school should entirely be in the hands of the students. Marx advocated for

democratization of educational system not knowing that most of the students are immature to part take in collective decision making in the school.

In imparting the knowledge, the teacher or teachers must always be in authority, because they know more than the learners. Teachers being in the business of teaching for long are in position to initiate the young ones.

In regard to the state, however, it is quite different because the professional are not actively involved in decision making concerning the affairs of the state. In regard to morals, it is not morally inclined for others to be born as rulers while others are mere followers. However, in the school also there is need to talk about authority, because authority is not simply an act of rule-ship, but it could mean areas of specialization, e.g. English, History, Mathematics, Geography, Philosophy, etc.

## 5. The Needs for the Abolition of the State

There are justifications in any case for Marx's ideology in education, no matter the limitation involves. For every advantage is associated with a disadvantage as the saying goes.

There is the principle of academic autonomy which was stressed by Marx in his search for harmony and peace in the school system. Academic autonomy refers to non- inference by external authority on what the school ought to do and when to do it.

According to Marx; those having the qualities of transmitting knowledge should be given the freedom to carry it out, without political influence or class influence that may cause disharmony within the school and political system.

There is what we call 'academic truth'; the schools have their own freedom to determine their own line of research and teaching including what to teach and who to teach. Peters cited in Gbari [21] called it provisional authority of the teacher, because teachers can also learn from his or her students that is why knowledge is dynamic.

Discipline, teachers have the tasks and authority of maintaining discipline if the school purpose or aim is to be achieved or fulfilled, however, participation of students in the process of teaching, and learning also depend on their age level. In the secondary school, for instance, food, boarding materials, organization of games, clubs etc. be jointly done with all the students so that cases of discriminations in economic, social and political status can be avoided. When there is togetherness in participatory work, it does not mean, the teacher is not mean in authority, it only makes for a striking balance between the two extreme academic and the authoritarian.

#### 6. Conclusion

In spite of the above shortcomings, the researchers hold the view that today it may not have any relevance but in the days of Marx it had relevance. In those days the state was really an instrument of exploitation and the proletarians were severely tortured and exploited by the capitalists. This compelled Marx to think of abolishing the capitalist state and bring it under the supreme authority of the working class. Not only capitalism has changed, change has taken place in all spheres of society.

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