


5-2017

# Impact of Two Wars on the Educational System in Nigeria

Helena Onyemelukwe-Waziri

Clark University, [honyemelukwewaziri@clarku.edu](mailto:honyemelukwewaziri@clarku.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://commons.clarku.edu/idce\\_masters\\_papers](https://commons.clarku.edu/idce_masters_papers)

 Part of the [Elementary Education Commons](#), [Environmental Studies Commons](#), [Indigenous Education Commons](#), [International and Area Studies Commons](#), and the [Urban Studies and Planning Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Onyemelukwe-Waziri, Helena, "Impact of Two Wars on the Educational System in Nigeria" (2017). *International Development, Community and Environment (IDCE)*. 122.

[https://commons.clarku.edu/idce\\_masters\\_papers/122](https://commons.clarku.edu/idce_masters_papers/122)

This Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Papers at Clark Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Development, Community and Environment (IDCE) by an authorized administrator of Clark Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [mkrikonis@clarku.edu](mailto:mkrikonis@clarku.edu), [jodolan@clarku.edu](mailto:jodolan@clarku.edu).

# **Impact of Two Wars on the Educational System in Nigeria**

HELENA ONYEMELUKWE-WAZIRI

MAY 2017

A Master's Paper

Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester,  
Massachusetts, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the  
department of International Development and Social Change

And Accepted on the recommendation of:

Dr. Jude Fernando

## **ABSTRACT**

Helena Onyemelukwe-Waziri

### **Impact of Two Wars on the Educational System in Nigeria and Possible Remedies**

Since the 1960's Nigeria has continuously been in a state of internal conflict, with different ethno-religious groups vying for social, economic, and political control. The situation has played out in extreme violence and has been on the international world's radar since the emergence of Nigeria's militant Islamist group Boko Haram in the late 2000's. Boko Haram translates to "Western education is forbidden," and the group has been behind the destruction of over 2,000 schools in Nigeria, killing hundreds of teachers and students, while displacing entire communities. As Nigeria holds the highest African population, it also has the highest number of out-of-school children on the continent.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with more than 130 million people, and over 500 ethnic groups. The largest ethnic groups in the country are the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo peoples respectively, which collectively make up 68% of the population. For the purposes of this paper, Igbo's are referred to as Biafran's in the Civil War section, as they were the major tribe in the secessionist group during that era. The aforementioned contrasting groups make up the majority of the population. Ethno-religious and political conflict have played large parts in the country's history, including the Nigerian Civil War (better known as the Biafran War 1967-1970). Although the lack of written material and data during the war constrains the breadth and depth of this analysis, the troubles Nigeria faces today are direct residuals from it.

Over the past sixteen years, conflict has taken a turn for the worse as militant Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram has made it a mission to destroy anything that has to do with "the

West." Boko Haram promotes a version of Islam which makes it "haram", or forbidden, for Muslims to take part in any political or social activity associated with Western society. Subsequently, the terrorist group has been responsible for the assassination of various government officials, bombings of churches and government-run schools, and several attacks on Nigerian government institutions.

In both conflicts, some of the same fault lines and tensions run parallel. Today, many Nigerians fear the possibility of a full scale Civil War due to Boko Haram's terrorism against non-Muslims in the North. Likewise, the Biafran struggle began as a series of political and social uprisings that originated in regional tensions with the North and South. This paper seeks to find how two wars – the Nigerian Civil War and the war against Boko Haram have had harmful impacts to the education system. First, it will analyze efficiency of the education system in terms of enrollment, access, participation, curriculum development, student learning, and teacher's response to two conflicts: The Nigerian Civil War and the militant Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram.

Based on studies in other countries, this paper will also make recommendations as how the education system can be re-build. Lastly, this paper concludes by offering a re-conceptualization of the relationship between Nigeria's most recent conflict and its effects on education, and suggests ways in which educators and policy makers can develop more context-appropriate policies and practices for the education system.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank my parents for instilling the value of education in my life, and the importance of higher learning. To whom much is given, much is expected and I truly appreciate everything I have been taught. Thank you to the International Development and Social Change program for changing my perspective. To the inspiring faculty, my colleagues, and staff members at Clark University, I feel honored to have experienced my graduate school years with such thought provoking and inspiring individuals.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview of The Relationship Between Education and Conflict.....	1
Understanding The Conflict.....	3
Post-Colonial Nigeria and The Biafran War.....	5
The Nigerian Civil War (Biafran War) 1967-1970.....	6
Impacts of The War in Education.....	9
Emergence of Boko Haram.....	10
Political Dissatisfaction.....	12
Ongoing Attacks in Northern Nigeria.....	14
Issues with Nigeria’s Current Education System.....	15
Challenges Primary School Teachers Currently Face.....	17
Current Student Enrollment Rates.....	19
Disparities of Children Schooling in Northern Nigeria.....	20
Conclusion.....	22
Conflict Resolution: Eradicating Boko Haram’s Terror.....	22
Implementing Peace Education.....	23
Boko Haram’s Role in The Peace Process.....	25

## **OVERVIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND CONFLICT**

Ethnic and civil conflict have plagued countries in Africa since the colonial era, affecting the education system in areas such as student enrollment, quality of education, teacher's impact, and access. Due to civil unrest, Western education has not advanced in Africa the same way it has in other parts of the world. This is largely due to the fragments left from colonialism, which have caused many of the conflicts countries face today. The Colonists gave preferential treatment educating only certain populations. Such was the case with the Germans favoring the Ewe in Togo, the English with the Baganda in Uganda, and the Belgians and the Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi. While countries such as Rwanda and Burundi have been able to rebuild their education systems through better governance and peace education, Nigeria is still trying to find a method that works for its failing system.

Sub-Saharan Africa has some of the world's worst indicators in education including enrollment and participation, which is significantly low. Empirical evidence has shown that during civil conflict, the biggest casualties and victims are civilians rather than the actual combatants fighting. Children, teachers, and schools are often legitimate targets in armed conflicts. For example, the civil war in Sierra Leone destroyed the education systems physical infrastructure. Consequently, many children lacked a physical place to attend school. Almost three years after the end of the war, about sixty percent of primary schools still required physical restoration, which affected millions of children seeking education in the country.

The quality of education during war periods is often negatively affected, and many countries continue to combat the standards of teaching while trying to maintain student enrollment. Teaching in countries where active conflict is occurring can be extremely difficult

and discouraging for educators. As of 2017, Congolese educators teaching in rural areas had no fixed salary due to residual uprisings and government spending from the Second Congolese War. According to data collected by the International Rescue Committee, slightly more than seven out of ten teachers were paid.

Sustainable progress in education quality depends on making sure that schools have sufficient teachers and that teachers are properly trained and supported. However, in Congo, teachers have gone unsupported. Not only do many teachers lack a salary, the government also does not provide incentives such as travel stipends, housing, or any types of hardship allowance, making it less desirable to want to teach. Subsequently, a lack of teachers has created larger classroom sizes to teach. Indicators have shown that class size is associated with performance and that the outputs for quality of education in larger classrooms are lower than smaller classrooms. Smaller class sizes allow teachers to spend more time with each student and less time in classroom management, providing better instruction tailored to the students' individual needs, and ensuring higher performance.

Access to education during conflict periods has plagued many African nations. Whether access is limited due to violence or poverty (as a result of war), gender parity is an intersection of access that has left an imbalance in many education systems. Consequently, many children do not have the same equitable means to attain an education. In the case of the Liberian Civil War, women and girls who were accused of belonging to a particular ethnic group or fighting faction or who were forced to cook for a soldier or fighter were at increased risk for physical and sexual violence (Swiss, 1998). The targeting of women and girls by armed forces exacerbated the internal conflict, discouraging girls from attending school because it was unsafe for them to



leave home. Thus, many young girls have gone unnoticed, losing the opportunity to gain a proper primary education.

Although the Liberian Civil War ended in 2003, the country is still having a hard time recovering. According to UNICEF, between 2008 and 2012 the net enrollment of female participation was thirty-nine percent, not up to half of the overall male-female demographic. Since then, new initiatives have been introduced to prepare school administrators with the tools to improve gender equality in education and respond to and prevent school-related, gender-based violence communities across Liberia. (The White House, 2016)

## **UNDERSTANDING THE CONFLICT**

The sociopolitical conflict Nigeria is currently facing with Boko Haram is not the only conflict the country faces; however, it is the most pertinent. Boko Haram's mission is an anti-Western ideology and the group's goal is to fundamentally stop non-Muslims from practicing what they believe in (e.g. religion, education practices). There are three major identifiable catalysts manifested prior to the conflict, which include but are not limited to the colonization/decolonization of Nigeria, ethnic tensions in Northern Nigeria, and control over oil production in the Niger Delta in the South. Prior to Nigeria's colonization, each ethnic group had coexisted, yet maintained their individual identities as each had their own ethnic, linguistic, and religious divisions.

During the cultural conquest of Nigeria and the colonization of the people, education played the most significant role. The colonial powers recognized this fact from the beginning and made education a vital role in controlling the people and the environment thus creating a divergence among the different ethnic groups. Western education and Christianity quickly spread

in the southern region of the country as opposed to the north, where the traditional Muslim leaders resisted the spread of Western education by Christian missionaries. (Falola, 2015) In an attempt to control, reap economic benefits, and “civilize” the various indigenous peoples of Nigeria, the British dismantled the native cultures by imposing their own practices and beliefs, while generalizing the native people who lived in the country as one.

Due to the traditional nature and blatant opposition of the Hausas in the North, the British had to find another way to gain control in the region. During the colonization era, the British Empire enforced indirect rule – a seemingly one-sided “partnership” that made the natives feel that they were still in control over the politics in their land. Indirect rule allowed the traditional authorities, the sultan and the emirs, in the north to continue running things more or less, as they saw fit. (Maier, 2001) In contrast, the Igbo’s and other small tribes in the south were a favorable ally for the British, as they were more open to submit to Western ideas and customs. Naturally, the British’s favoritism with the southerners created a rift with the northerners creating animosity where previously there was none.

The British pitted Nigeria’s various ethnic groups against one another with the amalgamation of the northern and southern parts of the territory in 1914. As the British asserted their Western beliefs onto the people, the country transformed from distinct ethnic groups with their own systems to “Nigerian” under the same group as a whole. The British inappropriately promoted a Westminster style of government to a country that had such ethnic and cultural diversity and Europe's arbitrary post-colonial borders ultimately left the people, “clustered into one country that did not necessarily represent who they were.” (Fisher, 2012) Essentially, the colonizers did not account for cultural differences, traditional governments, and political systems and expected the “Nigerian” people to replicate the colonial paradigm they had tried to

implement in the country. While some ethnic groups were accepting of the British colonial ideas, others were not as welcoming to the new ideology.

## **POST-COLONIAL NIGERIA AND THE BIAFRAN WAR**

Nigeria gained its independence from the British in October of 1960. Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo man, became governor-general of the federation, appointed by the British Parliament. He later became the first President of Nigeria following the end of British rule. In the post-colonial period, Northerners became particularly worried of Southern domination as the Yoruba's had rallied around Awolowo, and the Igbos, had nationalist leader Nnamdi Azikiwe, whom embraced Western education and pressed for independence. That left the political elite of the north, who had so adamantly rejected western ideology and rhetoric.

Due to the lack of educational diversity, the North's development remained somewhat stagnant. This was a great contrast to the Southern population, which had a more diverse educational background (Traditional and Western). Thus, when Nigerians took over from the Europeans, it was only natural that the vacancies left after were filled by the educated people who mainly came from the South (Gould, 2013). Therefore, the north, which had principally focused on the remnants of the Sokoto Caliphate, saw liberation as a potential threat to their conservative; some would say feudal, way of life. (Maier, 2001)

### **I. The Nigerian Civil War (Biafran War) 1967-1970**

In 1967, the Biafran people (individuals who belong to the Igbo tribe) were the fourteen million individuals living in the South who wanted to secede from Nigeria. The Biafrans felt their political and cultural beliefs were undermined and unrepresented in the country due to a

Northern-dominated federal government. Because of lack of data, the state of the Nigerian education system during the Civil War is rarely discussed.

In March, 1967, the Eastern Regional government started a sensitization drive and began going to schools in Igbo communities using propaganda to promote Biafran secession. Memoirs of students, annotated in *Recollections of Childhood Experiences During the Nigerian Civil War* describes the individual experiences of adults who were of school-age during the war. Children were taught songs to promote Biafran independence and were shown violent and morbid images from the pogroms, which killed half a million Biafran's to incite anger, anxiety, and fear of the opposing parties. This type of propaganda made it easy for the Biafran Army to recruit children to get involved with the war. Subsequently, many children – if not pulled out of school due to fear of enemy retaliation – became child soldiers. Additionally, many Igbo teachers from the Southeast joined the Biafran Army as well leaving several schools useless as teachers and students fought in the war.

The War commenced in July of 1967 and was the first “black-on-black genocide in postcolonial Africa.” (Korieh, 2012) During the course of the war, the Federal Government relied heavily on Western allies, receiving military aide and ammunition from both Britain and the United States, while the Biafran's gained later support from France (Ekwe-Ekwe, 2012). The same entity that held favor for the Biafran's previously, was the same one fighting against them in the war. This parallels with the case of Rwanda, where previously favored Tutsi's were denied. Additionally, due to the high costs of the war used for weaponry and other military spending, the Nigerian government had to reduce funding to education. The government faced direct and indirect costs of war, which was detrimental to the system. For example, direct costs included the destruction of school facilities and the infrastructure needed to support those

facilities. While indirect costs were loss of revenue due to the presence of the war (e.g. loss of human productivity due to death or injury). (Lai, 2012)

After three failed attacks on Biafra, the Nigerian Government enforced a siege, declaring a land and sea blockade. Government forces had decided starving the population out would be the best war strategy, and they succeeded. On May 19, 1968, the city Port Harcourt, the most important port in Biafra, fell to Nigerian forces (Ekwe-Ekwe, 2011). As the blockade of Biafra continued, famine began to spread. While the Nigerian forces bombed agricultural lands, Biafra's military situation quickly deteriorated; only logistical problems prevented the final crushing of the rebellion. (Ekwe-Ekwe, 2011)

During the end of the 1960s, education in the southeastern part of Nigeria was essentially at a standstill. As a result of the government policy to starve Biafran's through the land and sea blockade, many Biafran children affected, were unable to go to school. At the height of the war, Catholic missionaries that were in the country helped many people and used schools, churches, and their medical clinics as triage units for those that were suffering or dying. Journalist Alan Hart documented this phenomenon in 1968, when the rest of the world was unclear about the genocide that was occurring in Nigeria.

There were no declared winners or losers in the Biafran War, but it was clear who lost the battle. Biafra was unable to secede from the rest of the country and the social and economic imbalances went unresolved. An estimated two-million people (majority Biafran) were killed during the Biafran War, however data reports much less – about one million – with many of those killed dying of disease and hunger rather than from direct battle itself. The majority of those killed in the war were women, children, and the elderly, who did not participate in the fighting at all. It should be noted that a significant amount of teachers and educational

administrators were killed during the war, which greatly impaired the country's educational system.

The ethnic tensions that started the war were never fully resolved and as different parties came to power following the war, they ruled with their own group's interests coming first. No leader could unify Nigeria due to selfish political agendas and as a result, Nigeria remained divided as a plural society. The northern and southern regions of Nigeria felt no obligation to the state of Nigeria as a whole, as each struggled to survive in the system. In an attempt to create the appearance of community and national unity, dominant groups began to ban, or make unconstitutional, other political parties. As a result, continuing secessionist movements, one-party states and military governments became the norm.

## II. Impacts of the War in Education

The state of the country was in a frenzy and still very divisive at the start of the 1970s, and suffered many setbacks economically, socially, and most importantly educationally. The country's investment in education dropped significantly due to the loss of infrastructure and adequately trained teachers. After the war, the country needed to rebuild itself and in 1977, the National Policy on Education (NPE) in Nigeria launched. The policy focused on students' self-realization, individual and national efficiency, and national unity. (Amaghionyeodiwe, L.A, 2006) The NPE's goal was to achieve social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological development, unifying the people as well as the different sectors of the economy. (Amaghionyeodiwe, L.A, 2006) The policy adopted the 6-3-3-4 education system, which was a variation of Form Six. Subjects emphasized on were Science, Pre-Vocational and Performance

based learning and included courses such as Integrated Science, Technology, Mathematics, Agriculture, and Fine Arts (Oluniyi, 2013).

The NPE attempted to change the culture of education while improving national consciousness and national unity, yet Nigeria still struggled. Many factors shaped the Nigerian curriculum after the war, including politics, the economy, religion, and internal/external influences. As the country tried to unify and find peace, improving the education system fell to the wayside.

Politics played a large role in the stagnant state of the Nigerian education system. Rather than the Nigerian Government to play a role in inclusiveness and peace for democracy after the war, different political parties began an ego-war of which tribe could gain the most political power. The Nigerian Government did not see the importance of political participation of its citizens. In contrast, the South African constitution emphasized that all citizens should be able to participate fully in the democracy due to the lack of political power during the apartheid period. (Fiske, 2013) The South African government realized that the success of a new political structure was education, and that the substance of the curriculum and skills were necessary to create a new discourse in the country creating more equality among the South African people.

In order for Nigeria to create such inclusiveness, it would need to set up unbiased provisional legislatures, municipal governments, and several new and inclusive structures that would enable participation from its citizens. However, history has shown that the Government often chooses preferential treatment of ethnic counterparts. Unfortunately, lack of political power has created disenfranchisement of the Nigerian people, particularly in the area of education consequently locking millions out of the system.

Implementing an all-inclusive educational system post-war would have been uplifting for the country as a whole. A more efficient education system could have created stronger and more knowledgeable leadership, a more skilled labor force, and more informed citizens to create a more sustainable society.

## **EMERGENCE OF BOKO HARAM**

Boko Haram is currently one of the deadliest Islamic militant groups in the world. The emergence of the group can be attributed to the political and ethno-religious instability the country has experienced over the past half-century. Boko Haram has been characterized by political assassinations, bombings, and attacks on government institutions. The group has waged a violent revolt against the Nigerian government, for interfering with Islamic education and has claimed responsibility for killing thousands of students, teachers, and civilians across Northern Nigeria.

According to Human Rights Watch research, an estimated 10,000 civilians have died in Nigeria since the group began its attacks in 2009. (Human Rights Watch, 2017) Additionally, the number of displaced people (IDP) has increased from just over 1 million at the end of 2014 to almost 2 million in 2015. (Human Rights Watch, 2017) Nigerian authorities suspect that Boko Haram formed around 2001 in Maiduguri by Mohammad Yusuf, a jihadist from the northern part of Nigeria. (Human Rights Watch, 2017)

The underlying situation of the ethno-religious conflict Nigeria is currently facing had arguably been brewing for the past century. The northern and southern regions of Nigeria became rivals when the colonial powers arrived, changing the country forever. Yusuf is said to have displayed a deep hatred towards Western education and often preached against the evils of



it. His ideology was timely and coincided with public resentment triggered by the social ambiguity that arose from extreme poverty. Poverty and desperation for those living in the north was a dangerous mix, and Yusuf played on the emotions of people, particularly youth, women, and unemployed university graduates, to embrace his ideology and recruit them for his cause. Yusuf's recruits were taught to believe that the government, which imposed Western education on them and failed to manage the resources of the country to their benefits, caused their state of hopelessness. (Onuoha, 2015)

### III. Political Dissatisfaction

It is believed that Boko Haram was formed out of frustration over political injustices, and scholars theorize that Yusuf and his followers grew tired of the lack of support from the Nigerian Government's (led by a Southern, Christian Head of State) bias against Northerners. Yusuf and other Northerners shared the exact sentiments the Biafran's had during the Civil War, and felt they had been locked out of the system in terms of resource allocation, the economic sector, and citizenship. According to Yusuf, he perceived that the system of government based on "Western values" had resulted in the increase in corruption, poverty, unemployment and continued suppression of true Islam. (Onuoha, 2015) However, political bias was not toward any group in particular as the Nigerian Government selfishly privatized public funds and expanded state employment while leaving the growing Nigerian population with minimum access to both resources and economic growth.

The political corruption in Nigeria is long-standing and requires emphasis, being a main catalyst for the emergence of Boko Haram. The political issues in the post-colonial era, with certain tribes feeling superior and trying to dominate the country's political system. Since the late 1990s, Nigeria has created a "fair" system of political transition. In 1999 during the ruling of

the People's Democratic Party, Nigerian politicians and elites created a system of "zoning." (Ibrahim, 1999)

The zoning system provided for the rotation of presidency between the North and South to create an equitable distribution of power between the two regions. For example, if the president were a northern Muslim, the vice president would be a southern Christian (e.g. Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan who served from 2007-2010). Even with a "fair" system, Nigeria has experienced unfair distributions of access and equity. This has perpetuated inequality, poverty, and opportunity in the system, which has led to the frustration and hatred towards the Nigerian government.

The level of aggression observed today in the North is a fallout of the innate desire to have access to basic essential needs. Yusuf sought for Nigeria to apply strict Shari'a law and exterminate all influences of Western society. As the country stayed in a fallow state, citizens in the North who supported Yusuf's anti-Western/anti-government perspective rebelled, and purposely committed crimes to sabotage the economy they felt they were not a part.

Citizens therefore participated in destabilizing the country by means of breaking oil pipelines to siphon oil, cannibalizing vital infrastructures such as electricity, railways, and bridges, going beyond ordinary criminality to show their sentiments of exclusion from and lack of ownership of the common patrimony. (Alozieuwa, 2012) While Government officials would never admit to exclusion towards any particular group of people, historical evidence proves that past Head of States, have favored certain ethnic groups among others. In addition, Nigerian electoral history has showed that parties in Nigeria are inclined towards a certain ethnical or religious group, which has led to further disparities among the Nigerian people.

Boko Haram's dissatisfaction for the Nigerian government came to a head in 2009 when the group killed scores of police officers in northern states including Bauchi, Borno, Kano and Yobe. (Alozieuwa, 2012) In retaliation, a joint military task force responded by destroying Boko Haram's operational mosque and killing over 700 of the group's members. (Alozieuwa, 2012) Subsequently, Yusuf was killed by Nigeria's task force and the group. The group was taken over under new leadership became increasingly violent thereafter.

#### IV. Ongoing Attacks in Northern Nigeria

According to the Human Rights Watch organization, Boko Haram members have been terrorizing schools since about 2010. They have deliberately targeted all Christians, apostate Muslims, universities, and primary schools that use a "Western" curriculum. Since then, an estimated one million children have been forced out of school as a result of the group's violent attacks. UNICEF has reported that the violence has kept many children out of the classroom for more than a year, putting them at risk of dropping out of school altogether.

Boko Haram became particularly notorious in international mainstream media in April 2014 when the group raided the Chibok Government Secondary School and kidnapped 276 girls. The kidnappings brought global attention to the terror Nigeria faced with Boko Haram. The fact that young girls were targeted made headlines. Subsequently, the #BringBackOurGirls Movement was created in support of the families whose daughters were taken. Following the kidnappings, the local town of Chibok was completely terrorized with homes burned to the ground and the annihilation of the secondary school.

Following the attacks, the Nigerian government claimed to be working on finding the missing girls, but the Nigerian Army failed several missions. In fact, at least 200 girls are still missing with little progress since the release of about two dozen girls in 2015. The girls reported

isolation, which is a common war tactic. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda similarly isolated captured children threatening that the Ugandan army would capture escapees and mistreat or execute them (Wessells, 2009). The released girls reported extreme trauma ranging from rape, training to fight with Boko Haram, and many instances of other girls' sold as child brides.

Since the kidnappings, Boko Haram has carried out several other attacks in the North, continuously attacking schooling establishments and furthering the divide and mistrust among the Nigerian people. While the Government has promised to dismantle Boko Haram, each operation has failed, leaving the Nigerian people outraged. The government has been responsible for botched airstrikes killing IDPs instead of terrorists, poorly orchestrated counterattacks, and torturing civilians who have no Boko Haram affiliation for information. The aforementioned have caused many Nigerians to lose faith in the government, creating a deeper divide between the people and the government.

## **ISSUES WITH NIGERIA'S CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Education is one of the most important investments a country can make, and has the ability to advance a country from *underdeveloped* to *developed* status. Yet, Nigeria has consistently struggled with educating the masses. The country is currently working on outdated curriculum frameworks. The primary education system is based on content unrelated to development trends and is failing in areas such as gender parity, teacher quality and response, and student learning.

Nigerian children are currently being deprived a fair chance to escape poverty, obtain decent jobs, and a future to ultimately develop their communities. This continues to be a challenge in the development of a comprehensive education reform. A large cause of the

uneducated population is due to the differing social values and ethno-religious conflict in the country. Although the country has tried to develop new schools, change the system through initiatives such as Universal Primary Education (UPE), and modernize the curriculum to the current universal curriculum, the country has still struggled to stabilize school attendance and graduation success rates.

Nigeria's Nigeria's National Policy on Education (FRN 1998), states that the Federal Government, "adopted education as an instrument for effecting National Development in all areas of the nation." (Ali, 1987). It was created to promote the teaching of social studies and demote the teachings of history, which consisted of ethno-religious socio-political tensions and an ethnic driven civil war. Thus, social studies was considered a practical subject to teach in order to create cohesion among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Shortly after the updated NPE came into effect, the state made the decision to begin teaching Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) in public schools in the northern state of Borno. The new policy required that Christianity be taught alongside Islamic Religious Knowledge. Consequently, a number of Muslims were in opposition to exclude Christian teachings in the school system which led to three churches being attacked in protest. This led the state to withdraw the order to teach CRK in the Borno school system. The aforementioned is a primary example of the type of ethno-religious tensions that led toward the emergence of a militant Islamic group like Boko Haram.

Almost twenty years later, the situation has not changed and the Nigerian system, which encourages a confessional approach to matters such as religion has contributed to further marginalization in the country. Issues within the system include poor funding and thus poor educational infrastructures, inadequate classrooms, libraries, and lack of teaching aids (projectors, computers, and laboratories). The government has failed to allocate the proper funds

towards the education system. One cause is that the Nigerian Army has needed to reallocate funds to combat the terror of Boko Haram. For example, the military has acquired new equipment, such as the purchase of a substantial number of armored vehicles, attack helicopters and even Chinese armed drones to help increase the capabilities of the armed forces. Such spending has taken away from schools attaining adequate infrastructure, proper materials and teaching aids, materials such as suitable libraries and classrooms, quality books, furniture (e.g. desks and chairs), and laboratory equipment. The aforementioned are usually unsatisfactory if available at all, often run out, or used improperly, creating more problems than solutions.

With rapid population growth, poor governance, and internal conflict, education has severely suffered, leaving younger generations at a major disadvantage. During the 1980s and early 1990s, the education system had many flaws. Federal and State governments, Local Government Authorities (LGA), Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), and local communities provide funding for education at the primary school level (Olaniyan, 2008). Although the Ministry of Education is primarily responsible for school funding, the amount actually allocated to education is still very low. There were issues all across the spectrum from unqualified teachers and lack of teacher pay, to a disproportionate amount of schools built to keep up with the booming population.

## V. Challenges Primary School Teachers Currently Face

The quality of education outputs in Nigeria are very low, and there are little to no incentives to put effort into teaching. Teachers hold a significant role in societies because they facilitate the building of knowledge and skills necessary for future generations to grow. It is important that teachers teaching in the Nigerian education system feel valued and safe, particularly during times of conflict due to terrorism and ethnographic or ethno-religious

differences. Unfortunately, the overall quality of the existing teacher education programs has been insufficient in providing teachers with the intellectual and professional backgrounds adequate for their assignment in the society. (Afe, 2006)

The lack of infrastructure to hold the rapidly growing population has been equally problematic for teachers in Nigeria. With the Nigerian government unable to keep up with the infrastructure needed to house the millions of eligible school aged-children and Boko Haram destroying schools – the supply and quality of teachers is becoming scarce. This has created an environment with class sizes that are much too large teach, a solid indicator for poor academic performance. In fact, many Nigerian schools have as many as eighty to one-hundred students per class, which is too large for optimum academic achievement of students. (Yusuf, 2016) This only contributes to the reality that teachers (who already feel mistreated by the system) have less time to focus on individual students needs in the classroom, which can negatively affect student growth.

While conflict has had many physical effects, it has also affected teachers from a psychological standpoint. The attacks teachers have experienced from Boko Haram has had psychological effects that are overcome by grief at the loss or maiming of their colleagues and students or are distracted by threats to colleagues. (UNESCO, 2015) Teachers have experienced issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, which include symptoms of anxiety, depression, panic attacks, and even avoidant behaviors. This has made it difficult for many teachers to support their students or perform their job well for communities in Yobe, Kaduna, Adamawa and Borno states. Similarly, Burundi's teaching population showed that most teachers in the school system were deeply marked by their experiences with ethnic conflicts, and that they recognized the critical roles that they and the educational system must play to achieve lasting peace.

Attacks on schools by armed groups has not only put children and teachers' lives at risk, has also deprived many children of an education. Due to the terrorist attacks against schools, many have resulted in closure and many children have dropped out entirely. Even if classes resume after an attack, it is hard to revert to normal as the quality of education can suffer when students and teachers are afraid to go back. Furthermore, many teachers have been forced to flee for their safety to neighboring states, which has attributed to a small percentage of the teacher shortage Nigeria is currently facing. Threats of more attacks have also forced other schools in proximity to close or parents to keep their children at home leaving teachers with no children to teach. With this in mind, it is not difficult to understand why some teachers in the Nigerian school system are already poorly motivated. Thus, creating more problems for the education system.

## VI. Current Student Enrollment Rates

According to a UNESCO report, the number of children enrolled in primary schools in sub-Saharan Africa rose by 75% to 144 million between 1999 and 2012. (UNESCO, 2015) Nigeria is leading, having the highest number of unenrolled students on the continent. An important factor behind the low enrollment rates is the current conflict the country is facing with Boko Haram. Other factors for low enrollment are less daunting – children in Nigeria lack both physical and material access to education. For example, a child may not have adequate transportation access to and from school, school is too far or unsafe to walk or the expense of school fees, transportation, books, and other school essentials are too expensive. If either form of access is in jeopardy, it can have a detrimental effect on a child's education.

For advanced education for secondary school and higher, data shows a plummet in attendance rates. The secondary school attendance rate from the same year showed that only



53% of students were in school with 49% of females and 56% of males. (UNICEF, 2015)

Although primary school enrollment has increased in recent years (post-201 data), the net attendance has been about the same. Empirical evidence has shown a missing link between the standard and quality of education. If the Nigerian Government invested better resources and more money on the education system, there may not be such large disparities in the value and access to education today.

## VII. Disparities of Children Schooling in Northern Nigeria

Sixty percent of the mentioned 10.5 million children that are out of school are in northern Nigeria. (UNICEF, 2015) The majority of those not participating in school are girls. Of those fortunate enough to enroll, less than two-thirds complete primary school and even fewer girls finish secondary school. (UNICEF, 2015) A lot of that is due to the culture in Nigeria, particularly in the North where females are second-class citizens. While females play pivotal roles in Northern society in terms of fieldwork, homemaking, and watching after smaller children, their place in the classroom is not valued. Therefore, only the males are encouraged to stay in school. While Nigeria as a whole has reached gender parity for primary education (GPI between 0.97 and 1.03), girls in secondary schools and girls in the north remained at a disadvantage. (UNESCO, 2015) In the North particularly, the gender gap remains wide with the ratio of boys to girls ranging from 2:1 or even 3:1 in some states. (UNESCO, 2015) The northern population is still very traditional in their beliefs, believing that the only education necessary is that of the Quran and Islamic teaching. Subsequently, many students in Quranic schools lack basic reading and math skills. Furthermore, because northerners are generally anti-Western education, northerners do not believe in the importance of female education, and often times young girls who are of school age are married off to start families of their own. Since a bride

price and educational achievement, have little to no correlation according to northern tradition, many parents see no incentive in sending their girls to school and without regulation in the system. In contrast, male children – sometimes referred to as referred to as *Almajiri* – often leave their poverty-stricken families to attend school and are highly encouraged to beg on the streets to pay for their care and instruction. (USAID, 2015) Thus, the number of both boys and girls enrolled in northern schools has stayed significantly low.

As Boko Haram has perpetuated attacks and raids in small villages, particularly schools, girls who are privileged enough to attend school have often faced trauma. Instances of extreme violence, illness, and in many cases death have been side effects of the militant group's terror. This has been proven in cases such as the missing girls taken from Chibok. As previously mentioned, there has been little progress in finding the remaining missing girls. However, the girls who were released by Boko Haram reported there were many girls (aside from their group) who had been taken.

The Chibok girls reported instances of rape, sexual slavery, exploitation in the militant group's camps, and inadequate access to reproductive health services in the Boko Haram camp. They additionally reported unwanted pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS. The aforementioned is another contribution to low enrollment rates as parents are discouraged from sending their daughters to school because it is unsafe for them to leave home. Similarly, during the Somalian Civil War, girls dropped out of school when it became too dangerous to travel to school. In some cases, this accelerated their early marriage. Furthermore, school attendance is further discouraged when the absence of males means greater workloads for women and girls. (UNICEF, 2015)

## CONCLUSION

### VIII. Conflict Resolution: Eradicating Boko Haram's Terror

Nigeria is currently in great need of political and social change. Being the most populous African nation with the lowest student enrollment rate on the continent is extremely regressive for the future of the country. With the international community paying more attention to Nigeria and willing to help, now is an ideal time for the leaders of the country to create a plan for unity and peace. Nigeria could create a model similar to South Africa's using education to promote peace. The past miseducation of Nigerian children has only created more long-term disparities for the country as those children have grown up lacking the skills necessary to be self-sufficient, contributing their social and civil duties as Nigerian citizens.

The Nigerian government has experienced great corruption and long periods of military rule in the country have created problems of instability on many fronts. Irregular and sudden changes in the government leadership have resulted in good educational policies failing to be implemented or even started. (Nwagwu, 1997) There have been thirteen presidents since the country gained independence in 1960, of that amount, eight of those thirteen presidencies have been under military rule. Unstable national leadership has been destructive towards the education system because leaders have often governed by force rather than the wishes of the Nigerian people.

The government holds all the control to do something substantial in reducing conflict, yet it has held the education system back by embezzling educational funds (e.g. scholarships and grants). Currently, implementing free education in rural areas in the Northeast region – Boko Haram's most active areas – would make a great impact on the current education system. Additionally, more efforts to strengthen the establishment of schools and involve courses like

peace education to re-orientate children and youths on the need to live in peace and harmony with each other.

## IX. Implementing Peace Education

Nigerians have been fighting each other since the colonial era, with little progress on the national level. The country now needs to unite using the tool of education to navigate by creating an environment for social and civic reconstruction. If Nigeria adopted new policies to tear down former barriers and unify old rivalries, the country would be able to move towards a more progressive state. In addition, reforming the curriculum of the general education system to make it more responsive to the socio-economic needs of the country would create a solid foundation. Countries such as Rwanda and South Africa have successfully put aside ethnic and racial differences, focusing on education to resolve decades of conflict. Both countries have rose to economic dominance on the continent, overcoming years of poverty and failing education systems. Nigeria is in the position to follow suite, yet the country keeps experiencing setbacks.

The first step Nigeria can take in conflict resolution is peace education. While focusing on the overall education system is important, alleviating ethnic tension and creating solidarity among the Nigerian people is essential. Peace education is a holistic approach to education, and includes the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills, and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment. (Reardon, 2000) Implementing peace education would allow children the opportunities to put peacemaking into practice in an education setting as well as their community, ultimately creating a more unified environment.

Unless there is sensitivity to peacebuilding, social reconstruction will continuously lead to failure. Thus the Nigerian government, local organizations, and NGO's need to work with

both groups to demobilize Boko Haram, which has begun to spread to other parts of West Africa. To create a more unified country, an initiative such as peace education through emergency in education could be implemented in areas most affected by Boko Haram's terror. This concept is based on the notion that education is a basic requirement and cannot be delayed because of conflict. After all, waiting for the conflict to end is not ideal as wars can go on for years, and sometimes decades. Education is seen as an important intervention during times of conflict and has been viewed as a major life changing component for child protection. Empirical evidence shows that out-of-school children are at greater risk of violence, rape, and recruitment into fighting, prostitution, and other life-threatening, often criminal, activities (INEE, 2013).

UNESCO affirms that education provides a return to familiar routines and instills hope for the future, mitigating the psychosocial impact of violence and displacement. Good quality education provided during conflict can also counter the underlying causes of violence, and foster inclusion, tolerance, human rights awareness, and conflict resolution. (UNESCO, 2015) Thus emergency education can be executed through curriculum and a new discourse to create a more conflict-sensitive approach. Muslim and Christian students should learn together, in a healthy and inclusive way enforcing unification and diversity. With this approach, girls would also be completely integrated into the learning process, instead of taught a "gender-specific" curriculum leaving young girls at a disadvantage in the education system. Moreover, education should reach all classrooms in Nigeria, not just selected ones.

## X. Boko Haram's Role in the Peace Process

Integrating Boko Haram members in the peace education process would create a solid unified environment. The use of religious and ethnic appeals as tools of political mobilization would diminish during the peacebuilding process creating a climate of justice. Rwanda did this

in the case of the traditional community court system called “Gacaca” where communities at the local level elected judges to hear the trials of genocide suspects accused of all crimes except planning of genocide. The Gacaca trials served to promote reconciliation among the Hutu’s and Tutsi’s by providing a means for victims to learn the truth about the death of their loved ones. Additionally, perpetrators were given the opportunity to confess their crimes, show remorse and ask for forgiveness in front of their community. It should be noted that Nigeria has never had any type of national reconciliation or healing process from the Civil War or from the effects of Boko Haram. However, a holistic approach such as this process may prove reasonable and effective in the peacebuilding process as many different groups have been marginalized and affected during conflict periods.

Boko Haram has undoubtedly affected the way Nigeria runs as a country. Many children who have been cheated out of an education, will be locked out of the economic sector creating a perpetual narrative that follow the intersections of poverty, gender, and their effects on opportunity. Nigeria implementing capacity building and peacebuilding are the few options it has left to end the conflict and move forward as a nation.

A new structure could change the education sector plan to create a better representation of what the system could be if properly executed. Students would be more apt to learn in an environment where they feel safe and understood regardless of what their ethno-religious background is. School should always be a safe place meant for ideas, similar or different, to be understood and challenged. Yet, many Nigerian children are not even given the opportunity to learn basic skills such as literacy and mathematics. These children will grow up to be adults who lack basic skills to attain a proper livelihood as the rest of the world is becoming more technologically advanced.

The current problems Nigeria is experiencing will continue to exist as long as the government remains weak. The implementation, equity, quality, learning outcomes, monitoring and evaluation all fall on whether the Nigerian government can successfully facilitate and govern the different Nigerian sectors to work together and improve the education system. Therefore, with proper care and governance, the education system has great unifying potential.

#### Works Cited

Afe, John O. "Reflections on Becoming a Teacher and the Challenges of Teacher Education." *OPUS 4*. University of Benin, 2006. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

Ali, Anthony|Akubue Augustine. "Nigerian Primary Schools' Compliance with Nigeria National Policy on Education: An Evaluation of Continuous Assessment Practices." *Evaluation Review*. SAGE Journals, 30 Nov. 1987. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

Alozieuwa, Simeon H.O. "Theories on Nigeria's Security Challenge in the Era of Boko Haram Insurgency." *Peace & Conflict Review*. Report for the U.S. Department of Justice, June 2012. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

Amaghionyeodiwe, L.A.\* Osinubi, T.S. The Nigerian Educational System and Returns to Education. *International Journal of Applied Econometrics and Quantitative Studies* Vol.3-1 (2006)

Bartolotta, C. "Jihad in Sub-Saharan Africa ." *World Policy Institute*. The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations, 2012. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

Bartolotta, Christopher. "The Rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria." *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations, 2012. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

"A Critical Review of Management of Primary Education in Nigeria." *International Journal of African & African- American Studies*, 2008. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

(Editor), Chima J Korieh. "The Nigeria-Biafra War: Genocide and the Politics of Memory." *Alibris*. Cambria Press, 28 July 2012. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

Egiegba, Daniel. "Boko Haram and the Ongoing Campaign of Terror in Northern Nigeria: The End in Sight?" *Harvard Africa Policy Journal*. The Africa Policy Journal, 03 Dec. 2015. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

Ekwe-Ekwe, Hebert. "Biafra 1966-1970." *Combat Genocide Association*. Dror Israel Movement, 5 Feb. 2011. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

Ekwe-Ekwe, Herbert. "Biafra Revisited." *African Books Collective*. African Renaissance, 01 Dec. 12. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

Falola, Toyin O., and Reuben Kenrick Udo. "Nigeria." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 29 May 2015. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.



- Fisher, Max. "The Dividing of a Continent: Africa's Separatist Problem." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, 10 Sept. 2012. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.
- Fiske, Edward B., and Helen F. Ladd. "Elusive Education Reform in Post-Apartheid South Africa." *Comparative Education Review*. The Brookings Institution, 24 July 2013. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.
- Gould, Michael. *The Struggle for Modern Nigeria: The Biafran War, 1967-1970*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2013. Print.
- Human Rights Watch. "Attacks on Education in Northeast Nigeria." *Human Rights Watch*. Human Rights Watch, 16 Feb. 2017. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.
- Ibrahim, Jibrin. Political Transition, Ethnoregionalism, and the "Power Shift" Debate in Nigeria. Volume 27, Issue 1. January 1999, pp. 12-16
- INEE. "Education in Emergencies." *Education in Emergencies*. Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2013. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.
- Lai, Brian, and Clayton Thyne. "The Effect of Civil War on Education, 1980—97." *SAGE Journals*. Journal of Peace Research, 01 May 2007. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.
- Maier, Karl. "This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria." *African Affairs*. Oxford University Press, 01 July 2001. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.
- Nwagwu, Cordelia. "The Environment of Crises in the Nigerian Education System." *Comparative Education*. Taylor & Francis, Ltd, Mar. 1997. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.
- Ogundari, Kolawole, and Adebayo B. Aromolaran. "Impact of Education on Household Welfare in Nigeria." *Taylor & Francis Online*. International Economic Journal, 10 July 2013. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.
- Okereke, N.C. "Implementing the Nigerian Defence Policy: Reflections on the Boko Haram Crisis." *Nigerian Defence and Security: Policies and Strategies*. Kaduna. Medusa Academic Publishers Ltd, Oct.-Nov. 2011. Web.
- Olaniyan, David A. & Obadara, Olabanji E. A Critical Review of Management of Primary Education in Nigeria. International Journal of African & African American Studies Vol. VII, No. 1, Jan 2008.

Oluniyi, Oyeleke, and Clara Olajumoke Akinyeye. "Curriculum Development in Nigeria; Historical Perspectives." *The College of Information Sciences and Technology. Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 04 Jan. 2013. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

Onuoha, Freedom. "The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram Crisis Explained." *Nigerian Guardian Newspaper Report*. African Security Council, 23 Nov. 2015. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

Reardon, B. (2000). Peace Education: A Review and a Projection. In B. Moon, M. Ben-Peretz & S. Brown (Eds.), *Routledge International Companion to Education*. London: Taylor & Francis. p. 397-425.

Swiss, S., P. J. Jennings, G. V. Aryee, G. H. Brown, R. M. Jappah-Samukai, M. S. Kamara, R. D. Schaack, and R. S. Turay-Kanneh. "Violence against Women during the Liberian Civil Conflict." *JAMA*. U.S. National Library of Medicine, 25 Feb. 1998. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

Ugwumba, E.U., and T.C. Odom,. "Boko Haram Insurgency: A Peril to Achievement." *International Journal of Education Learning and Development*. European Centre for Research Training and Development UK, Jan. 2014. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

UNESCO. *Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges*. Rep. no. 12. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2015. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

UNESCO. "Education Transforms Lives." *UNESCO*. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2013. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

UNICEF. "Nigeria's Boko Haram Insurgency Forces One Million Children from School." *The UN News Center*. UN News Service, 22 Dec. 2015. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

UNICEF. "War Hits Home When It Hits Women and Girls." *Information: Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. UNICEF In Action, 2008. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

USAID. "Increasing Access to Education in Northern Nigeria | USAID Impact." *USAID and Partners*. The United States Agency for International Development, 16 Apr. 2016. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

Walker, Andrew. "What Is Boko Haram?" *United States Institute of Peace*. United States Institute of Peace, Spring 2012. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

Wessells, Michael. "Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection." *Google Books*. Harvard University Press, 31 Mar. 2009. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

The White House. "FACT SHEET: First Lady Announces New Let Girls Learn Commitment in Liberia." *National Archives and Records Administration*. National Archives and Records Administration, 27 June 2016. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

Yusuf, Taofeek Ayotunde, C A. Onifade, and O.S. Bello. "Class Size on Learning." *Journal of Research Initiatives*. Fayetteville State University, 2016. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.