



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA AND NIGER: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Usman Muhammad Malah¹ dan Komaruddin Sassi²

^{1,2} Pascasarjana Institut Agama Islam Al-Qur'an Al-Ittifaqiah Indralaya

E-mail : usmanmuhammadmala@gmail.com¹, sassikomarudin@yahoo.com²

Abstrack

The topic deals with education in Nigeria and Niger, challenges and solutions, and aims to identify the challenges facing education in Africa in general and in Nigeria and Niger in particular, and the difficulties that students and pupils suffer from before, during and after school, and the impact of colonial countries on not developing education and learning, controlling the curricula and leaving an educational system that serves their interests, and the researcher follows the descriptive and analytical method, to reach The desired or expected results at the end of the research, and the expected results at the end of the research are, the presence of officials and experts who are interested in developing education in Nigeria and Niger, and the application of curricula on the ground, which helps the community to obtain a good education, and governments are expected to pay attention to public education and provide supplies for this, there is a lack of competencies of employees and experienced professors in government primary schools. Because education in Nigeria and Niger is similar, the difference in the language of education may be a result of colonization, in Niger it is French, and in Nigeria the official language is English, we take a look at some of the history of education in the two countries, and some challenges and solutions.

Keywords : *Education, Nigeria, Niger, challenges, solutions.*



Abstrak

Topik ini membahas pendidikan di Nigeria dan Niger, tantangan serta solusinya, serta bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan yang dihadapi pendidikan di Afrika secara umum, khususnya di Nigeria dan Niger. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh siswa sebelum, selama, dan setelah sekolah, serta dampak negara-negara kolonial dalam menghambat perkembangan pendidikan dan pembelajaran. Negara-negara kolonial mengontrol kurikulum dan meninggalkan sistem pendidikan yang lebih menguntungkan kepentingan mereka. Peneliti menggunakan metode deskriptif dan analitis untuk mencapai hasil yang diharapkan di akhir penelitian. Hasil yang diharapkan dari penelitian ini adalah adanya pejabat dan pakar yang tertarik dalam pengembangan pendidikan di Nigeria dan Niger, serta penerapan kurikulum secara nyata yang membantu masyarakat mendapatkan pendidikan yang baik. Pemerintah diharapkan memperhatikan pendidikan publik dan menyediakan fasilitas yang memadai untuk mendukungnya. Terdapat pula kekurangan tenaga kerja yang kompeten dan profesor berpengalaman di sekolah dasar negeri. Karena sistem pendidikan di Nigeria dan Niger memiliki kemiripan, perbedaan bahasa pengantar pendidikan dapat dikaitkan dengan pengaruh kolonialisme—di Niger menggunakan bahasa Prancis, sementara di Nigeria bahasa resminya adalah bahasa Inggris. Dalam penelitian ini, kita akan menelusuri sejarah pendidikan di kedua negara serta berbagai tantangan dan solusi yang ada.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan, Nigeria, Niger, tantangan, solusi.

A. INTRODUCTION

The contributions of Africans to secondary education between 1859 and 1925 were highly significant and cannot be overstated. Without the involvement of indigenous Africans, the overall state of education would have remained extremely limited. Education in Africa initially began with the efforts of missionaries, but it was the support of Ajayi Crowther that played a crucial role in advancing education in Yoruba land and eastern Nigeria. In Bonny, the church leader informed Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther that religious instruction for their children was unnecessary since they already received sufficient teachings at home. Nevertheless, it was through Pastor Samuel Crowther's dedication that the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) successfully implemented its vision of educating Africans. (Mr. Akanbi G. 2017).

Governments across Africa face a threefold challenge: expanding the education workforce, increasing the percentage of qualified teachers, and ensuring that labor policies



support equitable education. Analyzing youth employment through the comparative NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) indicator highlights some of these challenges. Data from 11 countries reveal significant variations in the proportion of young people aged 15-24 who are neither studying, working, nor undergoing training. In some nations, this affects one in eight young individuals, while in others, the numbers are even higher. To address these issues, many governments have adjusted their education programs and workforce management policies. These initiatives aim to enhance teacher motivation and encourage them to work in schools that are difficult to staff. From 2005 to 2011, a teacher education program integrating ICT was developed and implemented with funding from the African Development Bank. This program involved 12 universities from 10 countries collaborating to design, develop, and deliver distance and e-learning initiatives. (UNESCO/African University for Development, 2023)

In 2012, the second phase of this project was initiated to enhance the existing teacher education modules by incorporating lessons learned from the initial program, revising existing materials, and developing new ones. This phase was successfully completed in 2017. On behalf of the African Virtual University and our sponsor, the African Development Bank, we invite you to utilize this module in your institution, for your own education, and to share it as widely as possible. We also encourage you to actively engage in the African Virtual University communities of practice that align with your interests. Our commitment remains steadfast in leading the development and dissemination of open educational resources (Sismondi Enosi. 2017). Most African societies depended on traditional informal education, where rituals, games, singing, and dancing played a crucial role. Boys and girls were typically taught separately to equip them with the necessary skills for adulthood. Rather than having designated teachers or lecturers as in modern education, the entire community participated in educating children. This collective effort continued until the children underwent a ceremonial rite of passage marking their transition from childhood to adulthood (Sarah Ferber et al., 2023). I am from Africa from Nigeria, the issue of education in Africa and especially in Nigeria is political corruption, economic corruption, poverty, insecurity and instability, all these things have led to the lack of quality and successful education. On the part of the people, there is no interest in taking children or Students to schools, due to lack of good income, especially higher education because it is very expensive especially in Northern Nigeria, same thing in Niger and it could be much worse, unfortunately the curriculum is not disciplined or clear, even schools do not have a good environment, there are no qualified and experienced teachers in schools, especially public schools.



B. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used the method in this study used data collection techniques through documents and then analyze the method, and follows the method of comparison also to reach the desired and the main objective of this study, and try to solve the issue that is the basis of the research, and highlight the results at the end to benefit the reader, and the researcher tries in this study to rely on reliable and reliable sources from primary and secondary sources, and all those sources, whether primary sources or secondary sources from books, scientific research, magazines, articles, taken from library sources or reliable official sites, and accredited and well-known universities, and all those sources are looking for (Education in Nigeria and Niger Challenges and Solutions), since the researcher is from Africa, specifically from the State of Nigeria, he can make some realistic observations on the subject, and he studied all stages of schooling there from primary to college, and he studied in many schools according to his modest experience

C. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS:

1. Education in Nigeria

Education alone cannot directly drive economic growth, but evidence indicates that it is a crucial contributing factor. It creates a foundation that enables other development initiatives to flourish. Education acts as a catalyst for growth, complementing other key factors. For instance, while education is linked to higher agricultural productivity, its impact is significantly greater in societies already experiencing modernization. (World Bank Policy Study. 2024).

The social work profession in Nigeria can leverage ongoing discussions to reform social work education and training programs. In addition to the practical strategies proposed by scholars, insights from my experiences in the Nigerian education system in the 1980s—where I pursued undergraduate and graduate degrees in psychology—as well as my exposure to the Canadian education system in the late 1990s—where I earned degrees in social work—offer valuable perspectives. Furthermore, a recent research collaboration with colleagues at a Nigerian university during my visit in the summer of 2004 reinforced the need to address three core issues within this dialogue. Additionally, I propose two key curricular areas that Nigerian social work programs should prioritize to equip the next generation of social workers with the necessary skills and knowledge to address national priorities.



Nigeria's education structure consists of one year of pre-school, six years of primary school, three years of junior high school, three years of senior high school, and four years of tertiary education. The National Policy on Education, introduced in 1977, was designed to promote self-realization, national competence, and unity, with a broader aim of fostering social, cultural, economic, political, scientific, and technological advancement. In 1985, the policy was expanded to include provisions such as free primary education (Anyanwu et al., 1999).

Before 1984, the education structure included six years of primary education, five to seven years of post-primary education (secondary school, teacher training colleges, and sixth form), and four to six years of tertiary education (colleges of education, technical institutes, and universities). However, since 1985, a restructured system emerged:

- a. Pre-primary education: Informal early childhood care for children aged 2-5 years.
- b. Primary education: A six-year formal program for children aged 6-12 years, serving as the foundation for all subsequent levels of learning.
- c. Secondary education: A six-year program divided into two phases—three years of Junior Secondary School (J.S.S 1 to J.S.S 3), followed by an examination (JSSCE), and three years of Senior Secondary School.
- d. Higher education: Tertiary education at universities, colleges of education, technical institutes, and related institutions.

According to Gbamanya (1997), the primary goal of higher education is to develop intellectual capacity, facilitate adaptation to the environment, and impart relevant skills (Perabel, 2020).

2. Education in Niger

Niger is a landlocked country with a population of 21.5 million, 84% of whom live in rural areas. The population is predominantly young, with 58% under the age of 18. Despite some progress in poverty reduction over the past decade, nearly half of the population remains poor. Several factors constrain Niger's development, including high population growth, climatic challenges that hinder rural development, economic vulnerability due to a lack of diversification, gender inequality, low literacy levels, and the country's geographic disadvantages, which complicate the delivery of basic services.



Niger faces recurring crises, including chronic food insecurity and severe food and nutrition crises in 2010 and 2012. The country frequently experiences epidemics, such as cholera, and natural disasters like floods. Additionally, instability in the Sahel region has led to security concerns and population displacement, particularly in the east due to conflicts with Boko Haram and in the west near the Malian border. (*UNICEF Niger, 2019*)

Education in Niger faces significant challenges, with the country recording the lowest learning outcome indicators in West Africa. Only about 8% of primary school students achieve adequate proficiency in reading and mathematics by the end of primary school (*PASEC, 2014*). Recognizing this crisis, the Nigerien government, in collaboration with UNICEF, has developed a National Plan for Monitoring Learning Outcomes (PNSAS). This plan aims to track student progress regularly and implement remedial measures for struggling learners.

Dr. Hassan, a regional education official, emphasized the need for more systematic monitoring of learning outcomes at classroom and school levels. Mr. Haroua Abdallahi, Inspector of Niamey Region V, echoed this concern, highlighting the urgency of improving educational quality through enhanced oversight and intervention strategies. (*UNICEF Niger, 2019*)

Niger gained independence from France in 1960, but its education system remains deeply influenced by its colonial past. French colonial policy sought to assimilate local populations into French culture, using schools as a tool to impose French language and values. As a result, French was established as the sole medium of instruction, replacing Niger's ten official national languages. Even today, the education system follows a French-influenced curriculum, as outlined in the 1949 colonial school programs (*INDRAP, 1950*).

The Nigerian Education System Orientation Law of 1998 (LOSEN) governs the country's education sector. While Niger is officially a secular state, the law allows for religious educational institutions, particularly Franco-Arabic schools, to be integrated into the public education system.

Between 2003 and 2013, Niger implemented the Three-Phase Education Development Program (PDDE), which significantly expanded primary school access despite repeated political and economic disruptions.

Niger officially recognizes four types of schools:



-
- a. Traditional Schools – Based on the French education model.
 - b. Private Schools – Follow the national curriculum.
 - c. Community Schools – Often run by NGOs, primarily in rural and nomadic areas.
 - d. Franco-Arabic Schools – Integrated into Niger's public system, blending standard and religious education.

While the government generally supports community schools, it does not recognize some sectarian schools unless they adopt the national curriculum and transition into Franco-Arabic institutions. (*Fofo Report, 2016*)

3. Basic Education Development Program

The government of Niger has set a key objective to expand free and compulsory basic education up to the age of 16. To achieve this, several prioritized actions have been implemented:

- a. Teacher Recruitment and Employment Reforms

The government aimed to eliminate contract-based employment by 2020 by recruiting qualified contract teachers into permanent government positions.

- b. School Infrastructure Upgrades

- 1) Replacing all classrooms under thatched roofs with permanent structures.
- 2) Constructing 2,500 new classrooms per year using durable materials.

- c. Enhancing Science and Technology Education

Building and equipping all Basic Cycle 2 institutions with modern science laboratories.

- d. Classroom Optimization

Implementing a rotation system to maximize the use of Basic Cycle 2 classrooms efficiently.

- e. Addressing Inequality and Discrimination

- 1) Implementing targeted policies to improve access for children in rural areas and children with disabilities.



- 2) Promoting girls' education through specific interventions.
- 3) Enhancing the school environment by improving health and hygiene conditions.
(Fofo Report, 2016)

Recognizing education as a top national priority, the Nigerian government allocated 21% of its public spending (equivalent to 5% of GDP) to improving the education sector in 2016. (World Bank, 2019; Reiser, 2012)

Despite challenges such as rapid population growth, limited financial resources, and security risks, the country's education system has shown notable improvements in recent years:

The Gross Enrollment Rate (GER)—the total number of students enrolled as a percentage of the school-age population—has increased:

- 1) Primary school GER rose from 64% to 71% between 2010 and 2017.
- 2) Secondary school GER improved significantly, rising from less than 4% to 14% in the same period.

4. Challenges facing education in Africa since independence

Review articles on "Education in Africa," "Education in Uganda," "Education in Nigeria," "Education in Mozambique," and "Education in Chad," emphasizing the challenges faced by education in post-colonial Africa. Identify the primary issues and compare them with your previous work from Step 4. Document the key concerns in approximately 250 words.

Beyond human resources, education in post-colonial Africa faced shortages in funding and essential materials. Political independence did not equate to economic independence, as nations had to allocate limited resources among various sectors. Consequently, African governments needed to enhance their capacity to generate funds and secure critical inputs for education. Additionally, the education system primarily emphasized theoretical and literary learning, resulting in graduates and school leavers who lacked practical job skills, knowledge, and values. This approach was insufficient to



produce highly skilled professionals, making it necessary to improve the efficiency of education. Another major challenge was adapting curricula to meet the needs of newly independent African nations. Gender disparities in education were also evident, with girls facing significant disadvantages. Overall, Africa has struggled to ensure quality, accessibility, and equity in education.

- a. One specific challenge in improving basic education quality in Niger relates to the coordination of initiatives, despite the existence of relevant offices. Notably, the Office of Curriculum and Pedagogical Innovations (DCIP) lacks data on the training content provided by UNICEF for teachers. However, UNICEF is expected to supply this information along with a clear timeline. (Sismondi Inossi, 2017).
- b. Another challenge is the regional disparity in the training of contract teachers. Despite Dosso and Tillaberi employing the highest number of untrained contract teachers, none have received training so far. This issue may stem from resource shortages, as evidenced by the significant efforts and time the Director of Curriculum Innovations dedicated to securing sponsorship for teacher training, which was planned to begin during the Easter holidays of 2010. However, the situation remains unresolved.
- c. Another significant challenge is organizing training for a diverse group of teachers. Coordinating and delivering effective training for pre-service teachers, trained permanent teachers, and untrained contract teachers is particularly difficult in a resource-limited country like Niger. The varying levels of individual training among educators further complicate efforts to provide quality education. (Ebru Shekarau, 2013). Additionally, a major concern is ensuring the consistent availability of school supplies and emergency school canteens for approximately 150,000 children. Advocacy and awareness campaigns conducted with members of the Education Cluster and regional authorities led to the evacuation of 30 schools previously used as temporary shelters for flood victims, allowing them to reopen for the new academic year. (UNICEF, 2023).



The challenges facing education in Africa, particularly in Nigeria and Niger, require urgent and effective solutions. Many young people struggle due to a lack of knowledge about career paths and sectors they are placed in by default. Some frequently switch fields before ultimately dropping out. The *Karatu Post Pack* project aims to address several key issues, including accessibility, lack of information about post-secondary opportunities, absence of role models, inadequate training for the job market, and difficulties in university registration outside major cities. Authorities must work swiftly to resolve these barriers. (Musa Faki Muhammad et al., 2019). Despite numerous awareness campaigns promoting quality education and inclusion in Nigeria, research has shown that many initiatives have minimal impact. A significant percentage of beneficiaries struggle to access or comprehend the messages due to obstacles such as language barriers, limited internet access, and low literacy levels. Many children cannot read or write, lack practical learning experiences, and show little interest in education. (Musa Faki Muhammad et al., 2019).

Naqeeb Al-Attas highlights several concerning trends in education, including secularism, Westernization, detachment from Islam, materialism, the disregard for spiritual matters, intellectual confusion, moral decline, and the rise of unqualified leaders. (Coumarudin, 2023).

To address these issues, African nations should explore innovations in alternative education, which includes non-traditional learning methods for various age groups. This encompasses programs for students with disabilities and special needs, as well as alternative philosophies that better align education with employment. (Human Development Resource Center, 2011).

Furthermore, the National Education Commission found that unsubsidized community middle schools often lack resources, qualified staff, and adequate support, leading to poor student performance. While the government sees these schools as a challenge in expanding the education system, the Commission argues they should be considered part of the solution. (David R. Evans, 2024).



D. CONCLUSION

There are several reasons why African countries have historically had lower levels of education, but there are also strong reasons for optimism. Historically, improvements in access to and quality of education have been closely linked to rising incomes. However, it remains uncertain whether economic growth drives better education or vice versa. Education enables individuals to earn higher incomes, while greater financial resources provide better access to education. Increased income allows families to afford essentials that support learning, such as electricity, nutritious food, books, and technology. This creates a cycle in which advancements in education and economic progress reinforce each other. As African economies grow, the demand for higher-quality education is expected to rise. If local education systems fail to meet expectations, people may seek better education elsewhere, leading to a loss of valuable skills and further setbacks for the continent.

Key challenges remain, particularly in government primary schools. A major issue is the shortage of qualified and experienced teachers. Continued support from governments and international education organizations is essential. Additionally, many students study in unsuitable environments, such as under trees, due to a lack of proper classrooms. Poverty remains a significant barrier, preventing many families from affording school fees and sending their children to school. Addressing these issues is crucial for the future of education in Africa.

REFERENCES

- Amagunyodeo, L. A., & Osinubi, T. S. (2006). *The Nigerian education system and the returns to education* (p. 32).
- Birabel, S. T., Ogeh, O., & Mathew, U. (2020). *Education in Nigeria: Challenges and the way forward*. Volume 8(1), ISSN 2309-0405.



-
- Duru, A., & Ogunleye, A. (2009). *New directions in the Nigerian educational system*. University of Lagos, Akoka Yaba, Nigeria.
- Duru, A., & Ogunleye, A. (2009). *New trends in the Nigerian educational system*. University of Lagos, Akoka Yaba, Nigeria.
- Emenike, J. A. (2024). *Prerequisites of primary school classroom environment for excellent teaching and learning*.
- Emenike, J. A. (2024). *Basic requirements for a primary school classroom environment for excellent teaching and learning*.
- Evans, D. R. (2024). *Shaping educational policy in Africa: A comparative study of five countries* (p. 29).
- Ferber, S., et al. (2023). *History of African Development*. Retrieved from www.aehnetwork.org/textbook.
- Kelland, A. (2016). *Education in Niger. Fufu Report*, p. 12.
- Kelland, A. (2016). *Education in Niger. Fufu Report*, p. 38.
- Kumaruddin. (2023). *The Qur'an, Image, Pedagogical Theories*. *Journal of Educational Issues*, 9(2), p. 100.
- Mahamat, M. F., et al. (2019). *Guide to Education Innovations in Africa* (pp. 15, 39). African Union Commission.
- Nomboso, S. (Ed.). (2008). *New directions in the challenges and possibilities of African education* (pp. 19, 163). University of Calgary Press.
- Shakarao, E. (2013). *Quality improvement in basic education in Niger: Initiatives, implementation, and challenges* (p. 82). Abdou Moumouni University, Niger.
- Sismondi, E. (2017). *History of education*. Nairobi, Kenya.
- UNICEF. (2019). *Educating Niger* (p. 4).
- UNICEF. (2023). *Niger-Humanitarian-Rapid Update-No. 05*.
- World Bank. (2024). *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. World Bank Policy Study, 1818 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20433, USA.
-