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## A PERCEPTIVE VIEW OF THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL CRISES ON EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Nigeria has witnessed a number of crises since her independence but for the past five years, there seems to be no period of calm in the country. Because of the interest to protect education and make it serve a functional goal, it has become necessary to examine whether there is any influence of crises on education in the country. 250 respondents expressed their views using a structured instrument as to the influence of crises on education in Nigeria. Results are presented and recommendations based on the results are made so as to ensure continued functionality and quality in the Nigerian system of education.

### Introduction

There has been a continuous search for way of improving the education system in Nigeria. More efforts have also been put top make education functional (Udoh & Akpa 1991). Several researches have been conducted and results show that the stipulation in the **National Policy on Education** (F.M.E; 1981) is capable of making education functional but for some extraneous intervening variables (Obinaju 1992, Usoro 1993 and Ezeife, 1992). Current research interest has been on how to remove such variables or at the least minimise their influences on education. As efforts are being made in these directions, several others, previously non-existent variables are rearing their heads. Events which may have been started with little relation to education end up wheeling tremendous effects on education and the educational system in the country. Such events include the numerous crises witnessed at different times in the country. Solarin (1989) describes these crises as a subject that has harassed the waking moments of most Nigerians.

Nigeria has actually witnessed crises from time to time since its independence. These include those within and outside the educational institutions. In recent times, specifically, for the past five years, there have been about seven (7) broad based crises which affect a great proportion of the Nigerian nation. In 1989, there was one which could be termed S.A.P.



University students crises when University students protested against the continuation of the Structural Adjustment Programme of the then government. As a result of this, several Universities in the country were closed down. 1992 and 1993 have witnessed two strikes actions by Academic Staff Union of Universities and one each of non\_academic junior and senior staff. In 1993, beginning with the presidential election on June 12, of that year, there have been a series of other crises. Labour congress protested the annulment of June 12 election, the removal of fuel subsidy and other issues. This led to about 14 days of no work in any of the sectors of economy at the same time. Since that year, also, there has been incessant and intermittent periods of acute fuel scarcity. All these are assumed to have various influences on the educational system in the country.

### **The Problem**

The problems which arise from the background just presented are numerous. Do the crises exposed actually have any association with the educational system in the country? If they do, what is the intensity of the influence of each on education or do they influence education in the same way and at the same rate? Are there any remedies so that education, a worth while venture may be favoured?

### **The Objectives of the Study**

Arising from these problems, this study gears towards examining the influences and the intensity of crises on education in Nigeria. It would also proffer remedies so that education may assume its proper position in the scheme of events in the country.

### **Research Questions**

The study would strive to answer the following questions:

1. In citizens opinion, is there any association between crises and education in Nigeria?
2. Do the various crises wheel the same type of influence on education?
3. In what specific ways do the various crises influence education in

Nigeria?

### **Significance Of The Study**

This study would be able to elicit whether or not there is an association either positive or negative between crises and education in the country. The result of this would expose to Nigeria. Depending on what is expected of education in Nigeria, citizens would, on the basis of the results of this research, be able to quell or aggravate more crises in Nigeria.

### **Method And Sample**

The population used for the study are the citizens of Nigeria both literate and illiterate. 250 respondents are sampled from the above population on a stratified opportunity basis. The stratification provides for samples to be drawn from the various categories of people and from various professions available. Samples included 10 Pharmacists, 10 Doctors, 20 Nurses, 10 Engineers, 20 Mechanics, 30 Teachers, 40 Traders, 20 Students, 30 Civil Servants, 40 Farmers and 20 Unemployed drawn evenly from the states sampled. Due to time and logistic constraints sampling was limited to the Eastern Zone of the country only. This comprises 5 states - Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Rivers, Abia and Imo States of Nigeria. 50 respondents were chosen from each state.

### **Instrument & Instrument Administration**

The means by which data were collected for this was study through the use of a closed-ended and an open-ended questionnaire. The instrument sought to find out whether crises in Nigeria has had any influence on the educational system in the country. If it had, whether the influence was positive or negative. Furthermore, the instrument listed the various crises and required of the respondents to rate each depending on his perception of the intensity of the influence of the crisis on education. Finally, the instrument required that the influence of each crisis on education be stated depending on the perception of the respondents. The instrument was validated by experts in education and test and measurement.

On administration, literate respondents were served a copy each of the questionnaire and allowed time to respond to it in writing while illiterate respondents were interviewed with the questions on the instrument. Their responses were filled in on their behalf.



### Data Analyses

After the collection of duly completed copies of the questionnaire, percentages of responses were worked out to show the perception of influence and the nature of influence exerted on education by crises in Nigeria. Chi-square test was used to test the association between crises and education. On the specific effects of each crises on education, each respondents had an option of providing up to three ways in which the crises in question affect education. The ways expressed by 50% and above of the respondents were summarised as perceived effects of the crisis on education. A summary of suggested solutions has also been presented.

### Results

From data collected, the following results are obtained.

**Table 1**

Summary of Responses showing influence and nature of influence of crises on education

	Responses Obtained			Total
	Positive	Negative	No Response	
Is the Educational system influenced in any way by crises in Nigeria?	224(89.6)	6(2.4)	20(8)	250(100)
The nature of influence	38(15.2)	192(76.8)	20(8)	250(100)

\* Responses obtained are presented in frequency counts and figures in parentheses indicate the percentage of responses in each case.

**TABLE 2 - Chi Square Analysis to Test the Association between crises and education in Nigeria between 1989-1994**

Major Crises in Nigeria Since 1989	Seriously		Average		Mildly		Not at All		No response		Total
	FO	FE	FO	FE	FO	FE	FO	FE	FO	FE	
1 SAP University students crises (1989)	192	154	51	79	7	15.17	0	0.5	103	1.3	250
2. Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) crises of 1992, 1993 and 1994	224	154	19	79	7	15.17	0	0.5	0	1.3	250
3. Non-Academic staff (both senior & junior) crises of 1992 and 1994 &	77	154	147	79	26	15.17	0	0.5	0	1.3	250
4. June 12 crises of 1993 till date	190	154	58	79	0	15.17	0	0.5	2	1.3	250
5. Labour congress crises of 1993	87	154	128	79	26	12.17	3	0.5	6	1.3	250
6. Petrol and Petroleum product scarcity of 1993 and 1994	154	154	71	79	25	15.17	0	0.5	0	1.3	250
	924		474		91		3		8		1500

$$\chi^2 = 351.44$$

$$df = 20$$

$$\text{Critical } \chi^2 \text{ at } P = 0.05 = 31.41$$

From Table 2, the value observed is far greater than the critical value at 0.05 level of confidence. This means that there exists a significant association between the various crises and education in Nigeria. It is now left for us to discuss ways in which the various crises influence education depending of course on the perception of the respondents.

### Perceived Effects Of Crises On Education

#### 1. Crises in Educational Institutions

- (a) Crises in educational institutions such as students unrest, non-academic staff or academic staff strike actions lead to indefinite closure of schools otherwise known as 'long holidays' and a total disruption of academic programme of schools.
- (b) When the school eventually re-opens, periods for actual teaching and learning are shortened with a rush-effect to cover the syllabus which never gets covered.
- (c) There is usually increased incidence of examination malpractice and crime trend in the country.
- (d) It leads to destruction of school and public property as well as loss of lives.

#### 2. June 12, 1993 Crisis

- (a) It led to and fuelled demonstrations by students and others which resulted to indefinite and untimely closure of schools, death of students and other multi-dimensional hardships on campus.
- (b) A general feeling of insecurity about life and properties created such that the ease with which one accepts schooling is lost.

- (c) It acted in a diversionary capacity to students at different levels; sensitizing some to get more involved in politics and neglect formal education or lack of what to do lures some into anti-social activities.
- (d) The crisis demonstrated a gap between ideals and virtues taught in schools on the one hand and the practice of the people on the other. There is a basic confusion.
- (e) It led to irregular monetary and equipment supply in schools.

#### 3. Labour Congress Crisis (1993)

- (a) It led to low or no productivity during the period of strike such that there would be no schools, and the decline in economic activities results in inflation which affects educational materials as well.
- (b) Staff morale is lowered such that even after the strike, the willingness and the enthusiasm to work would be at a lower level.

#### 4. Petrol Scarcity (1993 & 1994)

- (a) Commuters including students and teachers cannot travel because of high transport fares. This results in poor attendance at school.
- (b) There is immediate increase in prices of food and other services as a result of a sudden decline in economy.
- (c) Riots and protest by both students and other sectors of the economy led to premature and an indefinite closure of schools.

Other crisis mentioned not embraced by the categorisations above include:

- (a) Religious crises in the northern part of Nigeria (1990 and



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1992).

- (b) Secret cults in educational institutions (with no specific dates attached to it).

#### Perceived Solutions to the above mentioned Crises

- (a) Justice and the rule of law should be supreme in the practices of the people.
- (b) Dialogue between governors and the governed.
- (c) No domination of government by one (tribe) group of people.
- (d) Return of democracy to the country.
- (e) Reliable political leadership.
- (f) Salaries should be paid regularly and when due.
- (g) Reordering of priorities such that education receives sufficient funding and teachers become the best paid grade of staff in the country.

#### Discussion

It is not enough to assume that the various listed crises in Nigeria wheel tremendous influences on the educational system in the country. A research such as this helps to put things in their proper perspectives. On Table II, a significant association is observed between the various crises listed and education in Nigeria. Again, on Table I, 89.6% of respondents agree that crises in general influence education and 76.8% confirm that they influence education in a negative direction. The findings, thus leaves nobody in doubt as to whether the various happenings which constitute crises in the country could influence education at all or on the direction of influence.

What therefore becomes important is the examination of the ways in which each influences education and the remedy options available. From the summary of the effects of crises on education, presented above, it is clear that there is no amount of crises which does not result in closure of schools. Schooling as seen by Obinaju (1992) is a serious business. If for no other reason, schooling keeps youth occupied for some hours of the day leaving them

just enough time to take care of essential personal necessities. Peters (1979) conceives education, as provided by schools, as initiation for the development of the mind and as a source of social control. Morrish (1974:71) puts his conception on education thus:

Education is, in a real sense, theological, that is, it provides a common purpose in and for society which must be intelligently thought out and constructed.

In another development, Morrish (1974: 193) describes education in these words:

We are educating for life ...One of the essential elements in education is the inculcation of the ability to absorb new situations, new experiences and novel ideals, as well as the capacity to initiate activity.

If, because of crises, schools which provide the above mentioned benefits are closed, it means that there is no more source of social control on youths. Parents who would have been seen as a substitute are today eagerly looking forward to the day schools would re-open so that they run away especially from their adolescent children. It is not a surprise, therefore that increase in malpractices and other social ills are reported to be on the increase when there are crises in the country and schools are closed down. Students would have time at the disposal for no assignments. They fill such hours with self willed undirected practices. Many of them, though, may be antisocial.

It is also worthy of note that the election process which was not initially intended to affect schools has wheeled such influences as observed above. It has not only led to demonstrations by students and others, it has also led to another major crisis (fuel scarcity) with its attendant influences on education. Thus, one observes that crises in whatever sector in the country affect education either directly or indirectly. This is clearly shown by the findings of this study.

Apart from effects discussed above, other vices such as destruction of public and school property, irregular supply of school equipment, a general tension in the country and low productivity on the part of workers lay a weak



foundation to education and youths in schools. Obinaju (1993) while reviewing the relationship between economy and education, contends that economy provides funds for education. If the economy is low as a result of low productivity, the level of funding expected to be given to education would also be low. Property destroyed during crises would be difficult to replace. Supply of school equipment would be more irregular and the quality of education in general would be adversely affected. All these perceived effects of crises on education are inter-related. Anything, therefore, which leads to low productivity has to be avoided if the proper education of our children is to be given a priority attention.

### Conclusion

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn.

1. There is a significant association between crises and education in Nigeria.
2. Crises affect education in a negative direction.
3. Crises in all forms should be avoided so that education can be enhanced.

### Recommendations

It has been seen that education cannot thrive where there are crises. Crises even in sectors believed to be divorced from education also turn back to affect education tremendously. Yet education is a vital organ of progress in a society. All moves therefore should be to offer the best to education and avoid what would adversely affect it. The government, the people and the students should feel and exhibit more commitment to education instead of paying lip service as it is the case today. Monies allocated to education should be enough and released in time to avoid crises. Parents should place priority in the education of their children over every other matter. On the part of the students, they should avoid unrest and wanton destruction of property in respect of the huge sums and commitment expended on education. On the whole, crises in whatever form should be discouraged.

At the source of every crisis, stands the government of the time. Crises are generally reactions against what the masses reject. It is therefore recommended that the government at all times should take seriously what the

masses is in their best interest. In decision making, proposals could be made fielded for opinion pool before decisions are made. This type of government does not give room to a dictatorship but one in which justice and fair play are enshrined. By so doing, the masses, the students and the labour unions would see the government as serving the people. They would be better placed to offer assistance in the running the government instead of posing withdrawal and distorting moves which constitute crises.

It is believed that if this study is permitted into the appropriate corridors, when implemented, the recommendation made stand to offer a brighter future for quality in both education and the Nigerian society.

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