



1993

Nigerian education : an analysis of problems impacting development

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NIGERIAN EDUCATION:

AN ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS IMPACTING DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this work is an attempt to analyze the educational history of Nigeria, its administrative structures and the major problems encountered in the country, especially as they affect the educational development. The research will focus on the issues relating to the centralization of education and particular regional needs. The historical research method is the most appropriate way of accomplishing this since Nigeria is a very complex nation. The lack of knowledge of its history will keep one in the dark about the general developments in the country and particularly about the problems examined in this study. It is my firm belief that this analysis will suggest strategies to improve the educational situation especially that of development in Nigeria.

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

NIGERIAN EDUCATION:
AN ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS IMPACTING DEVELOPMENT

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

BY
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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JANUARY 1993

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have contributed to the success of this work. I want to thank in a very special way Dr. Gerald Gutek, who inspite of his many commitments, accepted to be the director of this thesis. My gratitude to him for taking the pains of going through the whole work. Special thanks, too, to Dr. Melvin Heller, a member of the committee, for his corrections and useful suggestions. My gratitude goes, too, to Dr. Kay Smith, the Assistant Dean in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, for all her help and encouragement. My most sincere gratitude and indebtedness to Ms. Barbara Schulenburg who generously devoted her time to read through the manuscripts, correct mistakes, and type the whole work while at the same time cheering me on to progress. Finally, I thank all, who in one way or the other, have contributed to the success of this research.

CHAPTER I

NIGERIA - A BRIEF SURVEY

"Nigeria," as a nation and a political entity, is a creation of the British imperialism. It is a nation with totally dissimilar or diverse peoples - diverse in culture, languages, dialects, religion, ethnic and tribal groupings. There are about 450 different ethnic groups in the country, some of which are, the Annangs, Fulanis, Hausas, Ibibios, Ibos, Yorubas, Kanuris, Tivs, Edos, Nupes, Ijaws, Efiks, etc. These diversities make the history of the country extremely complex. It is complex in the sense that one can rarely speak of a "Nigerian History." It is far more realistic to talk about the histories of the various ethnic groups. Consequently, the name "Nigeria" given and officially recognized in 1914 by British Colonialism was a mere geographical designation rather than a political one. It is on these grounds that Nigerians themselves look at their nations as a "mosaic" of nationalities. However, prior to the amalgamation, there were contacts between the many ethnic and tribal groups and as such, its history can also be viewed vis-a'-vis these contacts and relationships. The contacts came in terms of trade, scholarships (i.e., scholars crossing frontiers), diplomacy, wars, treaties,

slavery, religion, arts, poetry, rituals, and cultural exchange.

Before 1897, the area which came to be known as Nigeria was known by different names especially by traders, travellers, explorers and geographers. They variously referred to it as "Niger Coast Protectorate," "Central Sudan," "Houssa States," or "Nigritia," "Slave Coast," or "Royal Niger Company Territories."¹

The name "Nigeria" was coined from the Latin "Niger" (black), probably following the exploration of the single longest river in Nigeria first explored by the Scottish explorer Mungo Park. It was said to have been suggested by Miss Flora Shaw, a correspondent of the *London Times* who later on became the wife of Lord Frederick Lugard, the British Governor General in Nigeria. However, it must be noted that its etymology had been disputed by many historians. In 1914, Lugard amalgamated all the different ethnic entities of the northern and southern parts of the River Niger into one political entity, and the name "Nigeria" suggested in *The Times* was given to this new British Colony.

From the above survey, it will be wrong for anyone to have the impression that Nigeria, before Colonialism had a common political background or heritage. The name,

¹A.G.Nwankwo, et al: The Making of a Nation: Biafra, (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1969) p. 9.

therefore, is a foreign creation but signifies what the people represent - the most populous black nation in Africa.

Location and Demographics

Nigeria is located in the West Coast of Africa, with an area of 356,669 sq miles (923,768 sq km), thus making it the fourteenth in size among African countries. It is demarcated by latitudes four degrees and fourteen degrees north and longitudes three degrees and fifteen degrees E. The country is bounded on the west, north and east by the French-speaking republics of Benin (formerly called Dahomey), Niger, Chad, and Cameroon respectively, and on the south by the Atlantic Ocean or what some people call the Gulf of Guinea.

Despite its relatively small size or area, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. Due to some political, ethnic and religious problems, it is a little bit difficult to know the exact demogaphic figure. Until 1992, the widely accepted figures stood at 120 million people. But in April, 1992, the military authorities announced to the nation and

the world after the census, that the population stood at 88.5 million people. Within Nigeria and abroad, this had been hotly disputed. Whatever argument and reasons the authorities had for reducing the population figure, those who live in the country or have been to it know that the Nigerian population is over 100 million people. It is estimated that Nigeria has a population density of about 110.4 inhabitants per sq km.

The country is divided into thirty states and each state has several Local Government Areas. This facilitates "effective administration" and governance. Nigeria is a very strong federation. Centralization of administration and policies reinforces the amalgamation initiated by Sir Frederick Lugard. The states have limited power and cannot do major things without reporting to Abuja - the administration's seat of central government. Until December, 1991, Lagos had been the Capital of Nigeria. But because of congestion caused by overpopulation and some other reasons, the military authorities decided to move the capital to a more centralized area of the nation.

Many of the Nigerian youths move to the urban areas in search of "greener pastures." There are more job opportunities in the cities. In addition, more people move to the urban areas in order to enjoy modern facilities like electricity, telephones, etc., and also have access to amenities and modern inventions not found in the villages.

The folks in the villages are mainly subsistent farmers, fishermen, herdsman, and petite traders. The result of this is that the towns and cities are always congested and overpopulated. According to the Federal Military Government one of the reasons for the creation of many states and local government areas is to bring home at grass-root levels those amenities and facilities that cause migration to urban areas.

Both the vegetation and the climate, and perhaps physical features, are factors of the demography of Nigeria. About thirty-one percent of the land is suitable for cultivation; fifteen percent is covered by tropical rain-forests which are found mainly in the southern parts of the country. In the far north of the country are areas covered by the Sahara Desert. In the middle belt are the grassland or what is popularly known as the Savanna. The climate of the country is responsible for the population diversity. Traditionally people divide the Nigerian climate into two: the dry season and the rainy season. Temperature is relatively high throughout the year -- May to October are the rainy season. In November, December and a part of January, the N.E. Trade Winds blowing across the Sahara Desert produce dry and dusty conditions. At nights and in the mornings, it is "freezing" for the Nigerians (feels like early Spring and late Fall). This period is called the Harmattan. With its own peculiar characteristics, it seems

incorrect to classify it into the dry or hot season.

However, the actual dry season starts from mid-January to April. There is sporadic rainfall in April. The months of February and March are really hot and humid, with the sun seeming to be directly overhead.

Looking at the map of Nigeria, the country seems to be divided into three main areas by both the Niger and Benue rivers. These rivers meet near the center of the country on a spot popularly called the confluence town. This is found in Lokoja. Here they flow together southward to the Gulf of Guinea or the Atlantic Ocean. The river Niger is the third longest river of Africa, taking its course in the Fouta Djallon Highlands, whereas the Benue rises from the Republic of Cameroon. With ethnic diversities in the country and with different languages, the policy makers of the country felt that this three-fold natural division could solve some of the problems, at least the linguistic problem. Thus in trying to adopt what was to be known as a national language or languages, the government decided that the languages of the major tribes in each of the three divisions should be adopted as national languages. Therefore, in the North, Hausa was chosen, in the West it was Yoruba, and in the East, Igbo. Unfortunately, the language solution did not work out. Instead of solving problems, it created more problems as the more than 250 other linguistic groups would not accept the "big-three" language decision since each

group felt that its own language was as good and even better than the ones chosen. So for today, English remains the official language of the people and "pigin" English (a corruption of English and the vernacular) remains the Lingua Franca. Despite this, individual Nigerians are proud of the unique cultural heritage of their particular ethnic groups, and hence, where individuals of the same language group meet, they proudly speak in their own language or dialect. But it is considered bad manner for one to continue a conversation in a language which all listeners could not understand except by expressed permission.

Looking at Nigeria from these perspectives seems chaotic, but in reality there is real order in the diversity and it seems nobody will be able to do more about the situation, at least in the near future.

History Prior to Colonization

. . . About 750,000 years ago early man spread from Africa into Asia and Europe . . . around about 10,000 B.C. man's development reached the stage at which differentiation into the ancestors of modern African people can be discerned . . . Remains of such men have been found in West Africa . . . this type of man is the true ancestor of the negroid peoples who have predominated among African populations ever since.²

²J. Hatch, Nigeria the Seeds of Disaster (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1970, p. 20.

Both the archaeologists and anthropologists affirm that life started in Africa thousands of years ago. Consequently there is a very rich history of the African people before the advent of the Europeans on the African continent and even as far back as to what scholars call the prehistoric era.

Nigeria, a prominent area for the origin of the African people must have had a fair share in this history. Africa, south of the Nile, seemed to have been a forgotten area because of geographical features like the great Sahara Desert and the Atlantic Ocean. Despite non-communication with Europe and Asia, the Africans interacted among themselves and developed a much more and greater concentration on human relations and avoided a large-scale warfare. Before the arrival of the Europeans, the Africans reached an advanced stage in the exploration and settlement of their continent. They were able to discover those areas capable of supporting human and animal life and were able to adapt their agricultural methods and crops to the differing environments found in the continent. In addition, certain minerals were discovered by them such as gold, copper, and iron, which today are very valuable to the outside world. They possessed other luxuries such as ivory and animal skins that attracted outsiders.

Among the Nigerian peoples, if there were to be peace and unity, they had to accept some sort of government.

Realizing that there was no better government than the family system, Nigerians place great importance on the family. Clusters of families sharing the same ancestors united together and formed a small village or a clan. They had to work together for their survival. The discovery of iron and the metals made out of it helped them in farming, hunting, and occasionally defending themselves against attacks by their neighbors and territorial invaders. Invasion, wars, and conquest gave rise to powerful kings and chiefs popularly known as the Obongs, Obas, Alafins, etc., depending on the particular section of Nigeria. However, royal or imperial rule was not a common denominator in all sectors of the Nigerian society. Among the Yorubas, Binis, Efiks, Hausas, there was strong centralization of government. But this was not the case among the Ibos and some of their neighbors. Among the latter, cults, languages, and the extended family system formed the basis of social life and a bond of unity. Hatch states:

All relatives, however remote, were members of the family structure. Their place in the family guaranteed them social and economic security; their contributions in economic activity and personal relations were made within the family's framework. . . . the extended family was the foundation on which villages and the system of communal land holding were based.³

Villages were bound together into clans, all claiming the same ancestry, speaking the same dialect and sharing certain

³ Ibid. p. 73.

common customs and traditions. As a result, the kind of government that evolved was two-tiered: the council of elders and the village assembly. The council of elders strengthened democratic popular participation in important decision-making. That means they had veto power and their decisions were always final. Their job was to intervene when the village assembly failed to arrive at a consensus in a particular matter. The village assembly was therefore subordinate to the council of elders. All controversial issues had to be placed before it and on such matters all adult men (in some places women inclusive) had the right to speak. The decisions taken had to be unanimous.

The judicial system also played a major role evolving government. For instance, if squabbles developed between members of different families, other members of the families chaired by their elders became the arbitrators. But serious and heinous crimes were usually heard by the Council of Elders, and the "peer" groups or what is known as the "age groups." (An "age group" could be all young men born in a particular year and now grouping themselves together in order to be of some help to the community). Today, with Western Education, the groups surface even more in the different government areas and in many cases members act as a pressure group to check 'brutality and irrationality' among the governing body. To show their unity, Age Group members shared initiation rites, for example, the different

rites of passage. From then on they worked together in communal services. In many communities, they acted as vigilantes and militia or law-enforcement agents. To be active, they have to compete in different activities with members of other Age Groups, e.g., in sports, arts, occupation, integrity, etc. Because of their roles in the community, they were always very prominent and their leaders were incorporated into the Council of Elders.

Among the people of the southern part of Nigeria, earning or buying a title was another way of participating in prominent roles in the community. One earned a title by performing a heroic act or sheer braveness in a tribal warfare. Others, who were capable and of course had to be freeborn, had to buy the titles. Very few people could purchase these because they required expenditures of substantial amount of money and possession of material wealth. Leaders of these groups(the different title groups) were also allocated places on the council. Among the Cross Riverians, particularly the Annangs, Efiks, and Ibibio Clans, there were other organizations that were secret in nature. John Hatch said of this group:

. . . these societies practiced a secret ritual that was supposed to confer on the participants special powers from the gods. Such societies often played an important role in the government of the village. The higher-grade members would make major political decisions, while the lower ones were entrusted with administration.⁴

⁴ Ibid. p. 79.

Despite the advent of Christianity, these secret cults still exist in some Nigerian communities today. In the early times, because of its occultic nature, members of the secret societies in some cases threatened and weakened the power of the governing body. To check these, the village or clan head must himself be a member of such organizations and consequently would be in a better position to check their influence.

Another source of strength and unity among the Nigerians was the village market, the focal point of social, economic, political, and at times, religious activities. Politically, each market had a Council House where political discussions were carried out, but would turn immediately into a judiciary if there were cases to be decided. Since it is a powerful belief among Africans that both the living and the dead mingle together on market days, certain religious rites were performed at the marketplace; for example, rites of passage for women called *Mbobbo* and *Nwowo* and for men, *Abio-owo* were performed. However, both the social and the economic activities are more prevalent in the markets:

People gathered there not just to buy and sell, . . . it was in the market that most arrangements for the social life of the village and surrounding areas were made.⁵

⁵ Ibid.

Apart from conducting the above, it was here that the clans and the different villages set up a task force and an agreement on keeping and maintaining in good condition trade routes and roads linking one place to another. Road maintenance involved communal labor. On an announced day of sanitation, the men with machets, women with hoes and children with brooms had to get out to roads or paths allocated to their villages for a thorough clean-up. Failure to participate resulted always in heavy fines and penalties. This kind of activity was a big means of developing a strong sense of community and deepening the roots of cohesion between villages and clans. At times this extended to other tribal groups. For the Africans, the wider the extension, the better for the people. This is so because the more people that come into one's life, the happier the individual becomes. From then on, socialization with different groups of people irrespective of their backgrounds has become a cultural heritage for Nigerians.

Marriage custom and practices widened the sense of community. In many communities, men were encouraged to seek wives from outside their own lineage or clan. This custom encouraged multiple personal contacts which in turn encouraged inter-village, inter-clan trading, as the case may be. For the Africans, marriage is one of the most sacred institutions. It is the bond of marriage that strengthens the extended family system, which has become the

nucleus of the African people. Should a marriage exist between one village and another, the two villages involved become in-laws. As in-laws, they were linked to each other by blood and it became an abomination for them to do harm to one another, talk less of shedding blood. Should this happen, the factions involved had to quickly offer sacrifices to the gods and the spirits of the ancestors to avoid their impending rage and wrath. With such relationship existing between them, in many cases it provided basis for the organization of mutual defense and prevented occasions of warfare between villages.

Before the advent of Christianity and Islam, the Nigerians, like the other African people were deeply religious. Religion played a big role in almost all the activities of the people. Today, this could be found in the veins and marrow of the people. It has become a very and perhaps the most sensitive issue in a united Nigeria, that even the military authorities and subsequent leaders must acknowledge and consequently must handle it with care. Religion had been the strongest organizational network that drew people together. The people relied on a large number of oracles and deities. Oracles had to be consulted before major and even minor decisions were to be made. Despite their recognition of several deities, there was a strong belief in the Almighty God called Abasi-Ibom, Chukwu, Olarun, Allah, etc. Supreme God was considered to have

absolute power and the other deities were merely his children or servants. With such a conception of the people,

the belief . . . provided not simply ritual satisfaction or supernatural sanction; it was a crucial factor in political power and economic activity.⁶

Actions that offended the gods were considered very serious. The offenders in most cases had to provide some sort of sacrifices to pacify the gods or oracle offended. These would range from food-stuffs to animals of all kinds, and in very grave cases, human victims were required for sacrifices. This points out how seriously the people upheld their religion.

Looking at all these one would think that it was a monotonous type of existence, but the people themselves would tell that it was an era most exciting as reported by Equiano, a liberated slave from Nigeria who lived in Britain:

We were almost a nation of dancers, musicians and poets. Thus every great event, such as a triumphant return from battle, or other cause of public rejoicing, is celebrated in public dances, which are accompanied with songs and music suited to the occasion . . .

The people generally lived a simple type of life. The dresses of both sexes were simple and almost the same, consisting of a long calico, muslin, or wrapper, wrapped

⁶ Ibid. p. 80.

⁷ Quoted in Ibid. p. 83.

loosely round the body. Women from the upper-class wore golden ornaments and bracelets. On daily basis, almost everybody worked in the farm except on big market days. The women, when they were not working in the farms, usually occupied themselves with spinning and weaving cotton, which they would dye and turn into garments. They also manufactured earthen vessels of different kinds. Apart from farming, the people reared cattle, goats, sheep and had poultry which supplied them with their food. These were done both in the subsistent and commercial levels. Commercial transactions were mainly trade by barter, and later cowries currency were introduced. Then the manilla, made of copper and shaped like an anchor, became the standard currency exchange. With an increase volume of trade and marriage, came long contacts especially after the Europeans began to visit the coasts and the delta areas which quickly developed into prominent trading centers. Such places were Calabar, Bonny, Brass, and Warri.

Domestically, normal lives began in the individual home with the father as the head of the household. Depending on his strength and economic stance, he might have more than one wife and many children and some slaves. Everybody in a household contributed according to one's capacity to the economic situation and well-being of the family. Polygamy was encouraged because a man needed many wives and many children to cultivate his land. However, polygamy should

not be considered only from the economic perspective. It was a sign of ostentation. A man's riches, power, and importance were determined in the number of wives and children. Local kings and chiefs had so many wives. Some of the wives were given to them in return for a favor or as a means to establish a closer relationship or were captives in war. Some local chiefs had up to fifty wives and "uncountable" number of children. A case in point was the father of the Nigerian Cardinal, Dominic Cardinal Ekandem, who married thirty wives with so many children, so much so that the Cardinal finds it hard to know all his brothers and sisters, talk less of his nephews and nieces.

As mentioned earlier, the early lives of the people were deeply and firmly rooted, such that despite influences of both the Europeans and western civilization, the people still maintain much of their traditional and cultural heritage. It is this maintenance that marks them out as a people.

Advent of Europeans and Colonialism

Arthur Nwankwo quotes the British merchant, Morel as saying:

Commerce took us (British) to Africa; commerce keeps and will keep us in West Africa . . . The day it ceases to be so, West Africa ceases to be of use to the Empire. It will become a costly

plaything and the British people are too essentially practical⁸ a people to care long for toys of that kind.

What is said of the British could also be said of other European nations that visited the West Coast of Africa. Some historians said that the Portuguese came with the intent of saving the souls of "poor Africans" through conversion to Christianity, but ended up catching and selling the same souls into slavery. Trade was the sole reason for the Europeans' presence in West Africa before and after the Slave Trade. Columbus' journey to the Americas and the consequent development of plantations by the European settlers inaugurated slave trade in a very large scale in Africa, especially in the coastal regions of the Atlantic Ocean. Many historians believe that the Atlantic slave trade constituted the greatest forced migration in the history of mankind.

Before the arrival of the Europeans in Nigeria, there had been some sort of slavery there. Slaves were mainly captives in war or those folks given by one village to another as a compensation of some sort or as a means of paying tribute. Such slaves were used for household purposes, and could be wives to the chiefs and his ministers, and at worse could be used as sacrificial victims. On the whole their treatment was not so cruel:

⁸A.G. Nwankwo, p. 9.

. . . their food, clothing, and lodging were nearly the same as theirs (except that they were not permitted to eat with those who were freeborn) . . . some of these slaves have even slaves under them, as their own property and for their own use.

But large scale trading and trafficking in slaves developed in Africa, especially in the West Coast with the arrival of the Portuguese in Benin (midwest region of Nigeria) in the last two decades of the fifteenth century. At this time, the trade was limited between the southern coast of Nigeria and the Portuguese island colonies of Sao Tome and Principe. Those places served as slave depots or barracoon for the Portuguese. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the English and the Dutch joined the Portuguese. The emergence of sugar plantations in the West Indies in the mid-seventeenth century expanded this transaction in human cargoes rapidly. The production of sugar is said to have demanded the right type of labor or people who were capable of surviving the rigors of plantation life and dangers of tropical diseases in the Caribbean. Richard Olaniyan writing an essay on the Atlantic slave trade says:

The Amerindians (the 'native' Americans) could not cope since they were gravely affected by the new diseases introduced by the Europeans.¹⁰

⁹J. Hatch, p. 86.

¹⁰R. Olaniyan, Nigerian History and Culture (Zaria: Longman, 1985, p. 115.

The islands of the West Indies led by Jamaica and St. Dominique utilized the labor of the African slaves on sugar plantations and in the sugar industries to meet the increasing demand of tea and coffee-drinkers of Europe. This resulted in a large volume of trade developing between Europe and the West Indies in the eighteenth century. This also led to a new rush for slaves, and now no longer by the Portuguese merchant alone. In addition, the Dutch, English, French, Spanish, and Swedish traders moved into competing in this lucrative trade. Nigeria became a "fertile" spot for the trade, for slaves were cheap and easy to obtain here. Moreover it had an easy and free access to the ocean. Historians are unanimous on the assertion that not fewer than 20,000 slaves were sold every year from the southern part of Nigeria alone. This lasted for more than 100 years. Calabar and Bonny became the leading ports which handled the trade. When the slaves came to the ports, they were put in prison all together. Then were stripped stark naked for their European buyers to inspect them. The marketable ones were selected and the invalids thrown out. The marketable ones were then numbered and categorized in this fashion:

. . . a burning iron, with the Arms or name of the companies, lyes (*sic*) in the fire; with which ours are marked on the breast.¹¹

¹¹J. Hatch, P. 93.

A Dutchman who took part in the trade is reported to have said that it cost them two pence a day to cater for one slave, feeding them on bread and water. To "get enough room" in the ship, all the slaves were again stripped stark naked, chained and laid on the floor in two rows. A condition like this resulted in suffocation and many of the slaves never reached their destination and their dead bodies were thrown into the waters of the ocean. An American slaver of the 19th century added:

I took my round of the half-deck, holding a camphor bag in my teeth; for the stench was hideous. The sick and the dying were chained together. I saw pregnant women give birth to babies whilst still chained to corpses, which our drunken oversees (*sic*) had not removed. The blacks were literally jammed between decks as if in a coffin; and a coffin that dreadful hold became to nearly one half of our cargo before we reached Bahia.¹²

The above exposition points to the fact that the Europeans moved into Nigeria primarily to trade, and the slave trade overshadowed whatever any motive they had been having before travelling to the "Dark Continent." This continued for more than 400 years and millions of Africans found themselves in the Caribbean, North, South, and Central America.

But, because of the inhuman treatment of the slaves, resentment and protests arose in many quarters. There were

¹² Ibid., p. 95.

reports of the slaves revolting, both in the ships crossing the Atlantic, and on the plantations. Some of the slaves even committed suicide by leaping into the sea rather than face the prospect of the life of the slave. Some local chiefs wanted to see the trade put to rest. Thus, King Affonso of the Bakongo is said to have pleaded with the King of Portugal, asking that Portuguese traders be recalled because of their participation in the slave trade. A Dahomey King tried to stop the export of his people and later a ruler in Senegal is said to have actually passed a law prohibiting the transport of slaves through his territory.

The advent of the Europeans had other consequences too, though root-cause of such could be traced back to the slave trade. For instance, the different kingdoms, tribes and villages were always in conflict with one another. Peace eluded them. Wars, which might otherwise be prevented, were waged, constantly easy to start and hard to end, because they provided the human commodity demanded on the coast. Consequently, the different societies in Nigeria and the neighboring countries on the coast became insecure, more authoritarian, and violent.

However, in Europe, there were some critical voices heard like the Quaker, Horace Walpole, John and Charles Wesley, etc. Finally in 1807, the British Parliament abolished the slave trade for English merchants and also

tried to get other European nations to abolish it. Thus in 1833, the trade was abolished in the British Empire. The problem now was to stop the trade at its very center in the interior of Africa. The British government decided they should substitute another trade for it, and take over certain parts of Africa to help Africans learn to produce items that would replace the obnoxious trade.

Morel was, therefore, right when he said that it was trade that brought the Europeans to Africa, and without the commerce, Africa would be like a toy. Thus after the abolition of the slave trade, it was a trade in another form that brought the Europeans into the interior of Africa. This was a time of enlightenment in Europe and the Industrial Revolution in England. The Europeans needed raw materials and markets to sell their finished products. Africa again became the center of focus. In addition, the Europeans themselves debated during this philosophical time of enlightenment if they had known much about the African continent. This was much a challenge to explorers. The Christians also felt that they should get into the interior of Africa to compensate them for what slavery did to them, win their souls to God, and give them the white man's education. Thus it could be said that trade, exploration, and missionary enterprise brought the Europeans back into Africa after the slave trade. But the rule here was a "divide and conquer" affair.

The Europeans, especially the British, thought that economic advantages gained from a better knowledge of the inland regions of Africa would lead primarily to the extension of the commerce. It must be noted that during the slave trade era, the Europeans themselves stayed out of the interior, stopped at the coast, and transacted their business through the natives or middlemen. That was the reason some of them felt that, in order to give a final blow to slavery, they had to find a way of stopping it within the interior of the African countries. Accordingly, they wanted to introduce the new trade into the hinterlands, and by so doing, would be able to eradicate slavery in its entirety. However, today, many question the genuineness of such motives.

In order to penetrate the interior, the Europeans had to solve certain geographical problems in Nigeria. These would destroy the myths some European anthropologists had told about Africa. For the British, the starting point was finding the source, the course, and the exit of the Niger River. Between 1795 and 1805, Mungo Park, a Scottish explorer had explored the great river, but unfortunately died in 1805 at the Bussa rapids. It was not until 1830, that John and Richard Lander (the Lander Brothers) discovered the major entry point of the river into the ocean. In 1832, some Liverpool merchants, led by Macgregor Laird, and supported by Britain, tried to open up the

interior to the British trade through the southern part of Nigeria. This was a very expensive adventure in human lives. The British then negotiated treaties with the African Coastal Chiefs, urging them to stop the slave trade and at the same time pointing out the potential gains to be made to such trade as palm oil. It is necessary to reiterate here that it was at this time (1830s) that Britain was at its peak of the Industrial Revolution. They had discovered that Palm Oil was a necessary item to help keep British machine "well-oiled." Richard Olaniyan says:

Later, this same oil was to be used for making soap and other detergents to enable Britons to take their bath regularly and to wash their cotton clothes - in other words, to help revolutionize hygiene in Britain.¹³

This was how a legal trade between Nigeria and Britain began, soon to be followed by other European nations.

But how did something that started as a mutual trade agreement end up in a partner lording over the other and ultimately into colonialism? Answering this objectively may not be an easy task. But still, one must look at the real motives of the British who were taking a big risk to move into the heart of the African interlands. One also must not forget or downplay their dreams of building their royal empire far beyond Europe.

The treaties which the British entered into on the West Coast of Africa were at first centered in the regions

¹³R. Olaniyan, p.141.

of the "oil rivers," but later on expanded into other areas. As the coastal kingdoms were independent states in their own right, the treaties created unrest in almost everyone of them. Even when the British substituted the new trade, there were misunderstandings between the British traders and the African middlemen - heads of kingdoms. Such occurrences are said to have led the English traders, and later their home government, to seek intervention in the internal politics of the African kingdoms. This, they guessed, would further their own interests and would manipulate the system to their own advantage. The Africans found themselves bullied and intimidated by the British with their powerful gunboats. The British took advantage of this and cheated the people in the trade and made very huge profits. The Africans occasionally would strike back, making coastal areas like Lagos, Calabar, and Bonny, zones of perpetual conflicts. Consequently, the British developed their trading policy - to build an empire based upon commerce, to monopolize that trade by pushing aside African middlemen whom they saw as obstacles to what they referred to as a free-trade.

While the British traders were carrying on with their trade uninterrupted, humanitarians (those men and women who irrespective of their religious beliefs, took the risk by themselves or sponsored others to travel to Africa for the welfare of the Africans), Christian Missionaries, and

nationals of other European nations were entering Africa. Thus in 1841, another Niger expedition was sponsored by the humanitarians, with the backing of the British government. Like the new trade, this was considered another strategy to stop the slave trade at its roots. The first crew consisted of two missionaries, one of whom was Rev. Ajayi Crowther (who later became a bishop of the Niger), a botanist, a mineralogist, a doctor, and a person to supervise an agricultural experimental station which it was intended to set up.

With the introduction of quinine by Dr. Baikie, what used to be called 'the white man's grave,' was conquered and in 1853, the first Anglican Missionaries arrived in Oyo and were received by the Alafin. Following this, other Christian Missionaries moved into different parts of the coastal regions and finally into the interior. The Methodist Church Missionary, Thomas Freeman, founded the first Christian mission in Nigeria at Abeokuta in 1842. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) was in Lagos in 1851 and in Ibadan in 1853. At Calabar, the Church of Scotland established a mission in 1846. In 1885, the first Catholic Missionaries arrived from France and were led by Fr. Joseph Lutz, who belonged to the congregation of the Holy Ghost. The missionaries worked to win the hearts and confidence of the natives--sympathizing with them in their misery, giving them food and medicines and treating them as equals. The

French missionaries were exceptionally good with the people in this direction and the British traders and administrators saw them as a threat to the British interest. The British were suspicious of the French and feared the arrival of other European nationalities near the southern Nigerian coast. The British trade monopoly alone would not solve the problem of European rivalry. The control of the area politically by the British appeared to be the only solution. The British Government then decided to appoint a ruling consul for the Bight of Benin and Biafra, and the man chosen was John Beecroft, who enjoyed considerable respect from the natives.

The British continued to use their superior technology to intimidate and conquer local chiefs. The island state of Lagos, ceded to the British in 1861, became a British Colony. Efforts were made to do the same to the other Delta kingdoms but were rebuffed by strong resistance.

The actual colonization of Nigeria had a remote root in the historical situation of Europe. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 marked a turning point in Europe, which then extended to Africa and Asia. This was the period of the "scramble for Africa."

When Prussia defeated France, it became necessary for France to seek foreign adventure in Africa in order to save its face. Bismarck, the Chancellor of the newly united Germany, encouraged France in these adventures.

Consequently, French interests clashed with those of Britain, while Germany under Bismarck tried to play a role of a diplomat. Britain and France wanted to control Egypt which was strategically important both for the Middle East and the Far East. From the time of Napoleon, the French had been heavily involved with Egypt, and helped in the building of the Suez Canal in 1869. Since the Egyptians could not pay the cost, Egypt gave the British Government the opportunity to buy shares in the Canal Company. By 1878, both Britain and France, acting together, forced Egypt to let them manage part of the Egyptian finances. There was a violent agitation on the part of the Egyptians. The British asked the French to join them in putting down the agitation. But then the British unilaterally took over Egypt in September, 1882.

The British action in Egypt embarrassed the French who sought to recoup their lost pride.

After the British occupation of Egypt and subsequent move by the French, it became imperative for the European powers to regulate the carving up of Africa. This resulted in the famous Berlin Conference of 1884-85, under the chairmanship of Otto Van Bismarck. The main points at the conference were that the European powers having territorial claims should inform other powers and then effectively occupy the area. The basis of European claims to African territories were based on paper "treaties" with non-

literate chiefs. These territories were to provide the European powers with new markets for their raw materials and finished products.

As Europeans moved into Africa, they came directly in contact with the African people. The European occupation of Africa rested on an ideology that saw Africans as lesser human beings, was based on distorted interpretation of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and selection of species. For them, the "survival of the fittest," meant that the Europeans had the right to occupy Africa and other "backward" areas of the world. This ideology caused the Europeans who came to Africa, including missionaries, to act in a superiority - inferiority relationship with Africans.

Following the Berlin Conference in 1885, the British proclaimed a protectorate over the area of the oil rivers, declaring the area to be a British sphere of influence. Hence, southern Nigeria became the Protectorate of Britain, without stiff resistance by the natives. A case in point was at Opobo under King Jaja. The superior military weapons of the British smashed all oppositions. Thus with the subjugation, it was easy for the British to drill the population into line and to accept the new British authority.

The British also focused attention on the northern Nigeria kingdoms. This started in 1877 and by 1903, the

north became a British protectorate . This was not easy for the British because both the French and the Germans were doing business in the Nupe and Sokoto kingdoms respectively. It needed the shrewdness and ruthlessness of George Goldie to give the British the monopoly they needed. He was a born diplomat and was able to talk them into leaving those areas to other places. Soon the British hoisted the flag in Northern Nigeria in accordance to the Berlin Conference Charter of effective occupation. With the backing of home government, Goldie, in 1886, proclaimed a government for all the northern kingdoms. The French and Germans who were pushed to the neighboring Nigerian countries of Togo, Cameroon, Dahomey and Chad, were not pleased with the Trading Company of Britain, called the Royal Niger Company with Goldie as the chief. Britain then spent much time mapping out the boundaries of Nigeria - cutting in and cutting out family members, people of the same tribes, and merging people of unrelated traditions together.

Using their method of punitive subjugation for resistance, the northern kingdoms were conquered and named the British Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. In 1914, Lord Lugard then amalgamated the north and south and created a new entity - a political entity named Nigeria - a colony of Britain.

Independence and the Role of Education
in Creating a New Nation

British Colonialism in Nigeria was not an isolated phenomenon as pointed out above. It was part of the wider European scramble for territorial acquisition and the economic and political subjugation of the African continent. Between the conferences of Berlin (1884-85) and Brussels (1890), Africa was partitioned and controlled by Britain, France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Germany. Exploration, trade, politics, and missionary enterprise became the main objective of their presence. The British knew that dominating the people and introducing a sort of neo-slavery would not be to their own advantage. They knew that the more they tried to govern the Nigerians by force, the more they met with opposition and riots. Therefore, they turned to minor accommodations that allowed Africans to participate in their own affairs, in a very minute and servile way. To pacify the natives the British gave some support to the works of the missionaries.

Apart from bringing Christianity to the people and trying to abolish certain obnoxious practices, the missionaries also established schools and hospitals. The purpose of the schools was to teach the natives the white

man's way of life and to give some sort of trade to the people. Schools also became the fastest means of evangelization. The Catholic Church was at the forefront of this. By now the Irish Missionaries had replaced the French who had moved elsewhere because of the internal European politics and policies governing the African colonization.

The missionaries discovered that the Nigerians, especially in the south were willing to learn, and therefore, they could encouraged them to higher levels of education. The most academically promising ones were awarded scholarships to study in Britain. But the British Governor Generals and their colleagues disliked this Nigerian advancement in education. They merely wanted, both in their own schools and the missionary schools, to give the Africans only a very basic and rudimentary education. Such a limited education would enable them to secure the British as clerks, interpreters, and tax-collectors. They feared that higher education would make them to think logically and perhaps speak political interests. King Jaja of Opobo had taught them a big lesson even before formal education was introduced in Nigeria. Roland Oliver quotes a Briton reporting his experience in Southern Nigeria as far back as 1885:

Jaja, the most enterprising and accomplished of all the African merchant princes of the Niger Coast, had been a thorn in the flesh of every consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra since he established his settlement over the mouth of the Opobo River in 1872. Handsome, efficient, rich,

fluent in English, with manners that were almost polished . . . Jaja had developed a nice sense of European logic and legal forms which he had employed with remarkable prescience to defend his commercial interests against future encroachments . . . he explicitly recognized his right to act¹⁴

In their *modus operandi*, the British found this too bitter to swallow. They tricked Jaja to a meeting with Johnston on board a warship, and he was deported first to Gold Coast (Ghana) and then to the West Indies.

If King Jaja could be a thorn in the flesh for the British, how much more then if there were many Jajas in the 19th and 20th centuries? So the British, not only gave a very low standard of education to their established schools, but warned the missionaries not to give the Africans anything higher than the fundamentals. Some missionaries who disobeyed were deported. The deportation did not discourage them. Education progressed rapidly in Southern Nigeria to the chagrin of the imperial power.

With more Nigerians educated and many of them questioning the unjust colonization, the British had to find a way of keeping their power. They now had to support the "Indirect Rule" introduced by Sir Frederick Lugard, the first Governor General. According to Richard Olaniyan, Indirect Rule was introduced not for ideological reasons, but empirically as an expedient for coping with the

¹⁴R. Oliver, Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959, p. 108.

practical difficulties of administering vast territories under colonial rule with few administrators and meager funds. Hiding the real motive, Lugard said that the aim of British Colonial administration was to promote the interest of the home country's industrial classes as well as advancing the interest of the native races in their search for progress. The policy of Indirect Rule was to provide a means by which the British would rule through the existing local rulers and elites, preserving and supporting their authority. Both the rulers and the elites were closely monitored and a ruler was instantly deposed, should he act against British interest.

The Nigerian elites in the south criticized this system. The British monitored them as a politically minded group. The situation now was that the British with their puppet local chiefs were pulling in one direction while the western-educated Nigerians were pushing in another. Soon the opposition to Indirect Rule also appeared in the North. There was a growing awareness among the educated Nigerians that colonial administration existed to promote the interest of the colonial powers. Since the colonized peoples had no voice in their government, they felt that decolonization was the answer. The British administration in Nigeria could not conceal its distrust of the educated Africans who were largely concentrated in the south and condemned any move by this group in politics.

Consequently, the educated were, from 1900 onwards, excluded from responsible positions in the administration. Lugard and his successors believed that Africans ought to be confined to the lower tiers of government rather than allowed to participate in the higher levels of government. The Africans, therefore, could not rise to positions of any authority. The political activists of the south were not present in the north. Northern collaborators were rewarded by the British for patriotism. With this, there was a seed of disunity sown by the British among the peoples they were trying to unite as a nation. Britain cannot escape the blame for the endemic problem in Nigeria today. She knew that Nigeria was her own creation and not merely a geographical expression. The British instead of encouraging disunity could have developed a policy of encouraging peoples of different backgrounds, to act as a nation, one and indivisible. The United States of America serves as an example where this idea works. But Britain, from inception of Nigeria, encouraged the north to work for a separate development apart from the south. Southerners who did business in the north complained that they were not treated as fellow Nigerians, but were looked upon as strangers or foreigners. By now Lagos was the seat of the government, yet the south and north could not appreciate that they were under one common government. After 1861 there was a legislative council in Lagos, but the north did not

participate in its deliberations until 1947. A central legislative institution could have fostered national unity. The educated elite took note of this but could not do anything promptly since they were excluded from the government and the Legislative council. The British preferred to deal with the illiterate natural rulers.

But in the 1940s, the nationalized ranks grew with students who were returning home from studies in Western Europe and the United States and ex-servicemen returning from World War I. The latter had seen action and learned new ideas while in the Middle East, East Africa, Burma, and India. Local rich entrepreneurs who believed that self-government would improve their competitive position with foreign-owned businesses also joined the ranks of the educated. Now the agitation for self government assumed a new and greater dimension and urgency. This group resented the conception by the Europeans ever since the European and African cultures made contact with each other, the former was superior and so also the owners of that culture. This group of Nigerians were poised at fighting any sort of superiority - inferiority complexes. The fact that the Africans were developing in a slower space than the Europeans did not make them an inferior species of human creatures. But in Europe, opinions were divided. Some asserted that Africans were actually less capable of participating in "civilized" life than Europeans,

irrespective of their qualifications or performance. Unfortunately, this belief still exists in the minds of some individuals in the contemporary period. Such negative ideas are scandalous when they crop into the church and takes root among some strata of the clergy -- an elitist group that is supposed to know better. However, many others viewed Africans as equals with the Europeans. They opposed their fellow Europeans who wanted to use the Africans to further the ends of European states and economic interests. For this group, the Africans were no less human than the Europeans. These were mainly humanists, philanthropists, some psychologists, and missionaries. Africans began to learn that all Europeans did not think alike and soon found allies among them.

Despite the resentment of what the Nigerian elitist group called the "European pride" they had to admit that there were many positive attributes in the European way of life that they could incorporate into their culture. However, this kind of inculturation did not mean being a European in a black skin as is seen among so many Africans today.

After the end of World War I, political activity in Nigeria and other West African nations started to show signs of coherence. Educated Africans supported by European human rights activists, held conferences between 1919 and 1921 in Paris, London, and Brussels. Other conferences were

held both in Europe and America in 1923 and 1927. The main reasons for such conferences were to draw up a charter for Human Rights and to start an immediate move for decolonizing Africa.

In Nigeria, the first political party into which this nationalist impulse was channelled was the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC), formed towards the end of World War II. But by 1957, the pluralistic nature of the Nigerian society had affected the growth and development of the nationalist movement. The result was the establishment of two new rival parties - The Action Group (AG) in the west and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the North. Surprisingly, this process of decentralizing national political development was recognized and encouraged by the colonial government.

But said Olaniyan:

The British took advantage of this situation by emphasizing the constitutional and other obstacles in the path of decolonization rather than facilitating constitutional development towards early independence, the main obstacle in the Nigerian side being the Northern fear of Southern domination in an independent Nigeria and their consequent reluctance to be hurried into constitutional advance.¹⁵

Meanwhile by 1943, Nigerians were appointed into senior posts in the civil service while the responsibility for the government still remained firmly in the hands of the British Governor and his colonial officials. By the time the

¹⁵R. Olaniyan, p. 170.

Governor General, Sir Arthur Richards, introduced his constitutional proposals aimed at giving Nigerians a greater say in their affairs, the elitist group or the nationalists were no longer satisfied with such a goal. Richard Olaniyan portrayed that they rather demanded a greater and more genuine participation in the running of their country. The Richards Constitution which became law in January 1, 1947, brought the north and the south together in a common legislative council for purposes of law making, and to this extent fostered unity. It also registered and entrenched regionalism in Nigeria's political affairs by its acceptance of a tri-regional structure (Northern Region, Eastern Region, and Western Region). There was to be soon a mid-western region - making it four. After Richard's came Sir John Macpherson's constitution which highlighted a confederation based on the three regions with Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto as the most prominent political leader in the north, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in the east, and Chief Obafemi Awaolowo in the west. With an apparent distrust existing between the north and the south, what Nigeria needed in order to exist as one nation was a very strong and prudently run Federation.

In 1954, Federal elections were held. These led to the formation of a coalition government between the NPC and the NCNC in the east. However, the issue of a federation was not completely solved. The NPC wanted a high degree of

regional autonomy within any federal structure, arguing among other things, for guarantees respecting the integrity of Islam and for at least fifty percent of the constituted representatives at the Federal level. The NPC, was also determined that a federal Nigeria would not be dominated by Western-educated southerners or Christians. The Party presented these demands to the British as non-negotiable. The AG also argued for a strong measure of regional autonomy within a federal system. The western region had benefitted from a post-war boom in the cocoa industry and the AG feared that their resources would be dissipated in subsidizing for less wealthy regions within a strong federal Nigeria. In order to break up northern power, the AG supported the creation of a new region for the non-Yoruba westerners. The same strategy against the east and the west was mapped out by NPC. The NCNC with a stronghold in the East was in favor of strong federal powers and a completely centralized government. It strongly advocated a sharing of revenue according to the criterion of need.

Before the Federal elections of 1954, the British had established a measure of compromise between these conflicting demands. There was to be a federal government with a considerable degree of regional autonomy. Specific powers were to be reserved to the Federal Government, including defense and control of the army, as well as

currency, banking, the terms of national trade and customs duties.

In the 1957 federal elections, although ministers were appointed, there was no provision for a Prime Minister despite the fact that the regional government was presided over by the Premiers. It was not until December, 1959, that elections for an enlarged federal legislative took place. These were bitter and contested along regional lines. Britain, being biased and suspicious of the more educated southerners, and since none of the three major parties emerged with an overall majority, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa of the NPC, a former school teacher, was acclaimed the Prime Minister by the British authorities. Both the NCNC and the AG were disenchanted by this political intrigue by the British. The British were accused of manipulating the whole election process up to October 1, 1960, when the independent Federation of Nigeria was proclaimed. From the beginning, it was clear to the politicians what Britain was capable of doing. And there was anger and dissatisfaction in the whole process. Thus, a political figure in Nigeria, Chief Anthony Enahoro, writing his thoughts during the independence ceremonies of October 1, 1960, is quoted to have illustrated it thus:

There was something missing from the central scene. Dr. Azikiwe should have been there. Chief

Awolowo should have been there. But they like myself (sic) were spectators. . . ¹⁶

Despite the big "victory" for the North, their leaders looked upon the southerners still as a big threat. With the help of the British they tended to constitute a conservative force in Nigeria's political development. The responses of the early Nigerian nationalist leaders especially from the south, to the situation coupled with the country's political development in the area of regional and ethnic dimensions instead of a strong centralization, and in addition to the seed of disaster sowed by the British, all these led the country into the tragic Civil War of June, 1967, occasioned by the attempted secession of the Eastern Region, otherwise called Biafra.

¹⁶ Quoted in Ibid. p. 171.

CHAPTER II

THE CIVIL WAR AND ITS IMPACT ON EDUCATION

Based on the exposition of Nigerian history in the first Chapter, one can agree that Britain bequeathed a volatile

system of self-government to Nigeria. The acceptance and consolidation of the three big regional powers (the North, the East, and the West) overlooked the ethnic diversity of the new polity, and as such the vast minorities went unrepresented. In addition, Britain's gesture of favor towards the North was so glaring that the rest felt they were belittled.

On October 1, 1960, the Federation of Nigeria achieved independence. Almost immediately a series of problems developed. Tafawa Balewa, from the North became the federal Prime Minister and also a minister of foreign affairs; Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe whom majority thought would be the Prime Minister, became the Governor General and was finally installed as ceremonial president with no executive power. The leader of the Action Group, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, from the West was apparently written off. On October 1, 1963, Nigeria became a Republic. In 1961 the British had incorporated a part of the Cameroon into the northern region but would not do the same for the eastern boarder.

Apart from the Action Group's exclusion from the

Federal level, it also faced a renewal of Yoruba

factionalism which had been endemic throughout the nineteenth century. Consequently, there was a quarrel between Chief Awolowo and Chief Samuel Akintola, the Western Premier, who came from another section of Yorubaland.

In the eastern region, petroleum was discovered in the 1950s, thus turning Nigeria's poorest region into the richest. Now the National Congress of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC) almost retracted their revenue allocation policy - "allocation of revenue according to need." The NCNC also benefitted from the schism in the Action Group (AG). A referendum was subsequently held in the western region with the NCNC, always strong in the non-Yoruba sections of the West, campaigning for a separatist region for the non-Yoruba speaking areas. Following a legislative approval in August, a Midwestern Region was carved out from the western region and this new region became a stronghold of the NCNC.

In September, 1962, Awolowo and his deputy, Chief Anthony Enahoro, together with thirty supporters, were arrested and charged with plotting to overthrow the Federal Government and the two were sentenced to imprisonment. The trial was believed to be political and an attempt to ruin the political career of Awolowo. The evidence adduced at

the trial made public the level of bribery and corruption prevalent in Nigerian politics which unfortunately became a legacy to subsequent politicians, both military or civilian. During the trial, Awolowo himself confessed that he had tried to form an alliance with some elements in the NCNC in order to take over the Federal Government and to drive the NPC into a political "wilderness." This trial and development in the West highlighted the fragility of the federal constitution and the threat of political division. What the North had been fearing was slowly but gradually materializing. The South, that is, the East, West, and Midwest were not happy that the Hausas in the North were controlling the independent Federal Republic of Nigeria. (It must be noted that at independence, Nigeria was admitted into the United Nations and the Commonwealth, and October 1, 1963, it became a Republic).

In 1964, further threats emerged to federal unity. This time it was not the South versus the North. This happened with the NPC itself. The Tiv tribes of the Benue Plateau area and others in the Middle Belt of the country demanded autonomy from the North - perhaps trying to follow the Midwesterners. They began attacking NPC personnel and offices in their area, and rallied around Joseph Tarka's United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). The Nigerian Army mounted a counter operation and several hundred people were reported killed.

In the same year, 1964, economic disparities in the country became prominent and there were visible signs of high corruption, nepotism, favoritism and tribalism in public life. Consequently, the Trade Unions called a general strike to protest workers' wage levels. The Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa initially rejected the strikers demands. This produced greater solidarity among the strikers until the government recognized their protest and increased the minimum wage.

Federal elections were scheduled for December, 1964. There were splits in all the political parties and by the time of the elections, there were about nine different parties. The ensuing election was violent, abusive, and corrupt. It was widely believed that many candidates were returned unopposed because returning officers simply refused to accept nominations from their opponents. There were no elections in the East and few in Lagos. The President, Azikiwe, reluctantly asked Tafawa Balewa to form a new government. Agreement was also reached on a future review of the Federal Constitution and the holding of new elections in the Western Region. When elections were finally held in the East, the Easterners lost because they were excluded from the federal government. The ambitions of the Ibo tribe to control the south were dashed.

By 1965, Dr. Michael Okpara of the NCNC, an Ibo, is said to have publicly mentioned the possibility of Eastern secession

from Nigeria.

In November, 1965, elections were rescheduled in the West. The result was tragic violence as anarchy ensued in the West and more than two thousand people were killed.

The aftermath of these events after independence was that the faith of Nigerians in the future of democracy in their country was badly shaken. Now the forces of disunity and disintegration had been set into operation. The painful aspect of the situation was that the Federal Government was apparently blind about the events in that region and the Prime Minister is said to have denied that there was anything wrong in the West. Thugs and the local police took advantage of the situation to slaughter people. However the Prime Minister was still planning to leave the country to attend the OAU (Organization of African Unity) Conference at Accra (Ghana) despite criticisms that he should put his own "house" in order before engaging in external interventions. But stubbornly he

. . . continued to seek for African unity and world peace, while a part of his country was in chaos . . . (convening) a meeting of Commonwealth Premiers in Lagos to discuss the granting of the franchise to four million Africans in Rhodesia while a few miles away eight million western Nigerians were in effect (worse) than those four million Rhodesian Africans.¹

It became clear that Nigeria's political institutions were near a state of collapse. The political

¹ A. Nwankwo, p. 96.

system had been undermined by regional and ethnic ambitions. These factors had been further complicated by corrupt politicians seeking economic advantage and political power. The first Republic signaled its own self-destruction as irresponsible politicians left behind a legacy of bitterness that was to have tragic consequences. The tragic consequences took place just a day after the Commonwealth Conference in which the Premiers or Prime Ministers discussed the unilateral declaration of independence in Rhodesia. A military coup in Nigeria, killed the Prime Minister, his Minister of Finance, and the Premiers of both the northern and western regions.

It is pertinent to look into another spectrum of the cause of the coup and finally the military intervention.

During the Trans-Atlantic Trade, there was a correspondent Trans-Saharan Trade in the North. Here the Arabs were doing business with the Northerners. The resultant encounter was that Arabic culture gradually moved into the North. For the Arabs, the best way they could speed it up was to introduce Islam; consequently, Northern Nigeria has a predominantly Muslim population today. The schools established were mainly Islamic schools where children were taught Arabic with the aim of becoming devout Muslims. Islam was not only concerned with religious practices, but also established a socio-cultural pattern:

Therefore, Western Education, which in the early days of Colonialism inevitably meant the forsaking

of traditional values, was discountenanced by the northern Nigerian religious hierarchy.²

The South received Christianity from European missionaries who also established schools. While the mission schools were operating in the South by the mid-nineteenth century, it was not until the turn of the 20th century that the first school was opened in the North. This historical difference was the reason for the gap in educational and economic development between the North and the South. This disparity, says Nwankwo, was what gave the Northerners a feeling of fundamental difference from the Southerners, so that for decades afterwards they found it difficult to regard themselves as one with the rest of Nigeria. Earlier, it was noted that the North disliked the amalgamation of 1914. Nwankwo quotes Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of the North as saying:

'Lord Lugard and his Amalgamation were far from popular amongst us.' The Southerners (mostly Easterners) who emigrated to the North invested their resources there in their genuine belief in one country,³ were regarded as foreigners by the Northerners.

Mallam Abubakar Imam, an editor of a Hausa weekly *Gaskiya Ta Fikwabo* viewed the situation thus:

We despise each other . . . We call each other ignorant. The south is proud of Western knowledge and culture; we are proud of Eastern [culture] . . . To tell you the plain truth, the common people

² Ibid. p. 97.

³ Ibid. p. 98.

of the North put more confidence in the white man than . . . their black Southern brothers.⁴

The above quotation is very true when it is considered that the nationalist movement began in the South while strong opposition to British rule was not felt in the North. With lack of opposition from the North, the British policy was to appease the Muslim North by excluding Christian Missionaries and limiting Western education. They also limited contact between the Northern people and the more sophisticated Southerners. This policy perpetuated northern individuality and separateness. During the political campaigns, NPC could not even campaign in the South. It was a matter of ONE NORTH, ONE PEOPLE, and hence frowned on the Eastern and Western campaigners who contested in the North. They termed it "incursion into our territory." Founding fathers like Sir Ahmadu Bello, following a northernization policy, felt that Northerners were treated as strangers with no right to opportunities in their home because of cut-throat entrepreneurs from the South (mainly the Ibos). Bello felt that non-Northerners living in the North, enjoyed privileges at the expense of Northerners. "The North for Northerners" became a slogan during the 1966 crisis, by which thousands of Southerners mainly from the East were massacred in the North.

It should be noted that , the North never liked the

⁴ Quoted in Ibid.

idea of centralized government. With the "North for the North" slogan the rest of Nigerian settlers in the North were excluded from some rights and privileges:

Northern Government . . . scholarship awards were limited strictly to Northerners. All children of Southern parents were excluded, no matter what their academic qualifications or how long their⁵ parents had lived and paid taxes in the North.

On the other hand, the public service was opened to all in the South. However, there were also irregularities in the South, coming from the general corruption in the country and widespread tribalism and nepotism in the government and the public service. But the Northernization policy seemed to overshadow every other corruption and crime in the nation. It was believed in the South that since the government was in the hands of the Northerners, the North was greatly favored in budget allocations. For instance, the government was accused of giving more than fifty percent of federal scholarships to Northerners and that inexperienced and unqualified Northern school leaders were accepted into the Army and other government services in preference to better qualified and experienced Southerners. Those Southerners who lived in the North said that the Northerners preferred foreigners to them. Thus,

. . . foreign nationals were awarded contracts which qualified Southerners could have taken at lower cost; teachers were recruited from foreign countries at great cost in transportation, and allowances, while teachers could have been easily

⁵ Ibid. p.100.

and cheaply employed from the South.⁶

Nwankwo et. al. give some excerpts and statements made by some Northern government functionaries:

March 12, 1964: Alhaji Mustafa Dujuma, Minister of Establishment and Training: ". . . First Northerners, second expatriates, and third non-Northerners."

March 17, 1964: Mr. Dashi Toklen: "As far as Northernization policy is concerned . . . no chance should be given to non-Northerners."

Mr. Busar Umari: ". . . The Hon. Premier should from today empower the Minister of Land and Survey to confiscate all the houses and farms belonging to Ibos. We have finished with them and finished with them finally."

Alhaji Usman Liman: ". . . North is for Northerners, East for Easterners, West for Westerners, and the federation is for all."

Statements such as the above were provocative and divisive to the rest of Nigerians. But, Northerners should not take all the blame. One would imagine that insecurity and the fear by the Southerners caused alarm for the North. Western education advanced the South more rapidly than the North. Northerners became suspicious of the intentions of the educated Southerners. Southern intellectuals often regarding Northerners as cultural inferiors demeaned their traditions and religion. The Ibos and some Southerners did take advantage of their non-entrepreneur spirit. Consequently, the Northerners reacted,

⁶ Ibid. p. 102.

⁷ Ibid.

and in the process over-reacted. These developments caused the Northerners to have made the statement that the "North should be for the Northerners."

Because of deteriorating situation in the North, the State Union of the Ibos demanded a revision of the constitution. It stated:

The Federation of Nigeria was formed after a protracted round table conference of Nigerian leaders. If the leaders are fed up with the Federation, why not call a conference of leaders and dissolve it amicably instead of spilling the blood of the youths of this country for nothing, instead of creating a situation, that might lead to spilling of blood before dissolving it . . .

To determine the demands of the Ibo political leaders, it is possible to analyse their statements. Whereas the Hausas in the North wanted strong regionalism, the Ibos in the South preferred a strong central government under their control. Should that fail, then secession appeared the likely solution.

Even though the South accused the North of dominating the government, the army and the civil service, this was not quite correct. However, a quota system gave the north almost fifty percent of government positions. But in certain sectors the southerners were in the position of leadership as in the case of the army: in its service under the United Nations auspices in the Congo Crisis and in its assistance in the Tanzanian Mutiny of 1964, the Nigerian

⁸ Quoted in Ibid. p. 104.

Army had gained some reputation for disciplined and effective action. However, under the First Republic, the army increasingly reflected the divisions and tensions within the body politic. At independence, Nigerianization of the army created intense rivalries for promotion and also highlighted a generation gap between the older officers who served with the British and a new breed of educated and often university-trained younger officers. A quota system was operated for army recruitment: Fifty percent for the North and twenty-five percent each for the East and West. Despite the fact that the North had more soldiers, on the other hand, the officer corps was dominated by soldiers from the East. By 1965, the Ibos had filled nearly a half of the places offered by the British to Nigerians at Sandhurst and Warwick Military Academies in England. The Ibo-dominance was suspected by other tribes. The officers did not keep aloof from the political situation in all its ramifications.

Thus January 15, 1966, with the turmoil and blood shed in different regions of the country caused by political malpractices and the general misappropriation of public funds by the politicians and some civil servants, a coup d'etat planned and executed by junior officers lead by an Ibo officer, Major Patrick Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu. Prominent figures who were killed in the coup were: the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, his Minister of

Finance, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh, the Premier of the North, Sir Ahmadu Bello and the Premier of the Western region, Chief Samuel Akintola. The big question which in the immediate future generated into a counter-coup was: how come the Premier of the East, Dr. Michael Okpara, an Ibo, escaped unharmed? Yet the officers who executed the coup justified their action by pointing out that they were upset by the inability of the civilian leadership to hold the country together. They also resented being asked by the politicians to settle political problems created by them. Thus, they felt that they had a mandate to save the country and this became a frequent topic of discussion within the junior military circles. The carnage and the rule of anarchy in the Western region had to be stopped. With their higher military education, these middle-rank officers felt a call to action which resulted in the first military coup in Nigeria.

No matter how the coup plotters tried to justify their action, one cannot completely rule out the fact of political and ethnic struggles for control of power. According to some unconfirmed military intelligence reports, it appeared that some military officers from the North were also plotting a coup that failed to materialize. This coup was to be staged on January 17, 1966, and Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of the North, was identified for the post of the new Prime Minister. To prepare the way, a number of moves were

made. The Minister of Defence, Alhaji Inua Wada, a Northerner embarked on certain strategies. The General Officer commanding the Nigerian army, Major General Johnson T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Easterner was ordered on an 'accumulated' leave. The Inspector General of Police, Louis Edet, also from the East was also to go on leave. His Deputy, Mr. Roberts from the West, was instructed to go on compulsory retirement. He was to be replaced by Alhaji Kam Salem, a Northerner, who would be the police boss in Edet's absence. On his return from pilgrimage to Mecca on January 14, 1966, Ahmadu Bello, Premier of the North, was reported to have had a top secret meeting with the puppet Premier of the West, Chief Samuel Akintola. The said meeting took place in Kaduna and some top ranking senior army officers were present at the meeting. The soldiers were mainly Northerners except for Brigadier Ademolegun, Commander of the First Brigade, with headquarters in Kaduna. Another source of military intelligence, though unconfirmed, reported that the Brigadier had been busy training hundreds of soldiers from the North for Operation January 17. These circumstances prompted the junior officers to act promptly in the early hours of January 15, 1966. In the early hours of January 14, Major Nzeogwu took advantage of his position as a small-arms instructor in the Military Academy in Kaduna. He was reported to have taken a group of soldiers for an extraordinary military exercise around the Minister's

quarters. That evening all top Northern Military Officers were in Lagos for a reception. Thus the coup took the majority of the people with great surprise including the senior Military Officers. In the Northern sector, Nzeogwu himself led the operation and after a bit of resistance from the personal guards of the Premier, Bello himself was brutally murdered by gun-fire and bullets from grenades. His body is said to have been found amidst his many wives and concubines who, in a bid to protect him had heaped themselves on him.⁹ Now the radio station and key installations were in control of the coup supporters. Soldiers loyal to the Premier and those marked out to be standing on the way (that is, sympathizers and loyalists to the Premier) were shot. Kano Airport was seized and closed to all flights.

In the Western sector, mainly Ibadan and Lagos, the operations started simultaneously with the Kaduna Operations in the North. Major Ademoyega, a Westerner led the operation at Ibadan. The Premier, Chief Akintola and his body guards were reported to have put a stiff resistance to the plotters. After two hours of heavy gunfire exchange, the revolutionaries penetrated the resistance and finally killed Akintola. They also seized the radio station. In Lagos, the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was killed. The revolutionaries were too scared to kill the

⁹Ibid., p.130

General Commander of the Army, Ironsi. The Minister of Finance was arrested and in his fear he begged the soldiers to let him go promising them thousands of pounds. The reason for the delay in the East is still not very clear. It is said that before the operation in Enugu, where the Premier of the East lived, Ironsi signalled all the military posts within the country not to support the revolutionaries. Consequently by the time the majors were in Enugu, the news was all over the place and the majors had to return to Lagos. Other reasons equally given for not killing the Premiers of the East and Midwest are hardly acceptable by many Nigerians judging from backgrounds of the revolutionaries.

But for the fateful morning of January 15, Nigerians woke up to bewilderment and uncertainties. Nobody really knew what happened until the Radio Cotonou in Dahomey (now Benin Republic) announced that the Army had seized power in Nigeria. Nwankwo et al said that the report quoted an unidentified spokesman of the 'new regime' as saying the Army had taken over "to bring an end to gangsterism and disorder, corruption, and despotism."¹⁰

Then the leader of the revolution taking control in Kaduna, the Northern Region, in a radio broadcast, made the following statement:

In the name of the supreme council of the

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 133.

Revolution of the Nigerian Armed Forces, I declare martial law over the Northern Provinces of Nigeria. The constitution is suspended . . . and the legal and elected assembly are hereby dissolved. All political, cultural tribal and trade union activities, together with all demonstrations and all unauthorized gatherings, excluding religious worship are banned until further notice.¹¹

He went on to warn among other things, that looting, arson, homosexuality, rape, embezzlement, bribery, corruption, obstruction of the revolution, sabotage, subversion, false alarm, and assistance to foreign invaders, were all offenses punishable by the death penalty.

In Lagos, the Commander of the Army, still not knowing how to deal with the revolution, met with key functionaries and some of the remaining politicians and the Council of Ministers. The acting Prime Minister, Dr. Orizu, in a broadcast, told the nation that, in view of the situation, the civilians had decided to hand over the government of the country to the Armed Forces under the control of the General Officer commanding the Nigerian Army, Major General T.U. Aguiyi - Ironsi. The new head of state immediately announced decrees suspending the office of the president among other things, and threatening to declare martial law in any disturbed areas in the country. Ironsi ordered and finally persuaded Nzeogwu to recognize him and report to Lagos. This was only effective when the Commander reached some agreements with him, among which were:

¹¹ Ibid. p. 134.

- o A guarantee of safety for himself and the officers of the revolution.
- o A freedom for them from legal proceedings or court-martialling at any time.
- o Compensation paid to the families of officers who lost their lives during the execution of the coup.
- o All arrested in connection with the coup should be released.
- o A promise that the people whom he fought to remove from power would not be returned to office.

Despite the agreement, coupled with the fact that the two of them were Ibos from the East, Major Nzeowu still refused to report himself to the General in Lagos. The revolution could be said to be a success since what the leaders of the coup had in mind - a change of government leadership was fulfilled. But the revolution could be said to be a failure because the men who executed it had no chance to translate their plans and program into action.

There were reactions from the January 15 episode both within the country and outside. Before this date, it was obvious to Nigerians that the civilian regime had failed in its primary function of maintaining law and order, and therefore, became desperate in their quest for an effective government. Since it was apparent that the military would give hope to the people and a better government, the coup

was widely hailed. Major Kaduna Nzeogwu had demonstrated this in his first radio broadcast - telling the people that the coup was designed to stop "gangsterism, corruption, and despotism" and ended his broadcast by saying, "my compatriots, you will no longer need to be ashamed to be Nigerians." Nzeogwu was believed initially by all sectors until the reactions of the Ibos who lived in the North suggested something quite different :

Provocative graffiti: a drawing of Dr. Azikiwe [Easterner] treading on the crumpled head of the late Sardauna.¹²

It was believed by many that despite his astuteness , Nzeogwu never intended to spare the politicians from the East and Midwest; however, his plan miscarried because of those delegated to attack the Ibo leaders and the institutions. It is still not clear why the majors from the West killed the politicians from their own area, the same with the Northerners but in the Ibo East, the politicians were spared by the Ibo majors who had the same command to eliminate them. There was a great deal of suspicion that the coup was sectionally motivated and executed.

Internationally, the BBC called the coup an "Ibo-coup." The leaders of Muslim countries condemned it. Some neighboring Muslim African states closed their borders against Nigeria. In Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, the

¹² B. Emecheta, Destination Biafra, (Glasgow: Fontana, 1982, p. 72.

exceedingly tense and volatile situation despite the fact that messages of support came from all corners of the country to the Armed Forces and his ruling cabinet. Some of the messages written and signed by prominent people in the country read, viz:

. . . the Army, being the bulwark and sanction of any civil government, had come in to safeguard the parliamentary democracy, the rule of law and respect for human dignity - principles for which the masses had fought with sweat, blood, and tears in the struggle for independence.¹³

Others saw the new government as the only solution to the many crisis into which the country had been plunged.

University students and Trade Unions peacefully demonstrated in support of the military regime and chanted slogans like: "down with tyranny, away with feudalism", "tyranny is dead" "new Nigeria is born", "Nigeria is now really independent", "welcome Ironsi - but release our heroes", (i.e., those junior officers in jail as a result of the coup).

With such support from the nation, the new administration's main preoccupation was with the problem of national unity and how to arrest the drift towards regionalism. Ironsi quickly appointed four military governors for the regions and a 'supreme military council' as a federal executive organ. In the North, the governor was Major Hassan Usman Katsina, Lt. Col. Chukwuemeka Emechi

¹³ Nwankwo, p. 143.

Odumegwu Ojukwu was appointed for the East, for the West it was Lt. Col. Adekunle Fajuyi, and in the Midwest, Lt. Col. David Ejor became the Governor.

With enthusiasm and sincerity, the military embarked on the much needed national reconstruction which was to transform the country into a strong, united Nigeria. There was a period of "cleansing" in which all the functionaries of the previous regime were brought to book and made to pay for any ill-gotten goods and misuse of government property. Those indicted by the military tribunal, not only paid back any ill-gotten public funds, but as well received prison sentences. On May 24, 1966, Ironsi promulgated Decrees 33 and 34 abolishing all eighty-one political associations for a period of three years and abolished the Federal Structure, introducing a Unitary System. This was not welcomed in the North by some elements who misunderstood him. In addition, the European expatriates, mainly British, felt their high positions in the North threatened by the Decrees. They incited the Northerners to rebel against such decrees since they would disrupt the Northernization policy. Inter-ethnic suspicion resurfaced in Nigeria. The North felt that the military favored the South. They demanded the trial of the coup plotters. Ironsi found himself in a dilemma, as any action against the coup-makers would displease the Southerners who regarded them as national heroes. An action like that would have alienated the

southern intellectuals and military elites.

As was highlighted earlier , the Ibo residents in the North did not help matters. Their behavior in a manner suggested that it was an Ibo coup against the Hausas in the North. Consequently, with the promulgation of the decrees, an uprising in the Northern cities of Kaduna and Zaria ultimately spread to all Northern cities and villages. Thousands of Easterners, particularly the Ibos were massacred in to North. Their houses were burnt down, property confiscated and untold atrocities were committed against pregnant women and children, etc. In the military barracks, soldiers from the East were disarmed, mutilated, and some were burnt alive. Adding fuel to the fire that was now burning, the Muslim leaders in the North declared a Jihad (a holy war) against Southerners particularly Easterners. With the war cry:

They carried clubs and machets . . . shouting 'death to Kaferi' (infidels) . . . they hacked humans to death and those who tried to escape were clubbed and battered to death. Anybody who did not have a tribal mark on his/her face was regarded as Ibo . . . many were killed at the airport on the way to the East. . . many lived in the bush for weeks eating nothing . . . nearly all the women were without one breast, the very old ones had only one eye each, some of the men had been castrated, some had only one arm, others had one foot amputated . . . and over thirty thousand Ibos [and other Easterners] died in the North because of the riot.¹⁴

It is said that over 500 hundred men from the neighboring

¹⁴B. Emecheta, p. 87 - 91.

African states were sympathetic to the North because of Islamic connections, and joined the mammoth pogrom of July 29.

Meanwhile, Northern soldiers used the chaos in the country to plan a counter-coup called "Operation Araba" (Secession Day in Hausa). About 9 a.m. on the July 29, 1966, Ironsi was captured in Ibadan where he had addressed the country's rulers the previous day. He was stripped naked, tied up, flogged, and taken to a small stream about ten miles along the Ibadan-Iwo road. At this point, one of his ADC's Lt. Nwankwo escaped:

Enraged by this, Lt. Walbe and his men sprayed Major-General Ironsi and Lt. Col. Fajuyi with machine-gun bullets.¹⁵

Northern soldiers now gained control of government in all regions except the East. Northern officers now freely participated in the murder of Eastern soldiers and civilians.

The army, which in January had presented itself as the only institution capable of checking ethnic rivalry, was in July, being undermined by the very ill it came to cure . . . Nigerian officers were incapable of providing even the minimum conditions of political order.¹⁶

The North was not the only region that Easterners were massacred. The Northern soldiers before the arrest of Ironsi had infiltrated the West and taken over Lagos.

¹⁵A. Nwankwo, p. 158.

¹⁶ Olaniyan, R., Op. Cit. p. 196.

Easterners in Lagos and other Western cities were equally touched.

For the Easterners, especially non-Ibos, it is difficult to understand the depth of hatred that must have driven the Northern soldiers to these sadistic acts:

. . . the more so when it is realized, that, a few hours before the holocaust, the Eastern soldiers shared the same sleeping accommodations and dined at same table with their executioners. It cannot be argued that these killings were a sudden outburst of pent-up grievances. All available evidence points to a detailed and exhaustive programme - a premeditated and cold-blooded extermination of Easterners in the army.¹⁷

Operation Arabaa failed in the East, despite the fact that more than three-quarters of the soldiers stationed in the East were all Northerners. As soon as the news of events in the North reached Ojukwu, the governor of the East, he acted promptly and ordered Military Commanders to take precautionary actions. He ordered the immediate disarming of all soldiers, sealed off the armory, and called in the Mobile Police Force. He learnt that the rioters were in firm control of Lagos and would only agree to a ceasefire if the country would be split and all residents returned to their tribes of origin.

Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, who had just returned from England to serve as Chief of Staff at Army Headquarters in Ironsi's regime, was chosen to restore order and three

¹⁷ Nwankwo, et al., Op. Cit., p. 160.

days later became the Head of State. Gowon was a Northerner from the Middle Belt, but a Christian. The leadership and the people of the Eastern Region refused to accept Gowon's leadership. Ojukwu openly told Gowon that he would not recognize him, but for the interest of peace would cooperate with him.

The options open to Gowon were limited since the reason for the coup was the secession of the North. But Gowon was persuaded by his British mentors to abandon such ideas since they would lose economically, so unity was the only option for him to pursue with the strong support of Britain. While negotiations went on between Ojukwu and Gowon on returning all military personnel to their region of origin, the former appealed to all Easterners not to express their feelings in any violent form concerning the events of July 29. Even though, it is said that Easterners did restrain themselves from revenge, there were sporadic retaliations in many places. However, the number of Northerners killed in the East were few compared to the massive pogrom in the North.

After August 9, the remaining Eastern soldiers in the North and West including some civilians who escaped the pogrom were repatriated to the East. The Eastern soldiers returned home without their weapons and many reported maltreatment. It is believed that more than thirty percent of the soldiers from the East were detained in Lagos as

hostages. The Northern soldiers from the East were returned with their weapons and civilians were said to have been escorted to the boundaries.

Since tension was still mounting, the leader of the East could not attend any meeting in Lagos. Conferences were held in Benin and Aburi in Ghana to decide the future of Nigeria. At the meetings the demands of the East could not be met, for they drifted towards secession. Among other things, the military Governor of the East demanded Federal institutions and property in the East so that the Eastern Region became both *de jure* and *de facto* an autonomous state. Lagos refused to oblige. Following this, on May 26, the joint meeting of Chiefs and Elders and the Consultative Assembly of the Eastern Region gave the military governor the mandate to declare Eastern Nigeria a free sovereign and independent state named the Republic of Biafra.

While Gowon and his Federal agents admitted that the East had been wronged and that nobody should do anything to aggravate further an already tense situation, they were not prepared for, nor ready to, accept secession. Therefore, in a desperate move to stop the East from leaving Nigeria, Gowon's administration made a bold move on May 27, 1967. To subdivide Nigeria, including the East, into twelve states. A state of emergency was declared and Gowon assumed full military powers. This was a very shrewd tactic on Gowon's part, eventhough, it is alleged that British advisers

"suggested" the strategy.

Under this new state-structure, the North was broken into six states, the East into three, the West into two, the Midwest retained its size as of 1963. Olaniyan says that:

Ojukwu publicly described the creation of states as an act which interfered with the territorial integrity of the Eastern Region, and therefore, invoked the mandate of May 26, 1967, to declare the East a free state.¹⁸

Ojukwu had full support from Easterners of all walks of life—students of all categories, teachers, nurses, trade unionists, doctors, lawyers, market women, farmers, hunters, fishermen, etc. Huge demonstrations were carried out with slogans like, "On Aburi we stand", "Ojukwu, we are behind you", "Gowon honor agreements," "Ojukwu give us arms", "Confederation or secession", "Down with vandalism," "Remember the pogrom," etc. Lagos became intimidated by the reactions of the Easterners and responded by importing more arms into the country. Gowon proceeded to impose a diplomatic, economic and military blockade against the East. In addition, notes were sent to foreign governments telling them that the Nigerian situation was an internal affair.

Following these events, on May 30, 1967, Ojukwu announced the birth of the Republic of Biafra to the fourteen million Easterners. In a radio broadcast, he told the people:

Conscious of the supreme authority of Almighty God

¹⁸R. Olaniyan, p. 199.

over all mankind, of your duty to yourselves and posterity; aware that you can no longer be protected in your lives . . . and property by any government . . . outside Eastern Nigeria; i.e., . . . rejecting the authority of any person or persons other than the Military Government of Eastern Nigeria; . . . determined to dissolve all political and other ties between you and the former Federal Republic of Nigeria; . . . affirming your trust and confidence in me; having mandated me to proclaim on your behalf, and in your name, that Eastern Nigeria be a sovereign independent Republic, now, therefore, I, Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria . . . do hereby . . . proclaim that . . . Eastern Nigeria . . . shall henceforth be an independent sovereign state of the name and title of the Republic of Biafra. (see appendix).

The secession was greeted with joy in the East with shouts of "Hail Biafra, the Land of Freedom." Remarking on the declaration, Nwankwo noted:

Thus Nigeria, a federation created and destroyed by Britain, has unhappily taken a well-deserved seat among the federations that collapsed. Out of its decadence has emerged a young, virile, and amazingly promising African nation - the Republic of Biafra.¹⁹

Lagos reacted promptly to the secession. Nigeria was plunged immediately into a bloody and protracted civil war, the effects of which still play a role in the administration of the country today. With the direct involvement of major powers like the former USSR, Britain, and the Arab nations, the Federal forces were well equipped to go for the "quick kill" designed by the British Military Intelligence and advisers, and by so doing, their slogan, "To keep Nigeria

¹⁹A.Nwankwo, p. 253.

one is a task that must be done," was accomplished in January, 1970, when a defeated Biafra had ceased to exist. At the end of the war, it was estimated that more than three million people lost their lives, mostly of hunger and more than two-thirds were Easterners.

Military Intervention and its Involvement in Education

Education played a big role in shaping, building, destroying, and reconstructing Nigeria. The movement to independence was conceived by the educated. The change in leadership was initiated by the Western-educated Nigerians in the Military. Education played a major role in the plan and execution of the Civil War. Consequently, many intellectuals paid dearly for the role they played before, during and after the Civil War. The Military authorities had to acknowledge that education is the only single institution that would determine the destiny of a post-war Nigeria. They strongly believed that such an institution had to be properly monitored, managed and controlled.

In the previous exposition, educational imbalance in Nigeria had been mentioned. The Southerners firmly believed in the potencies of the white man's education and quickly adopted and adapted it. The story was different with the Northerners who felt that Arabic education was sufficient for them to read the Koran. The British Colonialists did

not improve education in the North as the missionaries did in the South. They even prevented and warned the missionaries from being so involved with the Muslim-North educationally. Being too involved would be to their own disadvantage of easy colonization as experienced in the South. That means, for the British, too much western education for the Nigerians would give them self-awareness which would result in decolonization. But one should not get the impression that Western education did not register its presence in the North. It did. But very few Northerners took advantage of this new way of enlightenment. There are strong reasons for the Northern attitude towards education.

Northern Nigeria has a predominantly Muslim population and traditionally they have a feudal political system marked by stratified social structure. Islam at its inception had inculcated to its adherents an attitude of subservience and submissiveness. Thus instead of grammar schools, Koranic schools were established where pupils (mainly boys) were taught to read the Koran and write Arabic. The aim of these schools was to produce devout Muslims and train the young to master the social and religious properties of the Muslim community. Western education, in the early days of European colonialism, was suspected by Africans as being a tool for abandoning traditional values. The Northern Nigerian religious hierarchy regarded western education as a means

of imposing Christianity and of gradually eradicating Islam. Consequently, western educational institutions were not welcomed in the North. On the other hand, the South welcomed the European Christian Missionaries who preached Christianity and established many schools in this part of the country. Thus, while schools were operating and flourishing in the South by the mid-19th century, it was not until the turn of the 20th century that the first school opened in the North.

Understandly, the leaders of Nigeria recognized that gap in educational and economic development existing between the North and the South.

Intellectualism and the result of Western education played a role in the secession and the consequent Civil War. Ojukwu, a graduate of Oxford, is believed to have taken advantage of Gowon's inadequate education. The result was that Gowon accepted Confederalism, although he had in mind Federalism. When the British and others warned him about the trap he had fallen into, he repudiated and dishonored the resolutions reached at Aburi (Ghana) on the peace initiative. Ojukwu did not compromise - "On Aburi we stand."

After the Civil War, the question of education became a major national issue in the country. The North did not only see education as a means of spreading Christianity, but also as a powerful instrument to govern the country. From this

perspective, the military , under a military decree, took over all schools from their rightful owners. The authorities gave the excuse that all schools should be controlled from the center for a proper and equitable administration. They also said that their management would be the only way to mend the imbalance. On this imbalance, Bray noted that:

By 1972, the imbalance had developed to the point where . . . for every child in a primary school in the Northern States, there are four in the Southern States; for every boy or girl in the secondary school in the North, there are five in the South. And for every student in post-secondary school institution in the North, there are six in the South.²⁰

This imbalance then became a politico-military issue in the late 1970's under the military regime of General Yakubu Gowon. Consequently, the government, controlled by Northerners and the majority of which were Muslims, developed a strategy to take over schools "to rectify the imbalance." Under the government's three-tier program of Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation after the Civil War, the school system in Nigeria witnessed a revolutionary change under military control. All schools in the federation were forcefully (without negotiations with their previous proprietors) taken over by the government. In a policy statement on August 21, 1972, the federal military government promulgated the following decree:

²⁰M. Bray, Universal Primary Education in Nigeria, (London:Routledge Pub. Ltd., 1981, p. 21.

The Supreme Military Council has decided that the Federal Government should, henceforth, assume full responsibility for higher education throughout the country, with the proviso that the status quo in respect of the existing universities should be maintained. It also decided that education, other than higher education, should become the concurrent responsibility of both the Federal and State government and be transferred to the concurrent legislative list.²¹

The Aftermath of State Control of Schools

The decree provoked mixed reactions from Nigerians. The critics of the edict put forward their reasons why the state should not control schools:

- o The edict was passed at an inappropriate time (just after the Civil War).
- o The takeover . . . was done in order to penalize the church for helping the Biafran Cause during the Civil War and the "Prime motive was to silence religious bodies who were critical of Mr. Asika (the civilian administrator imposed on the East Central State by the military government).
- o The missions would have come back to rebuild and repair the schools which were destroyed during the Civil War if government had not taken control of them.
- o The takeover would increase the burden of taxation to be borne by the post-Civil War impoverished people.
- o The military government had seized church property indiscriminately without adequate compensation and consideration.
- o The military government would eliminate religious teaching from the schools.²²

Both the Catholic and Protestant Church hierarchies

²¹ Daily Times, Lagos, 21 August, 1972, p. 17.

²² A. Ahanotu, The Nigerian Military and the Issue of State Control of Mission Schools, published in Church History, Vol.1, 1978, p. 337.

protested vehemently to the military government for their actions:

The Church ought to be allowed to participate fully in the education of our children for she is the best qualified to give religious education . . . We maintain that secularization²³ is not an answer to all our educational problems.

The leaders went as far as challenging all churches to unite and fight what they regarded as a 'national evil' in its various ramifications, which included the 'callous' and wanton seizing of Church properties indiscriminately and without due agreement. The religious leaders feared that secularization in Russian and American public school style would surface in the Nigerian education:

Any form of education which leaves God out of account is bound to spell disaster for the people. This is the risk involved in present day schools take-over by compulsion and not by negotiation. How we wish that the present day government control would allow church participation! A total take-over of all schools does not augur well for this country. Let the powers that be think again.²⁴

The Catholic Church, which operated more educational institutions than any other groups, reacted even more bitterly in a pastoral letter which suggested that the military regime was a totalitarian state:

When we combine all this with an attempt to mix up children and teachers of various religious beliefs in a type of forced and unnatural percentage system, then we have further evidence of denial of fundamental human rights given to man by God, the

²³ Quoted in Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 338.

Creator. It is only dictators and totalitarian states which go (to) such ²⁵lengths in the denial of human freedom and dignity.

Reacting as the highest ecclesiastical figure in Nigeria to the government's seizure of schools Dominic Cardinal Ekandem, the Primate of Nigeria summoned the episcopal conference to action:

With a certain amount of alarm, I am calling the attention of the conference once more to a situation which I feel is well known to all, for while all may not suffer yet seriously, it may be a case of mine today but yours certainly tomorrow . . . If as a result our actions and behavior in the Church reveal weak faith . . . the consequences of our actions to the christian community and to the whole Church can be disastrous . . . Here in Nigeria . . . the unity, stability, progress, and administration . . . appear to be threatened by . . . tribal differences, language, customs, insubordination, respect, etc. . . . it should be known that . . . where there are factions, truth is not served. The . . . dissensions to our Faith . . . and to our people . . . violently hit by the take-over of our schools, with the prevailing tendency either to play down religion or abandon it altogether, we had invited a guest speaker to lecture us on the real situation. Being left in no doubt . . . that the situation was a lot worse than what we had actually felt, we took a decision to be involved in the church's programme of supplying the lack of religious instruction and formation in the institutions . . . Let us hope that our Diocesan Directors of Religious Education have already formed a combined team and drawn up a draft syllabus of Religious Instruction for various grades of pupils. Let us give this act we have set in motion ²⁶the urgent and strong support it deserves.

To a foreigner, the above quotation sounds like a coded

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Cardinal Ekandem, Shepherd Among Shepherds (Aba, Nigeria: Cynako International Press Ltd., 1979, p. 62 - 64.

message. But within the country, it was well understood. Since an urgent action that spoke louder than words was needed, prudence was demanded in speeches about sensitive issues to avoid a military crack down on proposals and agents of change. The Church leaders viewed it as a duty to protect and preserve religious education in schools, whether the military liked it or not. Some radical members of church hierarchies were ready for a confrontation with the military irrespective of what such course might cost. The 'coded' action suggested by the Cardinal was to be very swift and nationwide:

We cannot afford to leave this programme unfinished or hanging for a long time as the only hope of survival or permanence may be dependent on the success of such programmes. I do not think that intensifying and widening the education of our people in faith and morals by using all available means now should ever be retarded by the hope of somehow and sometime getting back our schools.²⁷

The Cardinal warned against illusion that the government in the earliest possible time, as some believed, would return schools to their former proprietors:

If we ever get them back, well and good, but let us not be trapped by the idea of restoring an era that is gone and that could never have lasted. Let us not be lulled into a fascination for the restoration of schools as if these were a *sine qua non* for religious education and formation . . . History proves that such need not be the case. . . The time left now is for action, no more talk, no more undertaking, without real need, the seeing of this important person or that, who may be in today

²⁷ Ibid. p. 65.

and out tomorrow. ²⁸

The Cardinal concluded what sounded as a counter coup with a declaration of national prayers for successful implementation of moral and religious education programme in the country.

The church leaders and their supporters did not go unchallenged. The whole episode was seen as the end of an era. For some it was a complete break from Colonialism and colonially-induced religion. This group felt that their religious belief was economically determined. Some students welcomed it as an au revoir to ultra strict rules and regulations in schools. They wanted freedom - freedom from corporal punishments, from going to school on time, from wearing school uniforms, etc., and other laxities that came with the change. Many teachers also accepted the change with a sense of relief. The missionaries who controlled the schools were like little gods who expected too much from the teachers. Their salaries were not proportionate to their input and they feared being dismissed or demoted. The teachers were expected to exhibit high standard of moral rectitude, and they felt that they were not permitted to be themselves, nor led authentic and normal existence. To win their support, the military government quickly set up a commission headed by an attorney called Udoji. The Udoji commission looked into a way of

²⁸ Ibid. pp. 65, 66.

restructuring teachers' salaries and the salaries of other workers. When the report of the commission came out, there was the governments' white paper implementing a new and higher salary scales for teachers and other government workers. The teachers, in support of the government, agreed that the missions would not have been able to do what the government did. However, one must be reminded that the government was able to raise salaries at this time because of the oil boom in Nigeria. The Mission schools, it must be recalled, had little or no subsidies from the government, and yet many of the students paid little or nothing as tuition.

The military government went as far as changing the names of schools to "Africanize" the schools and to erase the missionary presence from Nigerian educational administration. However, today the names had been restored after the church leaders had fought the more .

The military authorities further argued that their action vindicated Nigeria's status as a sovereign, independent nation. Thus, it deserved an articulated national education policy. They argued that the missions had used schools to make converts, but the military government wanted to use schools to achieve five national objectives: a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy and a land of bright and full

opportunities for all citizens .

Government supporters also argued that mission schools were ill-equipped ideologically to inculcate Nigerian cultural values. They contended that questions of social and cultural development of Nigerian students could not be left to the churches and their institutions, even if the clergy and mission staff were totally Nigerianized. They, therefore, urged the military not to acquiesce in possible ideological brainwashing of its children. For them, secularization was the key for development and curriculum changes, and they called for the abolition of any sort of dogmatic and religious indoctrination in the curriculum.

In spite of all these, the military authorities still wanted to strike at a balance or some sort of compromise with the proprietors of schools. Their first gesture was to use the "oil boom" money to provide small compensation to the missions. But the idea of compensation infuriated the radicals who argued that:

The Nigerian government historically had contributed immensely by way of grants-in-aid to the support of the same schools it was now compensating. They reminded the missions that this gesture from the military government was a political generosity.²⁹

Others saw this gesture as use of politico-military power - it was a financial and economic power not existent in the church. The army was using this power to mobilize the masses

²⁹A.Ahanotu, p. 341.

towards national goals without any religious or class discrimination.

Another reconciliatory gesture from the government was the inclusion of both religious and moral instruction in the curriculum, allowing the schools to be called by their former names, and allowing the proprietors to be partly involved in some policy-making concerning the schools. However, these concessions came as a government response to negative criticisms. The reconciliatory move by the government, to the chagrin of the proponents of radical secularism, was seen as a surrender to the missions and a toleration of the existence of the mission schools.

One of the immediate educational reforms of the military government was implementing the Universal Free Primary Education (UPE). In the long run, this turned out to be a failure. Another measure was to check the imbalance. The government then adopted the unpopular quota system in admission to universities and federal government colleges. The quota system was based on the idea that the educational system itself was unequal, that it favored Southerners at the expense of the Northerners. They proposed that unless the disadvantaged groups were assisted, educational imbalance would be perpetuated. This idea was not accepted in the South. For the Southerners, it meant that while their better qualified students would be denied admission into the universities (because their number would

always exceed their allocated quota), the barely qualified Northern students would be admitted even in greater numbers. As there were more states in the North, the quota also favored the North in the ratio of allocation.

For the Southerners, the quota system was a political device to retard their academic progress. This issue abated only when the states were allowed to establish state universities. But for the military their policy was justified. There were indications that post-war Nigeria, like the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, was lagging behind other developing countries. It was incumbent on the military leaders to view the quota system as one of the major educational objectives. In spite of the military's educational policy, the few accomplishments were a source of frustration. A consequence was low morale and morality among students and teachers. They could go to school if and when they wanted. Some teachers did not even follow the curriculum. Reports of student lawlessness and moral laxity tended to confirm the original concern of the clergy. Since the military had enthusiastically seized schools, one would think that:

. . . the government would encourage the teaching of morals, physical, an religious education and encourage pupils to participate in those activities which would foster personal discipline and character training.³⁰

Both the religious leaders and the former school

³⁰ Ibid. p. 338.

proprietors were disappointed. The decline of morals and religion destroyed that which made their schools unique. They protested to the military authorities that lack of religious and moral education caused most of the ills in the educational institutions. The situation, especially in 1977 through 1978 was so alarming that the traditional rulers urged the military government to act quickly or return the schools to the missionaries and private individuals. They even agreed with the religious hierarchies that the trend of lawlessness was attributable to the lack of moral and religious instruction.

In addition to the indiscipline in schools and colleges, educational standards declined. High school students could not spell simple words, write correct grammatical sentences, do simple arithmetic, etc. Dedicated teachers could not get the students to study as there were wide-spread reports that students in different institutions had stabbed and fought with their teachers. The final examination results became a national shame. Consequently, students resorted to mass cheating in final and certificate examinations. With the moral laxity grasping almost every sector of life in Nigeria, some individuals in the ministry of education sold examination papers to candidates and some professors solved the problems for these lazy and irresponsible students after taking some money from them. The examination leakages was given the acronym "Expo." The

year 1977 went down in history of Nigeria as the worse year in examination malpractices in the whole federation, so much so that a book was published later on by the person in charge of the General Examination Council. He entitled the book Expo '77.

The military felt that these education problems had to be solved militarily. They responded by posting military and police personnel in schools to help in supervising certificate examinations. The police on many occasions were easily bought off by students - giving them a little tip of cash to "fall asleep" while conducting the examinations. The presence of law enforcement officers and the military personnel in schools was greeted with opposition and disapproval by the Christian Council of Nigeria. The Council called on the military to withdraw their personnel from the schools. The military presence, instead of alleviating the problems, created greater tension in schools. With the escalating tension, the military government failed in its attempt to use schools as instruments for educating good and useful citizens.

From 1977 through 1978, the military government was confronted with one of the most violent student upheavals in Nigerian educational history. Expressing his view on this confrontation, Ahanotu pointed out that:

This episode in Nigeria contemporary history is incomprehensible even in retrospect. It still staggers the mind to recall seeing student die at the hands of law enforcers and hearing the federal

commissioner of education take pains in reporting to his television audience the circumstances leading to the death of the students.³¹

Many of those who opposed the military take-over of schools attributed its detrimental consequences on the lack of foresight by the military and their stubborn refusal to listen to the ecclesiastical authorities. The principals of secondary schools, deliberating at their conference on the situation in the schools especially on discipline and motivation, concluded that:

What the Nigerian youth needed most was a "new morality," "a new attitude to life and living" and the right values which were³² to be acquired through . . . schools and family.

The emphasis on the joint responsibility between schools and family featured yet another departure from the old school system and its policy. The principals argued that without the integration of home and school, the task of infusing a new spirit into educational institutions would not be achieved. The solution, according to them would be the abolition of the boarding school concept introduced by the missions and the colonial government. This, they agreed, was no longer relevant to contemporary Nigeria. At home, the student would learn more religion and imbibe the fear of God which *ipso facto* no longer played a dominant role in the lives of the Nigerian youth.

³¹ Ibid. p. 342.

³² Ibid.

One thing that the reader should note on this section is that there were both advantages and disadvantages in the military take-over of schools. Teachers and other workers received just wages which is an important principle in traditional, Christian, and Islamic ethic. But on the other hand, there was wide-spread of indiscipline, moral laxity, irreligion and secularizm sprouting up a very religious and God-fearing society. The solution to all these could have been in striking at a balance. There should have been a fifty-fifty percent involvement between the government and the proprietors in running the administration of the schools. Subsequent military regimes learned from the mistakes of their predecessors and today, religion, Civics and Morals are included in the school curriculum. Currently in Nigeria, there seems to be a general acceptance from all sectors of life that God and Religion are even more important in the lives and growth of post-war Nigerian youths who saw and live and grew up during the period of violence.

All that has been said so far is that, education that had a humble beginning in Nigeria grew up to be an issue of national concern. It became a foundation rock for a post-independent Nigeria and would continue to be an issue of concern for all. The next chapter would attempt to examine the strategies taken by the government to give education the important role it plays in shaping the country and the

problems encountered in the process.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY MAKING

Defining a policy of education for its colonies in Tropical Africa, the British Colonial office on education issued the following statement in 1925:

Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations, and traditions of the various peoples [of Africa], conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life; adapting where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution. Its aim should be to render the individual more efficient in his or her condition of life . . . and to promote the advancement of the community . . . through the improvement of agriculture, development of industries, the improvement of health, the training of the people in the management of their own affairs, and the inculcation of true ideals of citizenship and service.¹

It was one thing for the British government in London to issue such an ideal educational policy for its colonies in Africa, but its implementation was another matter. For its representatives in Africa such a policy would be neither to the advantage of Britain nor to the advantage of the natives. The above statement was hotly disputed and it became very controversial among the colonialists and the

¹ Quoted in M. Bray, Education and Society in Africa (London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., 1986, p. 116.

missionaries. For the British in the African Continent, a minimum education would keep the natives under their control while at the same time enabling them to do both domestic and clerical work for their masters. The colonial government in Africa did envisage what a higher and qualitative education could do for the natives with particular reference to self-rule and thereby hastening an abrupt end of their occupation. That was the reason the above policy issued in London was ignored by the imperial government in Africa.

Nevertheless, after independence, the policy in education was not quite different from what the British had bequeathed and from what the missionaries had introduced. Both the curriculum and the system were the same. Centralization of policy, if any, existed in a very loose sense. All the Catholic schools had their own policy and administration. The same were applicable to the Protestants, Moslems and the few schools owned by the government. Consequently, there was not a uniform system of education for Nigeria. After independence, Nigeria's system was neither dynamic nor rooted in the culture and society it purported to serve. Because of these deficiencies, education had difficulty in achieving the orderly progress that Nigeria badly needed.

Lacking a central control and definition of goals was

the first thing that the military authorities considered when they finally took over the control of schools after the Civil War.

Centralization and National Bureaucracy

The Colonial government did not want to interfere so much in the administration of schools in Nigeria, except when it felt that the missionaries were acting contrary to its policies. But at the same time, it could not do much to stop the missionaries, especially the Roman Catholics, from providing a better education which attracted support from the natives. A Nigerian historian described the response and support viz:

. . . With the Roman Catholics, the situation seemed different . . . they appeared to the local people as a different kind of white man, a kind who came for the welfare of the people.

The British government had learned from its past that if it really wanted to carry out its trade peacefully, they ought not to upset the natives. The expulsion of the missionaries or infringement on their rights would not go well with them. Consequently, they did not want to tamper with the administration of the schools nor centralize its policies. This legacy was more or less adopted by the young government after independence. Proprietors were allowed to run their schools as much as they wanted. The situation was

²F.K. Ekechi, Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland, 1857 - 1914 (London: Longman 1972, p. 74.

that the mission schools were run and controlled strictly by the missionaries. Bureaucracies and policies were run in accordance with denominational backgrounds, faith, and doctrines. For instance, the Catholic Church which had more schools than any other group, established and ran its own training schools such as the Teacher Training College (TTC). All the teachers graduating from the TTC were Catholics, and on qualification, would be posted to Catholic schools or to government schools on request from the government. Therefore, to be a teacher in the Catholic schools, one had to be a Catholic and follow Catholic principles and norms.

Catholic schools were administered and grouped on a diocesan basis and supervised by a priest called the School Supervisor. Even though he was called a supervisor, supervision in this sense should not be viewed in the American concept. Supervision in the American system of education is more or less a morale booster for both the teachers and students. It should, however, be remembered that the Missionaries at the time of independence in Nigeria were either of Irish or British origin, and therefore, their *modus operandi* was based on the British system of education. In short, what was called supervision could correctly be called inspection.

The priest would pay an unscheduled surprise visit to the schools periodically. His duties were to inspect the

general classroom atmosphere and cleanliness of the school environment, to see how a teacher performed his duties by going through his "notes of lessons", that is, examining and determining the content of the curriculum taught to students. The surprises were not always welcomed by the teachers because of their unfriendly approach.

The missionaries, however, saw to it that apart from providing religious instruction to the people and helping them achieve self-rule, they had to make sure that their educational policies satisfied some of the needs and values of the people. For the Africans, morality, spirituality, and working hard for survival are of paramount importance. Commenting on the link between education and the African people, Bray states:

. . . devotion to some spiritual ideal is the deepest source of inspiration in the discharge of public duty. Such influences (*sic*) should permeate the whole life of the school. One such influence is the discipline of work.³

Morals and work formed an essential components of the curriculum. Both the natives and the school administration saw manual labor as an important factor in the development of Africa and the African of the future had to be a worker and a producer. Therefore, the incorporation of manual labor into education became a *sine qua non*.

The above was not a central educational policy

³M. Bray, p. 116.

throughout the nation. For example, the Koranic schools in the North were still busy in training good Muslims who could read the Koran, write and speak Arabic. Traditional muslim schooling persists despite the effort of Hans Vischer who opened the first western school in Kano in 1909 and included practical work in its academic curriculum.

When the military took over the schools, their first task was to centralize the administration under the Federal Ministry of Education, headed by a Minister of Education, with a cabinet of people who took orders from him. To facilitate the administration for the Federal government, each state was to operate a State Ministry of Education headed by a Commissioner and Director General. States do not have power as such to decide on educational policies but must follow what is being decided on the federal level. In each state, there are Local Government Areas and there are members of school board in each of the areas. Membership to the school boards is a plausible political appointment. The local school board is responsible for the assignment, transfer, discipline, retirement, and firing of teachers. All Local Government Areas have primary schools headed by headmasters or headmistresses. These in turn are under a school superintendent of the school district or Local Government Area (LGA). The superintendents' duties are to hold meetings with the head teachers, inspect schools, and oversee about the operation of schools in his area.

Teachers' salaries pass through his office. He and his office are answerable to the State Ministry of Education - Primary School Section.

The Secondary School (High School) is headed by a principal. The principal pays allegiance to the Local School Board headed by a Supervisor. The Principal coordinates with the supervisor who in turn pays allegiance to the State School Board headed by the Chief Inspector of Education (CIE). The Chief Inspector and his board members oversee the secondary schools, mostly from reports given to them by the Supervisor. Secondary school teachers are assigned on the state level and at times on national level.

The Universities have Vice Chancellors as their head. For many years all the universities were owned by the Federal Government. But for the past few years, due to the implementation on the national policy on education, states were given the mandate to establish State Universities or Colleges of Technology and Education. These tertiary levels of education are controlled by a special board in the State and Federal Ministries of Education. In Nigeria, there are no private universities. Private institutions that award degrees are always affiliated to well recognized universities within and outside Nigeria. These are the cases of the Catholic Seminaries and Protestant Theological Institutes or Bible Colleges. The only private institution that currently awards a degree is the Catholic Institute of

West Africa (CIWA) jointly operated by the Catholic Anglophone West African countries and recognized by the Urban Pontifical University in Rome.

With the government bureaucracy, the centralization and stratification of administration, education in Nigeria assumed a different dimension and outlook. For the government to arrive at this stage, there were a series of structuring and restructuring.

It was only in 1977, that the government promulgated a concrete national policy on education. The policy defined educational roles and goals and ratified its decree on the take-over of schools. A government white-paper on education which appeared in 1977 and was revised in 1981 stated:

Education in Nigeria is no more a private enterprise, but a huge government venture that has witnessed a progressive evolution of Governments' complete and dynamic intervention and active participation. The Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. It is only natural then that Government should clarify the philosophy and objectives that underlie its current massive investment in education, and spell out in clear unequivocal terms the policies that guide Governments' educational efforts.⁴

The policies defined by the government covered sensitive issues like imbalance and uniformity:

It is Government's wish that any existing contradictions, ambiguities, and lack of uniformity in educational practices in the different parts of the Federation should be

⁴ Federal Republic of Nigeria: National Policy on Education (Lagos: Federal Govt. Press, 1977 (Revised 1981), p. 5.

removed to ensure an even and orderly development of the country.⁵

Objectively viewed, a policy like the one above is meant to ensure the oneness and the federal character of the country. Unfortunately the application of the policy did not go well with all sectors of the country because it was a policy of this sort that introduced the quota system which the Southerners suspected favored the Northerners.

The most popular policy was the restructuring of the curriculum to suit the needs of Nigerians. The Government stated that:

. . . for the benefit of all citizens, the country's educational goals in terms of its relevance to the needs of the individual as well as in terms of the kind of society desired in relation to the environment and the realities of the modern world and rapid social changes should be clearly set out.⁶

Before looking into some specifics of the national policy, it should be noted that the government took many things into consideration in defining its policies. The Military authorities came to a realization that the Nigerian public was too advanced to be intimidated and silenced by draconian and totalitarian decrees, and consequently, they drew people of all calibre and walks of life to deliberate on policies of this nature. As far back as 1973, three years after the civil war, and with its three-tiered program

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

of reconciliation, reconstruction, and rehabilitation, almost at the end of its goals, the government summoned a seminar of distinguished educational experts, under the chairmanship of Chief S.O. Adebo, a former Permanent Representative of Nigeria at the United Nations to deliberate on a national policy on education. These experts included representatives of both Christian and Islamic religious organizations, the National Universities Commission, external agencies like UNESCO and UNICEF, ministries and organizations in private and public sectors interested in education for purposes of employment, Women's organizations and others. Recommendations of this cross-section of society were highly acceptable even though many items were rejected or modified by the special body that examined them, for the simple reason that some of the recommendations were obsolete or unacceptable due to changed circumstances in a changing world.

Responding instantaneously to the recommendations, the Government set up a National Education Policy Implementation Committee to translate the policy into a workable blueprint. That Commission also was to guide the bodies that will implement the educational policy, to monitor the progress of the planned educational evolution, and to ensure that infrastructures were prepared and obstacles removed to facilitate the smooth implementation of this national policy.

The Commission recommended that since education was a dynamic instrument of change it needed constant review to ensure relevance to national needs and objectives. The national needs and objectives were classified thus:

Section I

Philosophy of Nigerian Education

In this section the Government considered education to be the philosophy by which Nigeria as a sovereign state could achieve her objectives. Those objectives put forward were the building of:

1. a free and democratic society;
2. a just and egalitarian society;
3. a united, strong, and self-reliant nation;
4. a great and dynamic economy;
5. a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.⁷

By analyzing these objectives in terms of the history of Nigeria with reference to the evolution of education, it was inevitable that it should seek to develop political unity inclined. To achieve these objectives therefore, required a qualitative curriculum to inculcate the following values:

1. respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals;
2. faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
3. moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations;
4. shared responsibility for the common good of society,

⁷ Ibid. p. 7.

5. respect for the dignity of labor; and
6. promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.⁸

Again, from the political and diverse cultural history of Nigeria, other values were enumerated which emphasized self-realization, better human relationship, national consciousness and unity, as well as social, cultural, political, scientific, and technological progress.

From the above philosophy of education, it became clear that Nigeria's future depended on education. Consequently, the government called on other agencies and sectors in the country to operate in concert with education for the realization of national needs. Education was seen by the policy makers as the principal means of fostering much needed national unity and checking imbalances in inter-state and intra-state rivalries. Education was seen as the greatest investment that the nation could make for the quick development of its economic, political, social and human resources.

A sound philosophy of education in a country plagued with civil strife and lack of direction should not operate in a vacuum. It needed government implementation as soon as possible if the nation was to have self-esteem and respectability. Accordingly, conclusion of the section on philosophy stated:

The Government will take various measures to

⁸ Ibid.

implement the policy. Accordingly:

1. Education will continue to be highly rated in the national development plans, because education is the most important instrument of change as any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution;
2. Lifelong education will be the basis for the nation's educational policies;
3. Educational and training facilities will be multiplied and made more accessible to afford the individual a far more diversified and flexible choice;
4. Educational activity will be centered on the learner for maximum self-development and fulfillment;
5. Universal basic education, in a variety of forms, depending on needs and possibilities, will be provided for all citizens;
6. Efforts will be made to relate education to overall community needs;
7. Educational assessment and evaluation will be liberalized by basing them in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual;
8. Modern educational techniques will be increasingly used and improved at all levels of the education system;
9. The education system will be structured to develop the practice of self-learning;
10. At any stage of the educational process after primary education, an individual will be able to choose between continuing his full-time studies, combining work with study, or embarking on full-time employment without excluding the prospect of resuming studies later on;
11. Opportunity will continue to be made available for religious instruction - no child will be forced to accept any religious instruction which is contrary to the wishes of his parents; and
12. Physical education will be emphasized at all levels of the education system.⁹

The above policy was sound. There were innovations which would have a spectacular change in the whole system of

⁹ Ibid. p. 8-9.

education. For instance the British system of education inherited by the newly independent Nigeria did not emphasize continuous assessment of the students. This seems to have been borrowed from the United States system of education which is a very big factor in helping students to work hard all year long instead of waiting for the terminal and final examinations.

Should Nigeria follow everything to the letter of her philosophy of education, she could do much more better educationally, economically, and in nation building.

The only section that raised controversy was that pertaining to introducing Nigerian languages into the curriculum. Nigeria, as noted in the previous chapters has more than 250 languages. To solve the language problem, the missionaries allowed vernaculars, the native languages of the students, to be taught in each school while English remained official and the lingua franca of the nation. But then in the new education, the government asserted:

. . . as a means of preserving the people's culture, the Government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother-tongue. In this connection, the Government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba.¹⁰

The linguistic problems drew many people's minds to the pre-war era as the many minority linguistic groups

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 9.

questioned the integrity of the government and the rationale behind the assumption that Nigeria was "the country of the Hausas, the Ibos, and the Yorubas." This further generated into a big debate during the Second Republic when there was a bill to introduce the three languages into the National Assembly. The debate came out with some alternatives among which was the adoption of the OAU resolution, that in order to foster unity and understanding among Africans, a common language should be adopted, taught, and spoken in Africa. The language in question was Swahili. It was quite a great idea. But towards the time of its implementation, the Nigerian Christians rejected the idea because of the incessant Christian-Muslim confrontations. Swahili was analyzed to be a corrupt form of Arabic -- the language of Islam. The Christians then accused the Federal government as plotting in different ways to impose Islam to all Nigerians and to Islamize the country. After a protracted and heated debate, the idea was abandoned.

Even though the three languages were introduced into the curriculum and students forced to take at least one of them by making it compulsory in the certificate examination, so many students downplayed it and wished that the government would introduce technological and commercial subjects into the school syllabus.

But on the whole, defining a philosophy of education for the country was one of the greatest leaps the government

made in a post-war Nigeria. What remains is making the philosophy work.

Section 2

Pre-Primary Education

After defining a philosophy of education for the nation, the government went on further to reform the whole system of education. In 1973, the school year was changed. It was no more from January to December, but from September to June. In addition, changes were made as regards the ages of going to school.

Children from the age of three to five were eligible to registering in the pre-school. Despite the government take-over of all schools, it encouraged private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education known popularly in Nigeria as nursery schools or kindergarten. This was one of the ways of finding some sort of compromise with the proprietors of schools seized by the government. The purpose of pre-school is to prepare a child for the primary level of education among other things. In addition, the government made provision in Teacher Training Institutions for student teachers who want to specialize in pre-primary education while the Ministries of Education would monitor the schools to ensure good administration, qualified staff, provision of academic and non-academic infrastructure and the maintenance of high standards.

Section 3

Primary Education

This is supposed to be for children aged six to eleven plus. Primary education was considered by the government to be essential:

Since the rest of the education system is built

upon it, the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. This being the case, the general objectives of primary education are:

- (a) the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively;
- (b) the laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- (c) citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- (d) character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes;
- (e) developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment;
- (f) giving the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within limits of his capacity;
- (g) providing basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.¹¹

In pursuance of the above objective, the government was to make primary education free and universal by implementing the UPE scheme in September of 1976 and moved on to make it compulsory. But as would be seen later, the scheme was a fiasco.

In the new reforms, the government with emphasis on continuous assessment of students, almost abolished the

¹¹ Ibid. p. 12.

certificate examinations which took place at the completion of the sixth year in the primary schools. Such did not work and so the old way was returned.

It should be called to mind that one of the reasons for educational reforms in Nigeria was because of the imbalance that existed between the Christian South and Muslim North. There was a quick move to salvage the North:

. . . the state Governments are already considering measures by which suitable Koranic schools and Islamiyya schools, with necessary adjustment of curricula, could be absorbed into the primary school system; and with regard to women's education, special efforts will be made . . . to encourage parents to send their daughters to school.¹²

The introduction of the Universal Primary Education scheme, invited Voluntary Agencies, communities and private individuals to establish and manage primary schools under the government supervision. But with the bad economy, the response was not great except by the Roman Catholic Church and some high Protestant Churches.

Section 4

Secondary Education

In the new reforms, secondary education had national objectives of preparing the Nigerian citizens for useful living within the society and preparation for a tertiary education. Based on these objectives, the government

¹² Ibid. p. 14.

expected the following specific outcomes from secondary education:

- o That it should provide an increasing number of primary school pupils with the opportunity for education of a higher quality, irrespective of sex, social, religious and ethnic background;
- o It should equip students with the opportunity to live effectively in a modern world of science and technology while at the same time developing and projecting Nigerian culture, art and language as well as the world's cultural heritage.
- o Secondary education should raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labor and live as good citizens, and above all, foster Nigerian unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite the people in spite of their diversity.
- o Finally, it should inspire students with a desire for achievement and self-improvement both at school and in later life.

Education on this level was designed to eradicate ignorance and to provide opportunities for national unity and solidarity. Consequently, the government declared that:

Every secondary school should . . . function as a unity school by enrolling students belonging to other . . . states . . . the Federal Government has set an example by a programme of Federal Government colleges which admit students on quota basis from all the states. In this way, young pupils in their formative and impressionable years from all parts of the Federation, with different language, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds have opportunity to work, play, live and grow together, to learn to understand and tolerate one another, and thereby to develop a horizon of a truly united Nigeria.¹³

Recapitulating the events of 1977, the government laid

¹³ Ibid. p. 20.

a very strong emphasis on moral and religious instruction. Students should not only be taught nor merely memorize creeds from holy books, but should implement them and should be encouraged to participate in activities that foster personal discipline, character training, and role-playing.

Because of what it expected from secondary education, the government encouraged a wide variety of disciplines and curricula. Since there were so many subjects to be studied (most of them vocational), the government increased the former five year duration of secondary education to six years. There would then be a three-year period of Junior Secondary school and another three years for able students looking forward to going to the university or any other tertiary schools.

Section 5

Higher Education

Section five to eleven of the reform dealt with all kinds of higher education, professional education, adult and special education.

Higher education was referred to as the national education given in universities, Polytechnic and colleges of technology and including courses given by colleges of education, the advanced Teacher Training Colleges (now abolished), and Correspondence Colleges, etc.

Higher education aimed at the proper value-orientation for the survival of the individual and society; the

development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environments and to develop into useful members of the community; and finally the acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environments.

Due to the above aims, the government's policy stated that, in professional fields, course content should reflect the national requirements. Among such national requirements were avoidance of bigotry, the promotion of national unity, and knowledge of the diverse cultural and ethnic groups in the country:

Widespread ignorance among Nigerian groups about each other and about themselves will be remedied by instituting a compulsory first-year course in the social organization, customs, culture and history of our various people. The award of degrees will be made conditional upon the passing of the paper in this course.¹⁴

Higher education was to be rooted in a broad-based, strong, scientific background. That means that the curriculum was to be geared towards producing practical persons, and the course content reflected the national needs, not just a hypothetical standard. With this in mind, the National Universities Commission started to set up strategies on Engineering and Agriculture to restructure courses in these disciplines to make them relevant to the needs of the Nigerian economy.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 24.

Technical Education was defined as that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. This included the pre-vocational and vocational schools. This kind of education would be profitable to the industrial sector.

To provide functional literacy for adults, those without any formal education, those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system, Adult and Non-Formal Education became essential in the new dispensation.

Special Education for the physically and mentally retarded became a national issue. This was discussed more than executed by the government. Today the great amount of special education in the country is provided by voluntary agencies and charitable organizations. Such education was designed to give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all children and adults in order that they might fully play their roles in national development and to provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted children to develop at their own pace in the interest of the nation's economic and technological development.

The new policy also stressed the roles of teachers and proposed that Teacher Education continue to be given emphasis in order to:

- o produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of

our education system;
 o . . . to provide teachers with the intellectual
 and professional background adequate for
 their assignment and to make them adaptable to
 any changing situation not only in the life of
 their country, but in the wider world . . .

The new policy then moved on to recognize teaching legally and publicly as a profession. Therefore, those teachers already admitted into the profession without the requisite qualification would be given a period of time within which to qualify for admission according to the new rules. If not, they were forced to leave the profession.

An idea introduced into the new policy which was applauded by all was the measures to enable teachers to participate more in the production and assessment of educational materials and teaching aids and the planning and development of curriculum . They had the best experience with students, and therefore, more than the folks in the ministries of education, knew better what was best for students.

The last sections of the new policy on education dwelt on administration and planning. Common sense and history have taught Nigeria that the success of any system of education, be it European or American, depends on proper planning, efficient, committed, and conscientious administration and adequate financing. Administration is always expanded to include organization, structure,

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 38.

proprietorship and control inspection and supervision. The policy makers in Nigeria came to a consensus that school systems, and consequently, their management and day-to-day administration should grow out of the life and social ethos of the community which they serve. As a result, they put forward the following administrative machinery for the national educational system in the country:

- o Intimate and direct participation and involvement at the local level, in the administration and management of the local school;
- o effective lives of communication between the local community and the state and national machinery for policy formulation and implementation;
- o a devolution of functions whereby:
 - (a) the management of schools is placed in the hands of district school boards of management;
 - (b) the coordination, planning, financing and direction of the total educational effort within the state is placed in the hands of the State Ministry, Department or Directorate for Education, and
- o the integration of educational development and policy national objectives and programmes is made the responsibility of a Federal Ministry, Department or Directorate of Education.¹⁶

Since the government intended to make education free at all levels, the commission had probably envisaged some problems and consequently pointed out that education was an expensive social service and required adequate financial provision from all tiers of Government - federal, state and local and even invited, encouraged and welcomed the participation of local communities, individuals and other

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 44.

organizations, for a successful implementation of the educational programmes. The fear of poor financing did actualize which ultimately led to the demise of a free education for the Nigerian citizens.

Regional Differences and Needs

The two main religions - Christianity and Islam played major roles in the evolution of formal education in Nigeria. Education, loosely defined, is always referred to the Western Education and mainly associated with the Southerners in Nigeria at the early period of Colonialism. This does not mean that the only education then in Nigeria was Western. There were, in addition, informal and Koranic education. In this section, attention is focused on Islamic education which flourished mainly in Northern Nigeria.

Islam was established in North Africa in the seventh century and in the eighth century it began to spread along the trade routes into West Africa. By the tenth and eleventh centuries, before the partition of Africa and the consequent colonization, Islam entered the Northern part of Nigeria, that is, Kanem-Borno kingdom (a part of which is in the North-east of Nigeria). However, in the whole of Hausaland, it became well known in some form by the beginning of the twelfth century. This was introduced into

this area through peaceful and commercial contacts with Bornu whose rulers had embraced Islam earlier. The religion continued to penetrate steadily into the whole of the Hausaland especially in the second half of the fourteenth century through the Trans-Saharan Trade and by the Wangarawa merchants, itinerant pilgrims, and malams from North Africa. Up to the end of the eighteenth century, Islam was nominally accepted here and was mixed with African traditional worship. As far as the masses or common people were concerned, they were hardly expected, and did not pretend, to adopt Islam for a long time since they felt was foreign, and therefore, had to be dealt with by their rulers. Since they were subservient to their rulers, "the religion of the king was the religion of the people." From this perspective, Islam was viewed as a class religion, adopted mainly by the ruling group, and ran parallel to, but did not displace, their traditional religion.

In contrast to the Hausas, the Fulani Muslims (Fulani is another tribe in Nigeria) who had long settled in the Hausa States held orthodox views which involved strict adherence to the teachings and obligations - both social and ritual of their faith. The Fulanis were superior to the Hausas intellectually and this enabled them to occupy high and influential positions at the courts of the rulers. As devout Muslims, they became very uneasy at the apparent admixture of Islam and 'paganism' among the Hausas. The

Fulani leaders, therefore, sought to purify the Islamic religion by appealing to the pure faith of Islam purged of heresies and accretions. When this did not happen, the Fulani Muslims decided to carry out one of their most important and fundamental obligations -- to establish the political as well as the religious ascendancy of Islam and to defend it by force of arms when necessary. This gave rise to the first Fulani *Jihad* (Holy War) in Nigeria championed by a scholar called Shehu Usman Dan Fodio who belonged to the Torronkawa clan of Gobir. The Holy War, which lasted for quite a while and was costly in the loss of human life, did achieve its aim -- the holy "cleansing" of the Islamic religion in Northern Nigeria. Apart from the religious cleansing, the immediate consequence was the inauguration and establishment of a new political order commonly known in Islam as the Caliphate - based firmly on Islamic laws, to replace the decadent pagan governments in Housaland. By 1810, the Sokoto Caliphate started its reforms and one of the reforms was the introduction of Islamic learning or education. When Britain finally took over Northern Nigeria, the Sokoto Caliphate made it easy for Britain to rule the Northerners by indirect rule through their own rulers. This was difficult in the South since the Southerners were still organized into various small independent kingdoms.

For Usman Dan Fodio and his followers, educating the

people in Islamic laws (*the Sharia*) was very important. This was not a difficult adventure because of the Islamic general view of education:

The Islamic system is in many respects, far less dependent for its operation on specific administrative, institutional, and organizational patterns. It also tends to be much more flexible . . . [and] has an admirable leisureliness.¹⁷

Islamic education is known for its flexibility in its system and administration. Unlike the Western education, Islamic education does not set a particular age limit. Both children and adults can be admitted at any time. In fact, most of the time, the system prefers older and more mature students who have already shown evidence both of piety and responsibility. In Islam:

. . . in the Islamic system , education is seen as an unending process and an individual can remain a student till old age or death.¹⁸

In addition, emphasis is less on certificates and diplomas. Students can study any where, ranging from teacher's houses to under the shades of trees and mosques. There are basically two types of Islamic schools: the Koranic (Qur'anic) and the Ilm. The Koranic school is equivalent to primary school and the Ilm to the secondary school.

For the Muslim scholars, knowledge is very important in

¹⁷M.Brady, p. 80.

¹⁸ Ibid.

human development and the whole theory of Islamic education is found in the Koran (Qur'an) and in the *hadith* (traditions of the Prophet Mohammed). From the *hadith*:

. . . the quest for learning is a duty incumbent on every Muslim male and female . . . and wisdom is the goal of the believer and he must seek it irrespective of its source . . . God eases the way to paradise for him who seeks learning . . . and angels spread their wings for the seeker of learning¹⁹ as a mark of God's approval or his purpose.

In Islamic teaching, learning and wisdom are equal to worship and scholars or men of learning are supposed to be successors to the prophets. Pushing knowledge so highly gave Muslims a long tradition of travelling in search of truth. This caused the religion to expand geographically. The belief among the Muslims is that a scholar's education was greatly improved by travelling in quest of knowledge; habits acquired through contact with a teacher would be more strongly rooted than those acquired through ordinary study or lectures. This is why the Northern Nigerian Muslim reformer, Usman Dan Fodio, travelled to Niger Republic in 1774 to study under Shaikh Jibril Umar.

Although many Muslim children attend the Koranic schools, attendance is not strict with specific rules. Students can attend and leave as they see fit and registration is not compulsory. Students may leave schools and join others if they want particular subject

¹⁹A.L.Tibawi, Islamic Education (London: Luzac, 1979, p. 38

specialization. Class sessions are arranged by individual teachers in the morning, afternoon, and evening. The evening session is for pupils unable to attend during the day. Where there is no electricity, instruction takes place around a bonfire. Today, the evening session makes it possible for children to attend both primary and Koranic schools simultaneously. Classes are held from Saturdays to Wednesdays, with holidays on Thursdays and Fridays. Friday is the chief Muslim holy day .

Education is paid for by giving the teacher a gift or donation. Children from poor families pay for their education by working for the teachers or their farms or fetching water and firewood. At worse, the child can place himself in bondage to his teacher until he completes his studies. A Persian (Iranian) authority by name Al Ghazah (1058 - 111) is said to have maintained that teachers should not accept payment for teaching religious subjects, but could be paid for teaching secular and extra subjects such as mathematics and medicine. Teaching of religious subjects was supposed to be a personal duty of the believer and should be done with a fee. This did not exclude the student working for his teacher nor parents giving tokens of appreciation.

In some African countries such as Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, a formal ceremony normally takes place in the first day a pupil is admitted to the Koranic school.

The pupil's head is shaved and the words "in the name of Allah" are written in the palms of their hands. The pupil licks the sacred writing while the ink is still fresh. Then he receives a small ball of pounded grain which is taken home and given to first his father and then his mother. In the Ancient Greek philosophy, a pupil was known to be "a son" of his teacher. In the Islamic tradition, the meaning of the above symbolic act is that the child has been "bought" by the teacher. Later on at the end of the studies, the parents "buy back" the child during the passing out ceremony.

The most important thing is the curriculum. According to the Iranian scholar, Al Ghazali,

learning contains two elements. There is human reasoning . . . and divine illumination. The latter is more important but it does not eliminate the need for clear thinking and careful observation . . . After school, the pupil must be allowed to play . . . to prevent play and to insist on continuous studies leads to dullness in the heart, diminution in intelligence and unhappiness.²⁰

For him, knowledge is spiritual, physical, and intellectual. But another scholar, Ibn Khaldun emphasized more on spiritual knowledge:

Abandon all artificial means of learning and appeal to your rational innate reason . . . seek God's guidance which . . . illuminated the way of learners before you taught them that which they

²⁰A.L.Tibawi, p. 41.

knew not.²¹

At the intellectual level, Koranic education chiefly consists of memorizing the Koran. This had been the situation when Islamic education was introduced to Northern Nigeria. All that was expected of Islamic students was not only the knowledge of the Koran but knowing it by heart. Other subjects encouraged by popular Islamic teachings were not emphasized in the curriculum version of Nigeria. This was criticized by Ibn Khaldum:

. . . to restrict students to learning the Qu'ran by heart was fruitless . . . a person who [only] knows the Qur'an does not acquire the habit of the Arabic language. It will be his lot to be awkward in expression and to have little fluency in speaking.²²

In Nigeria, however, the pupils were encouraged to read and write Arabic. Therefore, the curriculum seemed to have emphasized only two core subjects - the Koran and Arabic. Koranic schools in Spain also emphasized poetry, composition, arithmetic. But in Nigeria, what were taught in addition were respect to elders and the culture of which they were a part .

In present day Nigeria, the Ilm will be perhaps equivalent to the Islamic Education Centre in Kano where students are taught Islamic literacy, theological and legal subjects. In addition, the interpretation or exegesis of

²¹ Ibid. p. 43.

²² Bray, et al, Op. Cit., p. 83.

the Koran, the hadith which covers subjects like marriage, divorce, inheritance, and personal conducts are taught. They give the students a clear idea of the behavior expected of an Orthodox Muslim, how he is to stand up and defend his faith, and an insight into how an Islamic society should be organized, administered and governed. In Nigeria the study of *fiqh*, which is the study of Islamic sacred law or Shari'a is imperative. The Koran is believed to contain the whole of Shari'a and many Muslims feel that, all that is required from the legal experts is the interpretation and advice on how to apply it.

The Shari'a occupies a central position in Islamic society, for upon it depends not only the people's status, duties, and rights, but also their prospects of eternal reward or punishment . . . it is believed to apply not only to Muslims, but to all mankind.²³

In recent years, trying to apply the Shari'a to non-Muslims had resulted in bloodshed and civil wars in different countries in Africa. In Nigeria, there was debate and antagonism regarding introducing the Shari'a into the Nigerian legal constitution. It became such a sensitive issue that the government had to use its military force to restore a fragile peace.

However, on graduation from the Ilm school, students are allowed to wear the turban and become the *Ulama*, *Malamai*, or simply the *Malam* meaning men of learning, rabbi

²³ Ibid. p. 84.

or teachers.

In its inception in Nigeria, Islam, probably due to the culture, did not emphasize the education of women. Many Islamic women were backwards educationally. The backwardness should not be attributed to the religion itself, for its founder, the prophet Mohammed, spoke against the neglect of women. His wife, Aisha, according to the Islamic tradition, is known to have been a scholar. Even in Nigeria, Usman Dan Fodio, and in recent times Usman Ngaogo and Aminu Kano, among others, emphasized the right of women to be educated and be teachers of Islam. Among other Muslims, however, women were not allowed to play such roles.

When the government announced a general policy on education, Islamic education was included. The government considered seriously the reforms introduced by the *Islamiyya* school system of 1950. This system advocated that the Islamic curriculum be expanded beyond the Koran and Arabic to include Western subjects. It raised the issue of the status of Muslim women. This was opposed by both the *Tijaniyya* and *Qaderiyya* brotherhood who were staunch traditionalists. When the defunct Universal Primary Education (UPE) was launched in 1976, there was widespread fear that the Koranic, the Islamic ethical and religious system, male and female roles, the nature of parenthood, models of marriage and authority would be swept away by Western education.

The reader should understand the basis of this fear. Among the Muslims in Northern Nigeria, especially in the villages, a father gives his daughter in marriage when she is about twelve years old. According to the tradition, a girl ideally should experience her first menstruation in her husband's house, and should be married before her sexual drives and potential are fully developed. The reason being that, it is a shame and disgrace for a girl to get pregnant outside wedlock. The society considers lost of virginity and illegitimacy to be parental responsibility rather than uncontrolled and illicit sexual practices. The implication for a father can be serious. He may, for example, be prevented from acquiring a position of honor and authority in the community. For how can he take care of the community if he cannot manage the affairs of his own household? Parents also think that allowing a girl to go beyond four years in the primary school is opening her to the risk of losing her virginity and a girl who loses her virginity finds it difficult to get a husband:

Western education would not only lead to a higher incidence of loss of virginity . . . but also . . .
 . undermine the system purdah . . . ²⁴

The *purdah* system is a practice by which married Muslim women live in seclusion. Thus they feared that in the new educational reforms, Muslim girls who went to schools

²⁴ Ibid. p. 95.

attended by pupils of a variety of different religions, would want to imitate the ways of non-Muslims and this would refuse to accept early marriage and seclusion -- a valuable tradition.

In Northern Nigeria, women in the purdah play a significant role with the help of their children. They do some small scale trading with the children acting linking the secluded women with their customers and suppliers. Placing these children in schools also means depriving these women in purdah of their "go-betweens." This could upset the economic balance of the family and the community at large.

The Muslims were also worried about the change that UPE would bring to the status of women. For a traditional Muslim, a woman was made to be subservient and an ideal wife had to look up to her husband for everything. However, a few of the 'westernized' Muslims viewed things differently and had no time for Muslim women who were not educated:

. . . a wife must be able to entertain friends, speak to them, talk about current affairs, talk sensibly at parties . . . ²⁵

Many of the Malams (teachers) and traditionalists viewed such approaching changes with alarm. Their fear was that, with the new trend, women would start behaving like men to determine their proper role in society and would go to the extremes of acting independently. The ideal woman

²⁵ Ibid.

with her character of submissiveness, obedience, and the admiration of her husband's status would vanish from the Muslim's community.

Many of the Malams reacted to these threats and some went as far as planning a mini-*jihad* (holy war) against the UPE scheme. The government reacted by absorbing them into the scheme as Arabic and Koranic teachers in order to appease them. Those of them who were not trained found it uncomfortable to integrate with the qualified teachers of the UPE scheme.

Despite their threats to the government, the programme, though unsuccessful, went on. They were made to realize that Nigeria was bigger than the North and that Northerners were not only Hausas and Muslims, but also Nigerian citizens and had to do what every citizen was doing. The Westernized Muslims also defended the government's action, arguing that Muslim girls who have attended primary and secondary schools were no more lax or promiscuous than those who have not. It was a popular view that if Nigeria (and Islam too) is to develop, the skills and techniques required for organizing a modern state must be acquired. Consequently, the government also introduced Nomadic education for the "cow-Fulanis" or herdsmen who wandered about with their cattle. They received their education *en route* their trade. The government was firm in telling the Muslims that things had changed in the country and the historical process could not

be reversed, and consequently, both the Islamic and Western systems of education had to be integrated.

What has been so far analyzed is the effort by the government to improve on the educational system of Nigeria and to bring it up to a standard that would be accepted internationally. But it seemed to be a difficult task for the government due to the many problems it encountered in the process. Some of these problems are examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

PROBLEMS FACING NIGERIAN EDUCATION

Chapter Three examined the efforts made by the government to restructure and reform the Nigerian educational system. In spite of these efforts, the system still faces numerous problems. Some of the problems raise questions in the minds of some people if it is worthwhile "wasting time" in schools instead of returning to the traditional way -- the African way before the advent of the Europeans. This aversion to school, coupled with other developments, had resulted in the high rate of illiteracy-- the first problem examined in this chapter.

Illiteracy and Education at the Primary Level

When Western Education was originally established in Nigeria before and after independence, it was welcomed by the natives as a means of rapid social and economical development for a new Nigerian generation. However, in certain areas especially in the North, it was regarded with suspicion and reservation. For the South, it was an achievement to have at least one member of the family educated up to the secondary school level and there used to be a big celebration in a village should one of their children become a university graduate. Education was and is

still a privilege in Nigeria because it is very expensive for the common people to send their children to school, even in the primary level. Therefore, when the military took over all schools, the government felt that free and compulsory education, at least on the primary level, should be a right of the citizens. The government had to make it compulsory, for if the imbalance was to be bridged, a bit of force was needed to compel the Northerners to send their children to school. It could be free because of the country's increased funds from the sales of crude oil. The Universal Primary Education was planned at the time of the famous *oil boom*.

Consequently, the campaign for Universal Primary Education was launched in 1976 and the result was tremendous. In the Northern States alone, the turn out of pupils took the policy makers by surprise and in the South, it became a long-awaited opportunity of educating all the children, especially those from the lower economic class. With such increased enrolments, the government began to have some problems as more and more children were enrolled. The government blueprint of 1978 to 1979 states that:

Under the scheme for Universal Primary Education, inaugurated at the commencement of the 1976-77 school year, the number of children to be provided for proved to be much larger than had been envisaged. For the Federation as a whole the projected enrollments in Grade 1 for the first year of the operation of UPE, 1976-77, were estimated at 2.297 million; in the event 2.992

million school children were enrolled in Grade
1.¹

It was agreed that there was an additional thirty-one percent increase in the enrollments than had been expected by the government. The result was that the government had to spend more money in the unit costs per pupil, per student, per teacher, and per classroom. In addition, Nigeria started to experience high inflation of prices in the economy. The upward oil prices of the *boom* years of 1973 and 1974 started to surge downwards while the upward movement of salaries and wages implemented by the government white paper called the *Udoji Report* had come to stay. With inflation came an increase in the cost structure of the whole system of education. On the capital side, the cost of building classrooms rose as building material prices and wages increased. On the recurrent side, teachers' salaries rose along with the cost of locally-produced and imported school materials and equipment.

At this point, the federal government retreated from its earlier position. The burden was becoming too much. There was not enough money to build more classrooms and schools for the teeming number of would-be pupils and consequently some of the pupils were forced outside a school environment. Equally, the government could not hire enough

¹ Federal Republic of Nigeria: Implementation Committee for the National Policy on Education - Blueprint 1978 - 79 (Lagos: October, 1978).

teachers to provide instruction for all the pupils and those hired were not paid regularly. Hence, slowly but steadily the UPE Program came to an end. Once again, the hope for a brighter Nigeria was dashed and the children from poor families returned to their homes without receiving a Western education. The result is the current illiteracy rate of about 60 percent.

Apart from unsound planning and the implementation of the UPE schemes, other factors contributed to its prime and early demise. First, the program was politically motivated and lacked solid planning and proper educational considerations. Also, apart from seeking literacy at the grassroot level, the policy makers failed to define clearly the aims and the goals of the UPE program. Criticizing the program, Bray states:

. . . the lack of unanimity in the vociferous criticism that has been launched against UPE . . . suggests that UPE's critics may not be entirely clear about its impact. . . and the rivalry of Northern and Southern elites for power and influence² in the federation was central to the program.

Bray also juxtaposed the implementation of the scheme and its consequential failure:

Poor quality teachers (untrained or those who had failed their teachers' college exams) made up a preponderance of elementary teachers. It was expected that low quality results among school-leaving exams would get worse in 1981-1982 when

² Mark Bray, Universal Primary Education in Nigeria: A Study of Kano State (Boston:Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, p. 21).

the first bloc of pupils finished the six year schooling . . . [and] that scape-goats and circumstances will be found³ to avoid political costs for the government.

The big questions asked in Nigeria are: is illiteracy going to be permanent? Will there ever be a government that will judiciously use national resources to eradicate or decrease the illiteracy rate? What would Nigeria look like in the absence of illiteracy and a sound system of education? The answer: only the future will tell.

Funding

In Nigeria, both the financial and the administrative responsibility for education rest primarily with the federal and state governments, while local governments and private sectors are called on to assist in the funding of education. Direct federal government expenditures on education used to be one third of total educational expenditures in the 1980s, but these have sharply fallen as well as the total federal expenditure. In the last few years, the situation became worse and Hinchliffe stated:

. . . it is readily apparent that the education sector has come under severe financial pressure in the last few years and that resources even in current price terms have fallen substantially.⁴

What Hinchliffe says is agreeable because even as

³ Ibid.

⁴ Keith Hinchliffe, Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (Kent: Croom Helm Ltd., 1987), p. 143.

far as 1985, planned federal expenditures were only twenty-eight percent of their 1981 level. Poor financing seems to hit the universities worse than any other level:

Everything in the university today points to an agonizing decline. Students swarm from their hostels where there are six in a room designed for two, into a dingy lecture room where a teacher shouts his notes across a hall of five hundred listeners . . . there are generally no course seminars or tutorials. . . . Without doubt the most affected of all the faculties is the Faculty of Science. For several months now we have been expected to run a physics laboratory without electricity, perform zoology and biology experiments without water and get accurate readings from microscopes blinded by use and age. Chemicals are unimaginably short. The result of all this is a Chemistry laboratory that can not produce distilled water and hundreds of 'science graduates' lacking⁵ the benefits of practical demonstrations.

For the person who had not been to Nigeria the above seems to be a little bit exaggerated but poor funding of the universities make this a truism. The same could be said about the libraries and other educational aids. However, since 1983, when this was written, the situation is even worse. It is not only the universities that are affected. The primary as well as the secondary schools are equally hit by poor funding. For instance, it was reported in Nigeria that:

The key policy framework of the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) is the new formula for funding . . . education which provides for rigorous financial accountability before

⁵ West Africa Magazine, September 12, 1983, Quoted in Ibid p. 145.

additional funds are made available.⁶

The mentioned formula had done more harm than good, for it delays progress that could be made due to the red tape involved among the educational bureaucrats.

Under this formula, all the three tiers of government, local, state, and federal were to be involved in funding education on the primary level, with the federal government alone shouldering sixty-five percent of the total cost. But the distribution of such funds again became a political issue with the so-called advantaged states (mainly the Southern States) receiving only twenty percent, while the educationally disadvantaged states (Northern States) received eighty percent. The inequalities, instead of being reduced, remain widespread abuses in the system. With inflation at almost 100 percent and politics surfacing in the funding area, the government has to consider other alternatives and methods of more equitable funding.

Population Explosion

With more than three million people dead during the Civil War in Nigeria, one would think that the population of the country would be drastically reduced. This was not the case. The casualties of the war produced a new ideological trend for those who survived the war. In fact, the 1970s

⁶ Newswatch, February 26, 1990, p. 9.

witnessed a *population boom* in Nigeria. Initially, the authorities paid no attention to it, nor addressed the issue until it became a big social problem.

Overpopulation does not only affect the economic and social life but retards national educational and technological progress. The educational policy makers perceived it as a set back to intellectual and economical growth and they argued that Nigeria would not attain her goal educationally if the population issue was not addressed and a solution sought in transforming it. This, however, was easier said than done. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the birth rate was growing steadily at three percent. This seemed to have been realized or caught the attention of the government when the UPE scheme finally took off. The estimates of the numbers strength of children in the country had been underestimated. During the enrollment, it was realized that despite a "huge" government budget allocation for education and the UPE in particular, such an amount could not meet with the unit cost per student or pupil. At this juncture, the government was in a dilemma. The authorities finally agreed that to satisfy all the national needs of education would drastically reduce accumulation of capital or funds to encourage consumers growth, building of the infrastructure, and economic development. It was also observed that with emphasis on health care delivery, there was a remarkable decline in the mortality rate. Medical

supplies, mainly from the Western countries, had significantly reduced the high rate of infant mortality. Although progress was made in the health care of Nigerians, it was problematic to the government, for as Chadwick notes:

This placed strains on governments as these children were consumers of public funds rather than producers who paid⁷ taxes and thus contributed to the public treasury.

The government had also realized that in a few years, the graduates of the UPE program, would enter the job market and consequently, aggravate an already-existent problem of mass unemployment since there would be no funds to provide for economic expansion to provide jobs. The government envisaged that it would further place more burden on the authorities who had already been confronted by disenchanting and jobless people.

After a long deliberation, the federal government arrived at a consensus that population reduction was the solution. But initiating it became a problem, as over sixty percent in the "reproduction factory" were uneducated and knew practically nothing about the mechanism of their reproductive systems. The problem encountered now was selecting the priority. Which was to be considered first? Mass literacy which would give basic understanding of the human body and thereby helping the common people to

⁷ Chadwick, F. Alger, Global Education: Why? For Whom? About What?, The Ohio State University, June 26, 1984, p. 51. (unpublished class notes).

understand birth-control, or should it be using means to reduce the population to enable the government to have enough capital to fund education for development? For so many people and agencies like the IMF (International Monetary Fund) which became alarmed about the population in Third World Countries, it is:

Reduce population dramatically while industrializing with the aid of the developed world, thus breaking the typical pattern found in the demographic transition.

In Nigeria, various methods of reducing the population do not work. The Traditional, Christian and Islamic religions, the three major religions in Nigeria, all oppose abortion. Due to such strong religious convictions, abortion would remain a non-discussed issue and be illegal at least up to the next century. The reason for this seems to be rooted in the metaphysics and spiritual belief of the Nigerians. The whole idea of human conception is a mystery. According to African philosophy, anything that is mysterious is either sacred or uncanny. African thought sees beauty in the mystery of human life, and consequently human life is seen as sacred. Since it is sacred, it has to be handled with care in order to avoid the wrath of its owner (God or gods). Abortion would be legalized if such idea is taken away or at least weakened in the minds of the Nigerian people. Contraceptives could only be used by the

⁸ Ibid, p. 53.

few educated and Western-minded folks while the uneducated would receive them with suspicion and ultimately reject them. Therefore, for now, population growth would continue to be a major educational problem in Nigeria . It would be a problem that would force the government and the policy makers in education to consider in relationship to illiteracy in the federation.

Corruption in the Administration

The word " corruption" is very familiar to Nigerians since it is the key word used in different sectors of administration, be it public or private. Corruption surfaces in different forms.

The Ministry of Education and those associated in shaping and dispensing education are involved in one way or the other. Misappropriation or mis-management of funds stands out prominently in the educational sector.

Commenting on this and trying not to be offensive to the public servants in the Ministry of Education, Aliyu Babatunde Fafunwa, the Minister of Education said:

. . . though the federal government voted huge sums of money for education, some . . . simply diverted the fund to where they thought they had

more urgent and pressing matters.⁹

In many cases, what has been described as "more urgent and pressing matters" may be the private coffers of those concerned. Some of those involved with finances often feel that they are above the law and are not accountable to the government. In addition the government does not monitor adequately the expenses made from the budget. Fafunwa confirms this:

. . . the federal government was still pumping money without any follow-up¹⁰ to see whether states were complying or not.

The rampant abuses and diversion of public funds to private interest have undermined educational progress in Nigeria. It seems from every indication that the authorities are not worried about the abuses since, according to a top government official, such lapses are not unusual in a country (like Nigeria) which is not used to accountability.

A part of the government's fund is set aside to grant scholarships to poor and brilliant students. But scholarships are given first to relatives of the government officials who are themselves rich, and the poor could not have access to them. At times non-relatives of the government official get such grants either through bribes and for a woman through sexual intercourse with the

⁹ Newswatch, Op. Cit., p. 9.

¹⁰ Ibid.

official.

Nepotism, tribalism, bribery and the use of sex have become means of getting what one wants in the field of education . It has been a well known fact that professors demand sex or money from their students to pass examinations and those in the administration do the same to admit students to the universities. On the general corruption in the country including the educational sector, Olaniyan said:

The bases of legitimate authority at departmental level having been scandalously eroded, it did not take long before a general state of indiscipline emerged. These attitudes of discourtesy to members of the public by these . . . officials were soon to spread to young men who were alleged to have bribed people in the higher positions in the civil service hierarchy before getting their jobs; indeed some of them were alleged not even to possess the necessary paper qualifications in the first instance. A bribe could either be financial or take the form of an offer of intimate friendship between a female relation of the young applicant and a highly placed person who was in a position to offer jobs. Eventually, acts of insolence, insubordination and misappropriation of funds became so widespread in departments and divisions of ministries that the point was reached at which the traditional values of respect for one's elders, one's seniors . . . by which society was held together were no longer able to sustain anyone¹¹ in his relationships in the office or at home.

Many young Nigerians have terrible stories to tell about the treatment they suffered at the hands of the public servants who are supposed to perform public services. These unscrupulous elements in the public service do what they do because they feel they are above the law and any

¹¹ Richard Olaniyan, p. 221.

disciplinary action. They can not face any sanctions even if they are sued since those in the judiciary are either their friends or are themselves often involved in such acts. Even if they are convicted, they can easily buy their way to freedom through heavy bribes. Lack of compunction and total negligence of one's duties have helped corruption to have a tap root in Nigeria.

Lack of Equipment and Unhealthy Atmosphere

If one conducts inspection into the Nigerian schools -- from the Primary schools to the universities-- one would surely wonder about the conditions in which the Nigerian students receive education. The puzzle would be found in the atmosphere of learning, teaching aids, and even in the person imparting the knowledge.

Most of the classrooms suffer from neglect, with blown-off roofs, cracked walls, and broken windows. In many states of the federation, the strong wind which accompanies rain has reduced most schools to symbols of national shame. Shortage of classrooms has forced pupils to hold lessons in mosques or churches. Others are forced to study under trees and at times they do this under the harsh harmattan wind but in many cases they are forced to go on unofficial holidays when it rains. For those who are lucky to study in the classrooms, such are always over-crowded. Commenting on the sad state of the classrooms, Fafunwa says:

A situation where teachers are expected to teach in over crowded classrooms was indeed a hall-mark

of the rot which has been the lot of primary education in the country these past years Even available classrooms meant for between 30 and 40 pupils are forced to take 80 and 100 at a time.¹²

Most teachers teach without teaching aids. Therefore, the effectiveness of how the teachers impart knowledge in overcrowded classrooms without proper equipment is best imagined. In most cases, text books and chalk have to be purchased by the teacher from his meager salary. Teachers, like their classrooms, have been suffering neglect by the government. Those hit worst are the primary school teachers:

Until late 1989, teacher's salaries were delayed for months and they were saddled with the responsibility of buying basic teaching materials like chalks and textbooks from their pay packets. Apart from the irregular payment of teachers salaries, conditions of service in the profession, especially at the primary level, is discouraging. . . Teachers' earnings are grossly irregular so they can't plan expenditure. And the frustration is part of¹³ why they exhibit an I-don't-care attitude.

However, a large proportion of these teachers in the Western standard are inexperienced and unqualified. During the UPE era, many unqualified teachers were hired in order to instruct the overwhelming number of pupils who responded to the scheme. Their inexperience baffled many parents and educationists. Professor Fafunwa has remarked:

¹² Newswatch, Op. Cit. pp. 8 - 9.

¹³ Ibid. p. 9.

. . . it will be a disservice to the country if all we can think of in terms of UPE is to multiply the number of existing schools and carry on business as usual . . . the year the UPE was launched, only 40.9 percent of . . . primary teachers were qualified and in some states . . . was much lower. In Kano State, for example, only 13 percent were qualified, and over half the primary teachers had only primary schooling themselves. The majority of staff, therefore, lacked both the experience and the self-confidence required to embark on innovative techniques. Most of them relied on the methods and materials with which they had themselves been taught, and it would have been naive to have expected them to do otherwise.¹⁴

However, the government has threatened to dismiss unqualified teachers by 1992 with the exception of those who are going through an inservice program. But on the whole, many do not like teaching because of its low quality and the plausible reason that the government looks down on teachers. Many of the teachers who get into universities, on qualification, join other professions or enter into business. Therefore, unqualified teachers may remain unless the federal government makes teaching attractive to qualified persons.

Government and the Unemployed

The links between education and employment have both economic and social significance for Nigerians. From the time of Colonialism, the Africans saw education as a means

¹⁴ Mark Bray, Op. Cit., p. 172.

of giving prestigious government positions. During that period, those qualified with certificates were not disappointed. The job market was always waiting for them. So in Nigeria, education and employment by the government were almost synonymous. Even after independence, with the Nigerian brand of capitalism which involved government ownership, the employment industry also was the main preoccupation of the government. School-leavers were never attracted by small-scale industries and a work-force that did not have a government blue-print.

In Nigeria, it is obvious that education is a costly enterprise, and therefore, it is necessary that it should equip its recipients with skills that will be used by the economy. Nigerians always argue that if school-leavers are unable to find jobs for which they have been trained, the resources invested in them will have been wasted. For such minds, knowledge for its own sake is not worth anything. Knowledge acquired must be transformed practically and the government was a key organ to bring this to realization. With this type of mentality, unemployment of school-leavers would have severe social consequences in the community. The unemployed would have lots of set-backs. They would often feel bored, have no means of income, and would feel they are burdens to their families and society. Anyone who had been educated in a particular family had in mind that he himself must see another member of the family through educationally,

and should he be unemployed at the completion of his studies, it means then that, no other member of the family would be able to proceed.

In the 1970s, employment for school-leavers had not been a major problem in Nigeria, especially in 1973, when oil prices rose phenomenally. Problems started setting in when the oil price dropped drastically. Unemployment reached high levels in the 1980s, accompanied by high inflation. This has far reaching consequences in the Nigerian society. The unemployed feel they have been misled by society and they resort to crime. Some who have connections with discontented military agents, are involved in some nefarious activities which produce political instability and coup d'etat.

Unemployment of school-leavers has become a breeding ground for crime in Nigeria. The most common is highway robbery which has become so intensive that the government had been forced to take punitive sanctions against robbers. Men and women convicted of armed robbery are always executed by firing-squads in public places before large crowds of spectators. These measures were taken to deter potential robbers. Unfortunately, the deterrence did not work. It rather turned many youths into hardened criminals and generated into other crimes and fraudulent activities. Foreign investors are afraid of investing in Nigeria and this hinders economic development and consequently makes

the Nigerian situation worse.

Fear of unemployment contributes to students' rioting in the universities and other tertiary and secondary schools. Rioting, strikes, and civil disobedience are ways by which students and their sympathizers call attention to their particular situation and the general situation of the labor market. This climate does not provide a good atmosphere for proper academic work. Strikes and rioting in Nigeria are destructive to schools' and government's property. Often, the government's response is prompt and ruthless. Mobile policemen or the Army are sent to quell such riots. In the ensuing actions, there are strong confrontation and resistance from the students which end with bloodshed and loss of lives.

Brain drain is another consequence of unemployment among Nigerian graduates. The nation has lost much educated manpower to Saudi Arabia and many other Arab nations.

However, the situation of unemployment has caused the nation a great anxiety and first time school-leavers enter the job market with a sense of desperation or despondency. Nevertheless, it has changed the attitudes of Nigerians a great deal. Before the recession or what is called the depression by some economists, Nigerian school-leavers only focused and had high aspirations towards white-collar jobs - jobs that would make them sit down under electric fans and air-conditioners and issue commands to their subordinates.

But in today's situation a blue collar or white collar job is as important as any other job in the work place.

From what has been examined in this chapter, education is a motivating force in the development of Nigeria. It brought with it many advantages. But it has also created several economic, social and political problems which led to a call for more reforms in the Nigerian educational system. The problems generated cannot be blamed on education itself. The educational administration must get rid of corruption and look at education objectively by exploring all available means to make it achieve its goals. If corruption is gotten rid of, many of the problems generated can be eradicated or minimized.

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Education is not an isolated phenomenon in Nigeria. Linked with the whole society, it has been affected and at times overtaken by events taking place in the country. However, the political and economic changes are the two main areas that affect it most. They are the main determinants of its progress or retrogression.

By several measures, Nigeria ought to be the colossus of Sub-Saharan or black Africa. (By Sub-Saharan Africa is meant all the countries south of the Sahara Desert excluding South Africa. The countries north of the Sahara with their interest focused primarily on the Mediterranean regions, are mainly Islamic and linguistically, Arabic, and are strongly tied to the countries of western Asia). As seen in Chapter One, Nigeria towers over the rest of Africa in terms of population. It is supposed to be the richest of all the countries south of the Sahara with the exception of South Africa. Nigeria's gross national product is estimated to be over \$30 billion per year. Unfortunately, population and wealth have not been sufficient for its national development. They do not solve its main problems. At

times, they are factors that produce what could be called the national slumber and attitudes of many citizens. Commenting on what it calls *another setback* for Nigeria, the *Economist*

says that, despite the fact that Nigeria is the colossus of Africa, it is only one thing that diminishes it:

an inability to make a success of governing itself democratically. For only ten of its 32 years of independent life, has it been ruled by civilians. For the other 22, including the past nine, the armed forces have been undemocratically in charge.¹

Those not familiar with Nigeria's history may wonder why this should be the case. But for the Nigerians themselves and foreigners who have followed closely the history of the country since independence, the above comment by the *Economist* is not a surprise. Since 1966, the military has always justified its depredations and coups in the name of curbing civilian corruption and incompetence and for the preservation of national unity and the healing of the nation's fractious multiethnic conflicts. Because of this kind of justification for upsetting the government, Nigeria has seen many generals come and go in six successful military revolts and countless abortive and counter coups.

In Chapter Two, mention was made about the first coup d'etat in Nigeria staged by the junior army officers. Even though it was engineered by Nzeogwu, Aguiyi-Ironsi took over from the first civilian regime. The same year, 29 July, 1966, there was a military counter coup staged by the northern soldiers. Like the first coup, this was bloody and like the prime minister, the head of state was executed. General

¹The Economist, New York, October 24th - 30th 1992, p.18.

Yakubu Gowon took over power and saw the country through the civil war and post-war era. After the war Gowon continued to rule until 1975 when he was thrown out in what Nigerians described as a palace coup -- the first non-bloody coup. By the Nigerian style of staging coups, it seems inaccurate to view the removal of Jack Gowon as a military coup d'etat. Among the civilians, there was a widespread rumor that Gowon was aware that he would be dethroned as he proceeded to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) meeting. But from military sources, it was said that Gowon was tired, a pawn of Britain, and too unsystematic in foreign policy. Therefore, the coup was precisely an initiative within the army to restore its prestige, which was gradually fading because of Gowon's leadership. The military, therefore, decided that it needed to reinvest its power and prestige with an aura of general dynamism. Gowon was forced to retire by the army standard, maintained his rank and full pension, and was allowed to seek political asylum in Britain, where he became a university student.

Brig. Murtala Ramat Muhammed succeeded Gowon. Muhammed was also a northerner, but a Muslim. From every indication, Nigerians needed this dynamic and active soldier to clean up the mess in the country and to overcome the general laissez-affaire attitude and the laxity in government quarters. Gowon's era was filled with corruption of every kind. School administrators distorted, misappropriated and embezzled funds

meant for improving and servicing educational needs. Teachers, like other civil servants, would never go to work on time. The phrase "African Time," meaning lateness to any degree or lacking the sense of time became endemic to Nigerian citizens. Murtala, therefore, in his first broadcast to the nation, emphasized two points: a return to collective responsibility and a promise to act with the greatest speed and probity. He moved swiftly to revive the driving force which had been lost in the last years of Gowon. The corrupt and unpopular state governors were dismissed. He moved in a very radical and popular manner and purged the public services including the ministry of education under the code "Operation Deadwoods". The operation signalled terror and brought fear to public servants and all on the government payroll, but joy to the common folks. "Operation Deadwood" sent out a big flame which engulfed and consumed many government workers:

Over the next few weeks, in a... purge of the public service... the retirement or dismissal of, inter alios, 10 senior police officials, 100 senior federal civil servants and 20 permanent secretaries and senior diplomats was implemented; more than 10,000 of the national complement of 750,000 public servants were dismissed on grounds ranging from infirmity to corruption. About 540 university staff were removed and 169 officers were retired and 47 dismissed from the army. Official investigations, followed frequently by confiscations² and convictions, proved to be extremely popular measures.

With "Operation Deadwood" completed in a couple of months, Muhammed became a national hero with an immense

²Africa South of the Sahara, 1990 (New York: Europa publications, 1990), p.766.

popular following.

On February 13, 1976 the national hero and the new-found confidence were brutally destroyed when Gen. Murtala Ramat Muhammed was assassinated in Lagos by Lt.Col. Bukar Sukar Musa Dimka and a few of his disaffected colleagues.

Muhammed was killed with his Aide-de-Camp (ADC). Despite his death, Dimka's Coup proved abortive. He succeeded in ruling the country for a couple of hours until dislodged from the Federal Radio Station after a bloody exchange of gunfire and artillery with troops loyal to Muhammed under the leadership of Brig. Ibrahim Babangida. Meanwhile Lt.-Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo from the western part of the country, who at this time was the second in command or the chief of staff of the armed forces, was ordered by the Supreme Military Council (SMC) to assume leadership of the nation.

Dimka's coup had some far-reaching consequences. Gowon was implicated and was summarily dismissed from the army and stripped of his rank and pension benefits. He was ordered to return to Lagos to answer some unspecified questions, but he declined to return. It was also alleged that the British government and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) were behind the coup attempt. When Dimka was finally captured, subsequent interrogation and investigation revealed that about 125 people, mainly military personnel, were involved in the plot. They were arrested and made to face military tribunals. Those convicted faced the firing squads. Most of the coup-

plotters were from the middle-belt, the natal region of Gowon, indicating the ethnicity and tribal problems in Nigerian politics.

Obasanjo, on resumption of power, reassured Nigerians that government would be restored to civilians in 1979. He was not a fire-brand like Muhammed but a moderate. It was his regime that inaugurated the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme.

October 1, 1979, true to his promise, General Olusegun Obasanjo handed power to the civilians through democratic election. Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) a northerner, became the first executive president of Nigeria. According to western sources, he won because his party was well organized and right of center in the nations ideological spectrum. He was therefore, supported by the west, led by the United States. But inspite of this, there were some problems he had to face:

A major problem confronting the Second Republic was a need to effect a transition in practice from the Westminster to the U.S. model of government, a problem exacerbated by the fact that many of those who had been successful in the 1979 elections had spent many years working within the now discarded British - derived system.... and the government became even more politicized than ever, with large numbers of senior appointees³ being practicing politicians rather than civil servants.

This problem generated into an explosive relationship between the ruling party and the elected legislators and executives. The tension was felt all over the nation. Money was no longer available for national and educational

³Ibid p.769

development. The nation's money was in the hands of a few selfish politicians, who used it to do personal business overseas. Corruption and riots escalated as favoritism, nepotism, and tribalism resurfaced. Among the politicians, there was a feeling that the federal democracy was a facade behind which the Shagari's regime, dominated by a clique from Kaduna, heightened bribery through contracts and rewards to ensure their continuation in power. This no doubt had a negative effect within the country especially as the government did not react effectively to the economic crisis.

In 1983, there was a general election. Through fraud and mass rigging, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) won again with Shagari securing a second term. "Democracy" seemed now to have survived in Nigeria, but the president was presiding over a country more bitterly divided than it had been in 1979.

Fears of the coming of a one-party state were widely discussed in an atmosphere heavy with corruption and against the background of a collapsing economy. President Shagari still refused to face up to Nigeria's economic problems, minimizing the extent of its seriousness in his budget speech of 29 December. Two days later he was under arrest....⁴

The coup that toppled Shagari and the Second Republic brought Maj.Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, another northerner, to power. This military take-over was broadly welcomed by the mass of the Nigerian people, and no significant resistance was offered in defense of the ousted regime. Moving very quickly to identify the new regime with the memory of Murtala Ramat

⁴Ibid. p.770

Muhammed, Buhari declared the coup plotters and the junta to be an offshoot of the last military administration. However, there were gross human rights abuses. The Chief of Staff who was the second in command apparently ruled the country. The new government moved with firmness and enacted decrees that could not be challenged in courts. The regime also placed major restrictions on the media and threatened to close radio stations and newspapers and to arrest journalists involved in "subversion activities" and spreading of rumors. The regime moved to recover ill-gotten goods from public servants and politicians. Special military tribunals were set up to try those under arrest and in absentia those who had fled the country. In an effort to suppress currency smuggling and to render worthless millions of naira as yet unconverted but held by overseas exiles, Nigerian borders were closed and the currency was changed and assumed new dimension.

Internationally, the regime was not popular. Relations between Nigeria and the United Kingdom turned sour when Nigeria attempted to kidnap Alhaji Umaru Dikko, a multi-millionaire and the son-in-law of Shagari, who was also the transport and aviation minister during Shagari's presidency. The strained relationship within the two countries resulted in the withdrawal of their diplomats.

Many Nigerians did not trust Buhari and his regime. The economy was still a mess. Nigerian doctors and hospital

workers went on strike over the inadequacy of health provisions in the country. The government started to incur public hatred and criticism. Tunde Idiagbon, the chief of staff, responded by issuing stern warnings to the nation and several journalists were detained.

On August 27, 1985, a coup was staged by the junior officers and Buhari's administration was toppled. General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida became the head of state and remains in power as of 1993.

The deteriorating political and economic situation had a debilitating effect on Nigerian education. Like all other sectors of life in Nigeria, education also suffered. The academic atmosphere deteriorated in schools. Students were forced to leave school and return home during the coups and counter-coups. Schools would only resume operations when each regime had secured its control. Attention was not paid to students and their progress, and students responded with riots which resulted in vandalism. Those concerned with the qualitative improvement of education became frustrated and discouraged. The big question was: what was the future of education in Nigeria?

Religion had its own part to play. Nigerians are very sensitive to religious issues, and consequently religious problems affect many facets of life in the country. There are three main religious bodies in Nigeria - Traditional, Christian and Islamic. Of the three, Christianity and Islam

have always been in conflict with one another. Statistics show that forty-six percent of the total population are Christians, forty-five percent are Muslims and one percent are traditional worshippers. The remaining eight percent are the so-called atheists. In Nigeria it is hard to really talk about this group. They are only professed atheists when they are not disturbed. But in times of calamities or disaster, they are known to look for protection in one religion or the other. However, like many other issues in the country, there is no consensus on these statistics as Muslims claim they are the majority and the Christians refuse to accept such claims. The issue becomes a very important one in politics. Thus, in any election or whenever there is a military head of state, the questions asked are: is he a Christian or Muslim, a southerner or a northerner? For the thirty-two years as an independent state, almost all the presidents or the military heads of state were northerners and Muslims. The Christians always agitated about this northern *cum* Muslim domination of power. The US-based magazine, *Insight*, writing about the abortive coup of April 22, 1990 in which the incumbent president, General Ibrahim Babangida was almost toppled, reported:

Ethnic jealousy, a product of colonial boundary making, resurfaced in Nigeria's latest coup attempt. Bad blood between the predominantly Muslim northerners and the mostly non-Muslim peoples of other regions compounds problems for the populous, oil-rich nation ruled by the military and sapped by corruptions and mismanagement.... Babangida, like most of the generals who have ruled Nigeria, hails from the

country's north, and many Nigerians have come to wonder if he is not too heedful of northern interest.⁵

Babangida, like his predecessors, (except for Gowon and Obasanjo who were Christians) is a Muslim. Muslims in Nigeria have strong ties with other Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Muslims in these countries are known to regard Nigeria as a fertile spot for the spread of Islam. Consequently, they are accused of covert activities in the country. There were rumors in the 1980's that some agents of these countries were training some Nigerian youths in Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism with the goal of getting rid of all infidels in the country. (Infidels mean non-believers in Islam). During the 1978 constitutional debate, Islamic fundamentalists in these countries urged Nigerian Muslims to flex their muscles to establish the Shari's appeal court, which resulted in a bitter debate. When the Muslims threatened to boycott all future proceedings, the president, Obasanjo, cautioned them before effecting a compromise, which guaranteed Muslim rights. In December, 1980, the populist preaching of Alhaji Muhammad Marwa generated an Islamic extremist sect called the Maitasine Brotherhood whose uprising caused many Christians to lose their lives in the north, in their attempt to get rid of infidels. The government blamed the uprising on foreign agitators but refused to acknowledge

⁵Insight (May 14, 1990), p.30

that the sect's appeal for an Islamically-based social order had caused consequences in the country. In October, 1982, the group struck again and hundreds lost their lives. Between February and March, 1984, more than one thousand people were killed, and in April, 1985, thousands lost their lives to the Maitasine extremists.

This religious uprising paralyzed Nigeria and the greatest shock came in February, 1986, when Babangida announced that Nigeria had joined the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Christian and non-Muslim southerners protested vehemently, expressing fears the Muslims were attempting to secure the formal Islamization of the country. During the religious killings, it was observed that children in primary schools were brainwashed and were at the forefront of the uprising, shooting people, committing arson and looting. Many students and labor unions dubbed the government incompetent for not containing the situation in the country. There were bitter arguments among Christian and Muslim University students. Schools now became places of rioting. The government responded by sending police to the institutions and many students were killed. The death of their colleagues infuriated other students. But ironically, instead of joining forces to fight a common enemy (the police), violent clashes broke out between Christian and Muslim students:

...there were arson attacks on christian churches and premises selling alcoholic beverages, and estimates of

deaths in rioting reached as high as 30.⁶

The irony stemmed from the fact that, at the time of the riot, both the Christian and Muslim students were protesting against police brutality. The police and other government law enforcement agents were posing as a common enemy to the students. Therefore like the trade unions, the students should have joined together to fight their common enemy, instead of fighting among themselves. This religious antagonism may continue to exist in Nigeria unless the government stamps out all kinds of religious fanaticism and bigotry which often infiltrate the country through foreign preachers, mainly, evangelical preachers from the West, and Muslim fundamentalists from the Arab nations. One way of doing this is checking the motives of these missionaries before allowing them entry into the country.

Again, the government responded by deploying military guards to the university and a dawn-to-dusk curfew was imposed. Events like the above make one wonder why religion is such a divisive and bloody force in a country like Nigeria.

Nigerian economic instability has had negative educational consequences. It is often said that an unsound economy reflects the backwardness and undevelopment of a nation. Could this be said of the nation that ranks fifth among the OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) members? Nigeria is responsible for much of its economic disasters,

⁶Africa South of the Sahara, 1990, p. 772.

however, the leadership is to blame.

In the 1970s, during the oil boom, Nigeria had a chance to build a strong economy for its posterity and to invest the oil money in meaningful projects that could have yielded interest for the country. But the leadership did not know what to do with such money. The country started projecting itself as the "lion of Africa" by hosting all sorts of sporting and cultural events at apparently its own expense. It hosted the famous FESTAC (Festival of Arts and Culture) for blacks from all over the world. The venture in itself was good but the way government money was spent without accountability was wrong. Contracts were given to whoever was a relative to a government official, who in turn, had to give a "kick-back" to his "benefactor." At this time, Nigerians started to develop taste for foreign-made goods and food items. Local produce was meant for common people and as such the local farmers, who produced both cash and subsistence crops, were not encouraged to produce more. Husbandry was more or less abandoned. There was money in the government circles and everybody wanted to have a share of this national cake. There was mass migration to the urban areas where the key words were "squandermania" and consumerism. But then disillusionment finally came in April, 1982.

With the federal budget over-extended, a slump in world oil prices produced a foreign exchange crisis and widespread financial panic. The government introduced short-term

measures designed to rescue the economy. However, the international community rejected these measures because of serious doubts about any long-term stability of the Nigerian economy. As a result, foreign loans became increasingly difficult to procure. With oil prices continuing to drop, the government introduced drastic political measures in 1983 to curb excessive imports and to control the export of foreign exchange. The demand for foreign goods resulted in widespread corruption and fiscal malpractice. The same year the country turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for support. The deal and negotiations were supposed to be secret but confidentiality was soon breached.

At this time, Nigerians started to suffer increasing hardship, which generated resentment. The government was frustrated and confused. The military took over the government and the Buhari administration's first concern was to restructure the economy. Negotiations with IMF became deadlocked as the conditions were not accepted by the Nigerian delegation. Among the conditions were: the devaluation of the Nigerian currency (the naira), at thirty percent; cutting the national petroleum subsidy; and relaxation of export controls and free trade. The rejection of these conditions made the government adopt austerity measures. Prices of consumer goods rose phenomenally and there were shortages of these goods at market stalls. The sentence -- "a hungry man is an angry man" -- generated social tensions.

At this time, negotiations were resumed with the International Monetary Fund, while the government explored other venues to gain capital and foreign exchange. When the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) failed to stabilize the world market on petroleum prices, Nigeria ignored its agreed production quota and followed what the Buhari administration called a "pragmatic" policy.

These actions by the government never eased the situation. Parents found it difficult to keep their children in schools and to pay for their basic needs. Teachers went on strike for non-payment of salaries. Students continued to riot, vandalizing school property. They were forced out by the military from the school premises, not without some of them being shot.

In its frustration, the government cracked down on illegal immigrants. They were blamed in part for the economic woes. During the hey days of the Nigerian economy many from neighboring countries entered the country illegally in search for greener pastures. Thus, the administration ordered their expulsion and repatriation and more than 700,000 left the country. In spite of the crack down on illegal immigrants, the plight of Nigerians never improved. The government then turned attention on the Nigerians themselves. Many government workers, educational administrators, and teachers were either retrenched or retired. The early retirement or retrenchment of government employees, was the government's new plan of

creating jobs for the younger generation and the more qualified certificate-holders. The government also believed that it was a good way of cutting down its annual expenditure on salaries, since the newly employed would be paid less than what it would cost to maintain those who had been employed in the same service for many years, as the latter would be looking for a pay raise depending on how long they had been in the service.

The hardship became unbearable and so General Babangida and his associates (the so-called, the Bida Mafia-Mamman Vatsa, Magoro and Nasko) took over power.

The economy was the number one thing in the government agenda. By now the public openly opposed any further negotiation with the IMF and the President gave an option of self-reliance as a basis of economic recovery to the nation. In October of 1985, the President announced pay reductions for the university teachers, the Civil Service and Armed Services. At the same time, Babangida declared a state of national economic emergency and assumed sweeping interventionist powers over the economy. After a public debate, his administration rejected further negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) -- a move that received widespread approval as an act of National independence and pride. However, the country had to pay a price for its pride.

Self-reliance and the rejection of the IMF conditions gave birth to the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) which is

actually sapping the Nigerian economy. Although meant to improve the economy, the economy has weakened under SAP. Protests by students and violent demonstrations do not help to solve the matter but result in school closings by the government. With schools not adequately funded, equipment and teaching aids are not available. Some lecture halls look like war-torn buildings. Libraries and classrooms cannot afford enough seats and desks for students. The majority of students must stand for their lectures and take their notes as there are no text and reference books in the library. Those texts available are most often old editions or outdated. Despite the bad economy, the government has increased costs for education and consequently only a few can afford to send their children to schools. There are acute shortages of teachers as graduates are inclined to enter business instead of teaching, now looked upon as a demeaned profession.

But the government felt that if the economy could be improved then conditions could turn better for every sector. The government therefore removed the petroleum subsidy which increased the price for petrol by three percent, but did not stabilize inflation. Students rioted again when the petroleum subsidy was removed in 1985. The riot was in protest of the government's action. Ten universities were closed and there were sympathy strikes all over the country, protesting the closing of the universities and the government's general economic policies. The universities were re-opened two months

following the general strike.

For Nigeria to progress in education, it must create an atmosphere conducive to it. In comparison to many other countries, Nigerian students must overcome serious obstacles. Many students and other educationally-oriented people feel alienated from the national system which they regard as fostering mediocrity and anti-intellectualism. They blame the educational problems not solely on the economy, but on civil servants who violate positions of trust.

Writing about the malaise of African economy, *Time Magazine* reports:

Expatriate businessmen estimate that wealthy Nigerians have enough money in personal deposits abroad to pay off the country's entire foreign debt, more than \$36 billion...Senior managers were appointed for political reasons, not for competence; the enterprises, incompetently run, lost money. Tribalism, provincialism and nepotism flourished and led to overemployment along with resentment and low morale.

The problem is that those involved are not the illiterates, but the educated -- citizens who have education and know its advantages. Due to lack of encouragement, education, meant to be a right of citizens, has become a privilege of the few. It is painful that this is the case when most people, even in the villages, have come to appreciate and recognize the importance of education. The authorities should create a good educational atmosphere and invest more in it. The investment would be possible if rulers

⁷Time Magazine, (September 7, 1992), pp 42-44.

would cut the defense budget. The government should be aware that it cannot provide quality education for its citizens, unless it introduces new policies on reforms or at least tries to implement the former policies. Nigerians have been having high hopes in education and they expected it to achieve many objectives, which include the badly needed national unity which has been one of the internationally known characteristics of Nigeria.

On this issue *The Economist* reports:

...the real trouble is that Nigeria has yet to establish in its citizens a sense of nationhood, let alone of the common good. It is, after all, a young country and in many ways a divided one. It is divided by history (its colonial masters, the British, employed indirect rule through local emirs in the north, direct rule by Colonial Civil servants in the South). It is divided by wealth (most of the oil that provides 97 percent of the country's exports lies in or off the Southeast). It is divided by religion (Muslims in the north, Christians in the east and a mixed population in the west). And it is divided by tribe (the ethnic differences are even more complicated than the religious ones, and just as keenly felt).⁸

Education has been challenged to bridge these divisions and that was the reason the government started the Federal Colleges and Unity Schools. But due to the failure of the 1970's policy of education, the colleges and the schools could not achieve their aims. The bitter Civil War in Nigeria was fought because of the above division and nobody who experienced that war would want it to happen again. But someday, with the inequalities and the imbalance in the

⁸The Economist, Op. Cit. p. 18

general national welfare, there is a likelihood that history might repeat itself. If that should happen, it will surely be different from the last Civil War. The justification of the above statement is seen in the quotation below, and the assumption is based on all the events that have happened in Nigeria after the Civil War. Despite all the woes it brought to the country, the war was like an eye-opener for the Nigerians. On the Biafran side, the leaders of the rebellion had learned from their mistakes, and they knew why they were easily defeated. At the same time the proponents of "One Nigeria" had laid new strategies of keeping the country one. Books and newspaper articles have been written by supporters of both sides. The existence of inequalities has always been the main issue. It is not just the common citizens that worry about the issue. Top military personnel and highly educated civilians seem to have exhausted their patience and are totally fed up with the prevalent situation of inequalities, favoritism and the imbalance in government allocation of the national budget. At the same time those involved in the corrupt practices are doing all in their power to foster the situation. A situation like this can only enhance hatred and promote disunity. It should also be noted that Nigerians on both sides of the spectrum are learning from history and have seeing events unfold in our modern world. They have seen the breakaway of the Balkan states from the Soviet Union. They are monitoring the situation in Yugoslavia. They have had a

useful experience in the last Civil war, and they are aware that, to try another secession, entails a lot of preparation militarily, economically and psychologically. However, it should not be construed that the author of this work is supporting such an unpopular means of eradicating inequalities in Nigeria.

The last abortive coup that almost toppled the government of General Babangida had some allusions to the above statement when the coup leader, Major Gideon Orkar, announced:

I wish happily to inform you of the successful ousting of the dictatorial, corrupt, drug-baronish, inhumane, sadistic, deceitful, homosexually centered and unpatriotic administration of General Ibrahim Babangida this is your chance to free yourselves from internal slavery ...⁹

Since that bloody and traumatic event which gave birth to Biafra, no matter how bitter the ethnic strife differences, secessionist talk has been a taboo in the country and the army has seen itself as the moral enforcer of national cohesion. So Orkar's coup attempt was the first since 1966 where the leaders openly incited the people to a regional and ethnic rebellion. Orkar was directly attacking a sensitive issue (national unity) and because of this he and his co-plotters had to be executed by firing squad.

But what type of education is going to change Nigerian attitudes and heal tribal, ethnic, and regional differences? What sort of curriculum can the policy makers in education generate? The expectations of education could be elusive

⁹Insight, p. 30

unless there is popular good will to accept and improve on education. National unity depends not only on the educational factor but also on the other factors mentioned in the different sections of this work. Therefore, the capacity and expectation of education to act as an independent variable is not realistic. A business man once said that if Karl Marx were to be alive today, he would have quite a different perspective of his political philosophy; instead of religion, education would be the opium of the people.

Writing on the future of education in Africa, Mark Bray examines some of the problems coming out from education in Africa:

Instead of the anticipated fruits (from education) many nations have witnessed increased political instability, large-scale unemployment, depopulation of the rural areas and overpopulation of the urban ones, very high drop-out rates within the education system, and reinforced social stratifications.¹⁰

This work analyzes not only the problems, but also the developments that have come to Nigeria since the introduction of Western education. The nation, always referred to as the Colossus of black Africa, is what it is because of education, inspite of the problems discussed. Education has been taken more seriously than any other thing in the country by the majority of the citizens, including those who had never attended school. It was education that planted the concept of nationalism and the move to independence in the minds of the

¹⁰Mark Bray, p. 171.

elites in the nation. Education has helped Nigerians to distinguish right from the wrong. It is true that the players in the educational administration had been very corrupt, but this does not mean that education itself is corrupt. Education as such is not responsible for the malpractices, but irresponsible individuals who manipulated the status quo to achieve their selfish and personal interest. But even in the corrupt system, there were still some conscientious people who hated corruption in all its forms, and used their time of service to work on solutions to the problems encountered. It was this distinction that motivated the military elites in the first Republic to eliminate political corruption. Education has begun an evolution in Nigeria which is evolving towards self-actualization or self-realization in every aspect. Nigeria is developing faster than any other Sub-Saharan African nation in technology and in infrastructures. Without education, the national wealth could have been even more mismanaged by unscrupulous elements than it is done at this present moment. In brief, Nigeria is what it is today because of education. The National Committee on the implementation of educational policy called for this:

...it is evident that much of the success in implementation of the national policy on education depends on the close ... alliance of all concerned - nationally and locally - towards the achievement of the nation's educational objectives.¹¹

The above call is not only for the government but also

¹¹Blue Print, p. 9

for all those involved in education to make it a success. The administration -- from the minister to the principal -- should research and explore every means to bring it to world standards. There should be constant communication, active involvement, and cooperation among all the actors. In their reforms, they should know that a modest reform is easier to accomplish than a total and fundamental one. This kind of reform can come about if there is a dialogue among the administrators. In finding a system of education for the country, those involved should look at it objectively and abandon the mistakes made by their predecessors. In the past, if the policy makers had studied in Russia or Germany or Britain, etc., on assumption of power, they felt the Nigerian educational system should be modeled after the systems in these countries; and as such, many of the systems adopted never considered the indigenous needs, culture, and temperament of the Nigerian society. The Nigerian system must originate from Nigeria, though it has to adopt from other school systems those essential elements that would suit its own system. (The curriculum advocated is explained below).

The government should encourage teachers and make them realize that the teaching profession is a noble one. Such encouragement includes: paying them just salaries regularly, providing them with inservice training and infrastructures that would help in their professional development, and they should be encouraged and supported to do research which would

improve their teaching methods.

The administration should encourage and support the efforts of local communities of granting scholarships in the villages to needy but brilliant students. Parents should be encouraged to be involved more in educational activities. They should be made to be aware that they are the primary educators of their children. As of now, they are acting on that capacity but are not conscious of what they are doing. Being made to be conscious of their role as co-educators with the professional teachers, would give them a big incentive to do more. They would feel that they, like the professional teachers, are important, and are a part and parcel of the school system, although some of them are illiterates.

In Nigeria, the goals of education are always defined but achievement of those goals remains a problem. That is the reason why the whole system needs to be re-examined and re-evaluated. Nigeria needs a stable government with an educational oriented leadership. The nation's educational policies and the attitude of policy makers need a very radical change -- a change that will provide the means of achieving the goals for preparing students for future careers with emphasis on a sturdy educational foundation for schools and students. The policies should reinforce these conceptions of school administrators, making them committed to providing students with academic and extra-curricular programs that are rewarding to all students. The policies should be designed in

such a way that they are appealing and provide incentives to attract both teachers and students. The new policy should see that money is used judiciously and with a mandated accountability for the purpose it was given. The government should enact laws and regulations governing educational operations and they should be a *sine qua non* for a uniform implementation of the policies.

Coming to the general atmosphere in the schools, good leadership is very essential. Here, the head teachers, rectors, provosts, and vice-chancellors are expected to do the work of the principal. The principal should be seen as an administrative and instructional leader with those qualities of managing the affairs of a school, and with the motive of preparing students for future careers. As an instructional leader, he should encourage the teachers to create an atmosphere in the school that encourages learning -- an atmosphere that attracts students from diverse backgrounds and tribes where they are provided with a rich and varied experience to develop the ability to become independent and problem-solving adults and country-builders. It should instill in them the realization that the future of the nation is in their hands and that they are future leaders. Many problems facing Nigeria is as a result of ethnic diversities. Schools would be the best place to address this problem.

The principals of schools should join together and periodically send memoranda to government officials especially

those concerned with educational policies. They should ask them to provide students with equipment that will help develop both the basic skills and specially designed activities to stimulate them to create and experiment with their own ideas. The principals should know that children learn best when they are motivated, actively involved, and challenged to think at the highest level of their abilities.

Individually, a principal is expected to create change and meet the needs of his local community. This could be difficult for the Nigerian principal since, with the present military leaders such changes would be frowned upon, and moreover he would lack the necessary resources (political, human, and financial) to achieve such changes.

To be successful, a principal or administrator should not stand aloof. He should concentrate his energy on parents, the local community, and staffs; he should be informed of what is happening in the government's enclave. Reading national newspapers, listening to news and having friends within the ministry of education would be the means of knowing what is going on as regards education in the country.

Ronald G. Cabrera and Mary V. Sours state:

Working hand-in-hand with parents is very rewarding. (For) parents have a vested interest in all that goes on in the school because their children are there. So gaining their support is imperative.¹²

To gain this support, they advise the principal or the

¹²Principal, Vol. 69; No. 1, (September 1989), p. 23

administrator to be always visible, not only in school but also at community functions. He must be available, pleasant, sensitive, open to suggestions, accessible, prompt, informed, dependable, ready for trouble, informative, humane, and patient. His relationship with the staff and faculty should be close and cordial to maintain a healthy school climate and achieve positive and effective goals. Sergiovanni makes us understand that "efficiency is the highest value, not loyalty."¹³

Efficiency, more than any other thing is badly needed in the Nigerian school system, if the standards of education are to be met. Due to nepotism, many unqualified people are given positions they are not qualified to handle by the political leaders. Since they are not qualified to handle such positions, the result is always a negative one. If efficient and dedicated people are entrusted with positions they are qualified in, there may be no room for victimization, domination, aggression, tribal and sexual harassment, and bigotry in the system. Efficiency will uproot immorality, hypocrisy, dishonesty, disloyalty, insincerity, viciousness, and dehumanization in the Nigerian educational system, for these vices are the canker-worms that eat the system to corruption.

Nigerian policy makers should study the United States'

¹³Thomas Sergiovanni, Supervision (Human Perspective), (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1988), p. 218

system carefully for it offers much that would enhance the system if those elements are adopted and adapted to local needs. Such positive elements include: the roles of the superintendent, the principal as an instructional leader, the role of the government, financing, and curriculum development.

Implication of the Thesis for the School Administrator

In view of the situation described above in Nigeria, the roles of the educational administrators seem to be bleak or very limited under any given military regime. However, their roles are not totally removed. The type of regime described above renders their administrative power almost useless or ceremonial.

Just as education has been affected by the political, religious and the economic episodes in Nigeria, so also are the school administrators. A situation like this makes their roles complex and challenging.

From the British colonialist and the Irish missionaries, a legacy was bequeathed to the post-independent administrators in Nigeria. For instance, the school superintendent was expected to fill many demanding roles as an expert in educational affairs. He was not just seen as an educational leader, but as one who was well vested with knowledge in the political spectrum--a knowledge that would help him to deal with the government as regards budgeting and school finances. As an expert in education, working with other educational personnel to develop and

implement school curriculum was another major task for him. They were, so to speak, the policy makers of education.

It is therefore evident that the military regime in the country has had a negative effect on the administrators, except for those who were politically minded, who seem to be satisfied with the status quo.

With the military in power, coupled with the political instability and uncertainties, education, not only assumed a different dimension, but the administrators had been stripped of their roles.

Political instability in Nigeria creates fear and uncertainties in the minds of the administrators. With the high rate of recession, inflation at 200 percent and unemployment on the rise everyone is afraid of losing jobs, the administrators inclusive. Some of the administrators had been threatened by the government in different ways, and consequently they had no option except to accept the status quo. Other administrators who could not cope with the situation had to resign and pull out of the school system.

There is the third group of the administrators who neither pulled out nor accept the kind of education outlined by the military administration. Members of this group constitute themselves into a sort of pressure group. They are the ones who instigate students into demonstrations and prompt trade unions to go on strike when students and educational rights are infringed upon. In times of

adversity, this group collaborates with student unions and trade unions and issue joint statements to the government and the public protesting the manner in which the government is handling educational issues. The group always calls for some reforms on policies, especially as regards the curriculum. In as much as it supports the present curriculum which was influenced by the British, it advocates a curriculum that would take into consideration the Nigerian culture and mentality. Nigerians by nature are pragmatists. This is partly portrayed in the informal education that existed before the advent of the Europeans. Parents and elders would teach the children by storytelling at night and relate such stories to specialized tasks they would perform as adults. From the stories, boys would be taught how to make spears, den guns, matchets, hoes and other tools for hunting, farming and fishing. Girls were taught how to weave cloths, baskets and mats, and also learned how to gather and prepare foods. But the storytelling would end with the essential patterns of group life evolved into moral codes of behavior. The moral codes were ritualized ways of dealing with one another and the environment in which one was growing up.

This group of administrators believes that a curriculum of this kind would emphasize inculturation, while adopting and adapting the positive educational elements of other cultures. However, the group does not deny the use of

abstract knowledge to build intellectual power. Abstraction would help in the creation, usage and manipulation of symbols which would ultimately result in a positive educational learning, cultural inheritance and tradition.

Despite persecution and threats by the government, enthusiasm, commitment and optimism are always hallmarks of these administrators. In their enthusiasm and hope for the future, they always encouraged the intellectually and educationally minded university graduates to join their rank and file to speak out against the enemies of "progressive" education. This group of educators, due to their courage to speak out for the good of the nation, are popular among many of the Nigerian citizens. But within the anti-intellectualism of the ruling class, they are seen as revolutionaries with non-cooperative attitudes towards the regime and consequently some of them have much to suffer. The effect of this far-reaching to prospective administrators. Many university graduates are no longer motivated into such positions. Even those who are motivated, do so with the hope of leaving the country when they qualify as administrators. In the previous chapters, mention was made of the concept of brain-drain. Lack of job satisfaction and inability to put into practice what one has learned brings frustration and those who cannot cope with the situation have to leave the country in search of "greener pastures" in other countries. Some of those who

left the country are either in Europe or the Americas. But in the countries where they are residing, they form some sort of union or pressure groups. They protest against a continuous and prolonged military rule in Nigeria and they make their voices heard by sending articles to the national newspapers.

The administrators are justified in not supporting the military regime since their roles as executive officers had been removed. The consequences are seen on those who still work with the government. Many of them are no longer motivated. They are ineffective and their motivation to perform efficiently has been greatly reduced. But in a moderate regime, they are allowed to supervise both the teaching and non-teaching staff but must report to the Ministry of Education. Their recommendations regarding employment, promotion and dismissal of personnel are not considered due to wide-spread nepotism and other corrupt practices in the government and the school systems. The system does not permit them to ensure compliance with directives of the policy makers since such directives, at times, could be enforced by the use of the police or military personnel. They are often excluded and not consulted in making educational policies like long-range planning affecting schools, curriculum development and major financial matters. This is unfair to them and the local communities they are serving. With such roles and functions

taken away from them, their role as spokesperson for the school is more or less ceremonial and they seem to serve in their capacities as mere figure heads. Their powerlessness and the frustrations that follow have a negative effect on the school system. Indiscipline, moral laxity and an "I don't care" attitude become the rule of the day in some schools.

However, with some administrators, like those forming the pressure group, there is still an atmosphere of optimism. Those in this group are looking forward to the day the military will return running the government to civilians. The recommendations made in this thesis are meant for this group. They are the hope for a progressive and quality education for Nigeria. Hopefully, they are the ones who would weed out corrupt practices in the educational administration in Nigeria. They are the ones who will transform theories into practice and recommendations into actions or implementations. With them, there is a bright future for education in Nigeria.

However, nobody should think that it would be an easy task for the administrators of the new era. First of all, they have to clean up the mess that the previous regimes had created. Then they will face a task of getting the right resources for change. The main resources they would need are political, human and financial. Politically, they need a stable government and politicians who are ready to work

selflessly with the educational reformers. They need politicians who would not appoint a school superintendent because of nepotism or affiliation to a political party. On the human factor, they need to be careful on their selections of personnel to be involved in the reforms. Likewise, all those who are going to work in the new school system have to be properly screened. This is because, both the good and the bad would want to have a job with the new era. Financially, money must be judiciously spent. Money must be spent for the purpose for which it was allocated. Embezzlement of funds and squandermania should have no place in the new administration. For them to earn the trust of the communities they are serving, proper and accurate accountability must be rendered.

There is hope that in the near future, Nigeria will develop a system of education that would not only benefit Nigerians but also other African nations if it properly and sincerely identifies the key elements in the Western world. It appears that if this method is used, Nigeria will develop a synthesis from the different forms of education operating in different parts of the world. After a period of experimentation, these elements could be abstracted to suit the needs of Nigerians and the rest of Africa and, hopefully, the world at large since Nigeria is a member of the Global Society.

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The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

March 15, 1993
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