

Chapter 69

The Impact of the Boko Haram Conflict on Education in Northeast Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the impact of the Boko Haram conflict on education. Theoretically, conflict tends to be a dominant and elusive concept. Although it is possible to agree that, in practice, conflict has a positive meaning as there is evidence of this in everyday productive debate, dialogue, and negotiation, the interpretation that emerged in this case is negative, as demonstrated by the violent clash between the Boko Haram Group and the Nigerian armed forces. Therefore, a particular analysis of what this conflict looks like in Northeast Nigeria is presented in this chapter. The chapter also focuses on the threats, especially to education, which have been experienced by the affected community from 2009 to the present day.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses the impact of the Boko Haram conflict on education. Education, which is a human right, is often difficult to provide in times of conflict. Conflict arises because of real or perceived differences between two or more people, groups or forces. Such conflict also manifests in different forms. The form of conflict this chapter considers is a clash between the Boko Haram Insurgents and the Nigerian forces and those persons affected in the Northeast of Nigeria.

The author chooses to focus on the conflict in Nigeria for three reasons. First, Nigeria has the highest number of internally displaced people in the Lake Chad Basin (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC], 2017), thus education in times of conflict is evidently a problem that needs to be examined. Second, displacement in the country mostly happens on individual or families basis (IDMC, 2017), which makes it problematic to restore education because support cannot be provided to a particular state,

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where there is a significant number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and IDP returnees. Third, the author lived and worked for some years as a lecturer at a university in Northern Nigeria and experienced the region's people as a very lively and accommodating community. It was very distressing to see such people being forced to flee their homes because of the conflict, which they were neither its architect nor were they interested in it, while they ended up paying a huge price because of its consequences.

This chapter is structured as follows: the first part begins with the conceptualisation of conflict. It then examines the triggers for conflicts and exemplifies the challenges schools face during conflict. This is followed by an analysis of education in the internally displaced camps. The second part of the chapter provides a short summary of the Boko Haram conflict and the complex political and socio-economic conditions in the Northeast of Nigeria. It then presents a synopsis and trend analysis of displacement in the region and how this undermines education. The chapter ends with the role of education in conflict prevention and moving development forward, and demonstrates a correlation between illiteracy, poverty and susceptibility to conflict.

Conflict

The term conflict is a slippery word which is interpreted differently by different people. For example, some people see conflict as much about disagreement (Rahim, 2000) or 'differences in issue position' (Swanström & Weissmann, 2005: 7). Conflict is also associated mainly with a misunderstanding that results from a real or perceived threat (Furlong, 2005). Conflict is equally perceived in other contexts as fighting and war (Jeong, 2000). Other meanings of conflict tend to focus on differences in personalities (d'Estree & Shapiro, 2009).

The key issue that emerges here is that conflict is a tension or an opposition growing out of actual or perceived differences. In his elaborative interpretation, Moore (cited in d'Estree & Shapiro, 2009: 58) contends that the word conflict means a struggle 'between two or more people over values, or competition for status, power and scarce resources'. A particular analysis of what this struggle looks like in Northeast Nigeria is presented in this chapter. The chapter focuses on the threats, especially to education, that have extended from 2009 to the present day. This suggests that conflict in this chapter is interpreted simply in terms of hostility or violence.

Therefore, the chapter focuses on the conflict associated with violence. Violent conflict in the North-east Nigerian context is characterised by prolonged armed confrontations between Nigerian armed forces and the Boko Haram group. This deadly confrontation between Boko Haram and State forces can also be interpreted as civil war. Civil war, Doyle and Sambanis (2006: 1) claimed, poses a:

Challenge to the sovereignty of an internationally recognised state, occurred within the recognised boundaries of that state, involves the state as one of the principal combatants, [and] includes rebels with the ability to mount an organised military opposition to the state and to inflict significant casualties on the state.

Impliedly, war is equated with violent mass conflict between two or more armed forces as players in combat, which lasts for a long time. Current violent clashes are not confined to combat between the warring parties; innocent civilians are targeted and fear is spread to achieve self-defined aims or criminal interests. The interests or aims of the discourse of Boko Haram is examined in the second part of this chapter. Moreover, the majority of such conflicts are taking place across the countries. Some of the con-

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