

## ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLING FOR THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN NIGERIA: THE ASYNCHRONOUS INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

Adamu, M. Jebba<sup>1</sup>, Atsumbe, B. N.<sup>2</sup> and Raymond, E.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Technical Education, Niger State College of Education, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria  
<sup>2</sup>Dept. of Industrial and Tech. Edu., Federal University of Education, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria

### ABSTRACT

*One of the severe consequences of the ongoing insurgency in Northern Nigeria is the astronomical increment of individuals that have been rendered homeless. These individuals whose population is running into millions are tagged as "internally displaced persons" (IDP). They are forced to abandon not only their ancestral homes but also their source of living and means of education among several other necessities of life. They live in patched camps with no means of education of their children, wives and youth. Thus, the youths are been denied their fundamental right to education. Indeed, the attainment of the United Nations advocacy of education for all is been denied this citizens of Nigeria. It is against this sordid state of affairs that this paper attempts to explore the possibility of adopting one of the popular means of educating the youths in the developed nations tagged as asynchronous instruction. The paper highlights the several unique features of this method of education which includes the fact that teaching and learning takes place without the physical interaction and presence of teachers with their students. As a palliative measure, the paper recommends for a policy statement that will mandate telecommunication giants to support the IDP with access to free internet service while the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should liaise with ICT experts in Nigeria Universities to design means of instruction using the synchronous and asynchronous platform.*

*Keywords: Asynchronous Instruction, Instructional Platform, E-learning, Internally Displaced Persons, (IDP), Insurgency.*

### INTRODUCTION

It is no longer news that the deadly attacks by the Boko Haram insurgents has led to massive destructions of precious lives and properties in Nigeria. Perhaps, what is news these days is the astronomical number of victims of the Boko Haram attacks who have been rendered homeless right inside their own country. With ever rising population running into millions, these groups of Nigerians are popularly referred to as the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP).

According to the United Nations report, Internally Displaced Persons are people or groups of people who have been forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (Mooney, 2005 and Francis, 2007).

This implies that an IDP is someone who is forced to flee his or her home but who remains within his or her country's borders. They are often referred to as refugees. However, they do not fall within the current legal definition of a refugee. It is often very difficult to get accurate figure of IDPs because their population is constantly changing. For instance, while some of the IDPs may be returning home, others are fleeing, and others may periodically return to IDP camps to take advantage of humanitarian aid. However, despite the inconsistencies in their status, a global census of the IDP conducted by The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) in the year 2007 shows that at the end of 2006 it was estimated that there were 24.5 million IDPs globally. The region with the largest IDP population, according to this report, is Africa with some 11.8 million in 21 countries.

Even in Africa, the case of IDPs in large camps such as those in Darfur, Western Sudan, as well as those ones piling up across many camps in north eastern cities in Nigeria are relatively well-reported. It is, however, still very difficult to assess those IDPs who flee to larger towns and cities. It is necessary in many instances to supplement official figures with additional information obtained from operational humanitarian organizations on the ground.

Thus, according to IDMC (2007) even the 24.5 million figure must be treated as an estimate. Additionally, most official figures only include those displaced by conflict or natural disasters. Globally, the largest IDP populations were found in Iraq, Colombia, Syria, Democratic republic of Congo, Azerbaijan and relatively most recently, an unprecedented population was discovered in Nigeria. For each of this country, the IDMC reported that there are IDP populations of over one million.

### THE NIGERIA SITUATION

With a growing population of approximately one hundred and seventy million (170,000,000) people, Nigeria remains the most populous African country and arguably one of the best endowed (Adamu, 2015). However, the present state of insecurity in Nigeria is an open secret that brings the patriotic citizen of this country to a humble state when analyzed. The country is currently faced with monumental crisis never experienced in its history. The crises which is traced to the high level of insurgency across the North eastern states is gradually eroding the entire nation at an alarming rate.

Perpetrated by a group known as the Boko Haram, the activities of the insurgents have led to a high level of catastrophe and destruction of peoples livelihoods. According to Aliyu (2015) and Momale (2015) businesses, residential buildings, farm lands and even government institutions like police stations, military barracks, hospitals, and even schools were not spared of this monumental and wanton destruction. The boomeranging effect of the insurgency is the large number of IDPs being produced within the most affected areas of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states. Momale (2015) reported that as at August 2015, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) discovered that there are approximately 1.7 million displaced Nigerians. From this population, 1.4 million are within the country while 0.3 million are scattered within the neighbouring countries of Cameroun, Niger, Chad and Benin Republic. There are of course, millions of other Nigerians who, though not displaced, are living under sub-human conditions being held as captives by the insurgents and deprived basic means of livelihoods. Among this category belongs the "famous" and "celebrated" case of the abducted Chibok Secondary School girls, who have been held in captives for over 500 days. Additionally, livestock, including cattle, sheep and goats have been confiscated by the insurgents. Furthermore, it is also on record that thousands of rural households were unable to cultivate crops for several years because of the massive destruction.

Indeed the attacks were also severe on education. There was an unprecedented attacks on students, teachers and even school buildings and facilities. According to Sidi (2015), NEMA reported that a total of 120, 077 students were affected by the insurgency, 115 schools have been completely destroyed, with another 139 partially demolished. Over three hundred teachers were killed, other hundreds are permanently maimed or partially injured during the attacks. Thus, these severe attacks have not only led to unprecedented rise in the number of the IDPs but it also draw the attention of international organizations who have notably formulated some framework for addressing the challenges of the IDPs.

### THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF IDPS

Deprived of their normal means of livelihood couple with the traumatic experienced encountered by the activities of the insurgents, the IDPs way of life is most sympathetic, awful and very pathetic. Their condition of living is also horrible. Although, the government through its agency (NEMA) has being trying her best to provide for the basic needs of the IDPs but because of their unprecedented population, it is still a far cry and far off from complying with the United Nations recommended guiding principles for catering for the IDP. These principles provide the normative framework for addressing human rights challenges in situations of disaster-induced displacement. According to Mooney (2005) the principles recognized that persons forced to leave their homes share many common types of vulnerability regardless of the underlying reasons for their displacement. Thus, the principles advocates for:

**Access to assistance:** IDPs have the right to request and to receive protection and assistance from national authorities. States should in general be willing to respond quickly in providing humanitarian assistance to affected persons and those states needing assistance from abroad should do so in collaboration with the international community. Governments at all levels must not block access to those in need when they themselves are not in a position to provide adequate assistance. Restrictions on the delivery of aid, such as excessive delays to obtain the necessary permits to reach affected populations, should be avoided.

**Access to education:** Prompt return to school after a natural disaster is important to minimise disruption to the education to which displaced children are entitled and is also critical for their psychosocial well-being. School attendance can reduce children's exposure to risks, including trafficking and military recruitment. Access to education for non-displaced as well as ID children will also be constrained where IDPs are

sheltered in school buildings. Resettling IDPs to more appropriate temporary accommodation will open opportunities for educational access not only for IDPs but also for children from the broader community.

**Protection of women and children:** The Guiding Principles call for special attention to the needs of women and children. They experience increased vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence, especially in camps, where they risk higher levels of domestic violence. When food is not delivered directly to women and when they are excluded from camp management and from the design of relief and reintegration plans, women's vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse increases dramatically. Women also have special needs as regards access to health services and in the area of reproductive health. Children who have lost their homes and families are particularly at risk of military recruitment.

**Voluntary return and resettlement:** After the emergency stage of a disaster is over, displaced persons will usually require assistance to rebuild their lives. National authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to facilitate this, by establishing the conditions - as well as providing the means - for IDPs to return voluntarily, in safety and dignity, to their places of origin, or to resettle in another part of the country and to facilitate their reintegration. In addition to rebuilding homes and other infrastructure, this may include assistance to enable the displaced to re-establish previous livelihoods (e.g. rehabilitating damaged agricultural land, business assets or fishing boats) or providing the displaced with education and training.

### PROBLEM CONFRONTING EDUCATION OF THE IDP

Going to school provides a degree of stability and normalcy for persons whose lives have been traumatised by displacement. Schooling can help protect IDP youth against threats of military recruitment, sexual violence and exploitation and provide opportunities for conveying life-saving information about landmines and HIV/AIDS. However, the situation is not the same for the IDP especially in situations of war, the freedom of the individuals is usually not guaranteed. This is associated with series of other obstacles. According to Mooney and French(200??) among the barriers to education that IDPs frequently face are:

- **Lack of infrastructure:** In situations of conflict-induced displacement, schools have often been destroyed or damaged and school premises (and teachers) singled out for attack. In IDP camps and settlements schools tend to be makeshift and only offer primary education. Many of the schools established – often by IDPs – lack blackboards and even roofs.
- **Safety:** Going to school may entail crossing minefields or military roadblocks. In most part of Maiduguri for instance, threats of bomb explosion, sexual violence *en route* to school kept many IDP at their camp.
- **Loss of documentation:** Displacement often results in the loss or confiscation of identity documents. Without documentation, IDPs may be unable to enroll in school. Getting replacement documents is often very difficult and dangerous, requiring IDPs to return to their area of origin, even if the area remains unsafe.
- **Discrimination:** Frequently, IDPs suffer discrimination as a result of their ethnicity or even the mere fact of being an IDP. Indigenous and minority IDP students have been turned away even before entering classrooms. Discrimination also exists within school walls. It is common for an IDP to received remarks like: “no wonder you are so stupid – you are a displaced.”
- **Material requirements:** Pencils, stationery and uniforms must be paid for – costs that IDP families with destroyed livelihoods have great difficulty meeting.
- **Economic responsibilities:** IDP children often miss school because their labour is needed at home or to generate household income. Post-primary dropout rates are particularly high for IDP girls burdened by domestic, childcare and/or agricultural responsibilities. Family poverty drives many IDP girls out of school and into early marriage, prostitution and trafficking.

It is against these constraints that this paper advocates for the use of “off-the-site” system of education for the IDP. Simply described as the asynchronous platform of instruction, the system is ideally suitable for educating the IDP in view of the present reality of the high level of fear for teachers to stay in areas affected by the insurgency or even live among the IDPs.

### THE ASYNCHRONOUS METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

Asynchronous instruction is a popular platform which teachers use to interact with their students beyond the confine of the conventional four corners of the classroom. According to Mayadas (1997) asynchronous instruction is a student-centered teaching method that uses e- learning resources to facilitate information sharing outside the constraints of time and place among a network of people. An important element of the asynchronous instruction is that teaching and learning process can take place at different time and at different place. In other words, students scheduled their activity at their own time, place, and pace. In other words, the instructional delivery does not take place simultaneously. Thus, the teacher may deliver the

instruction via video, computer, or ICT medium and the students respond at a later time. For example, instruction may be delivered via the Web or videotapes, and the feedback could be sent via e-mail messages.

Asynchronous learning is based on constructive theory, a student-centered approach that emphasizes the importance of peer-to-peer interactions (Wu, Bieber and Hiltz, 2008). The approach combines self-study with asynchronous interactions to promote learning, and it can be used to facilitate learning in traditional on-campus education, continuing and distance learning education as well as for learning in volatile environments where the teachers and students are not physically in touch as a result of, for instance, the open university in Nigeria. This combined network of learners and the electronic network in which they communicate are referred to as an asynchronous learning network (Mayadas, 1997). Typical example of asynchronous instruction technology includes blogs, email, wikis, DVD, CD Rom, video tape, Moodle and Youtube.

For whichever type of asynchronous technology tool, one major consideration is the convenience and personal schedule of the participants. According to Obasai, Eludire and Ajao (2013) the learners convenience and personal schedule are cardinal to asynchronous tools. Asynchronous tools are useful for sustaining dialogue and collaboration over a period of time and providing people with resources and information that are instantly accessible, day or night. Asynchronous tools accommodate people from different time zones since learning activities are done at one's own time. Furthermore, tools in the asynchronous platform are helpful for capturing details of interactions of a group, allowing for collective knowledge to be more easily shared and distributed.

In an asynchronous learning environment students are able to actively participate in their own learning, giving them the opportunity to interact with their peers, provide peer feedback, and reflect on the status of their personal learning goals and outcomes (Higley, 2013). Asynchronous technologies support learning and allow more time for student reflection, collaboration, and student-to-student interactions (Bonk & Zhang, 2006; Skylar, 2009). According to Meloni (2010) asynchronous communication and learning is by far the more popular learning type because many of the learning tools are free, require minimal hardware, and are used at the student's pace. Above all, it could serve as an alternative medium of instruction in crises environment such as those of the insurgency where fear and apprehension of attacks on teachers made the conventional schooling virtually impossible.

### **BENEFITS OF ASYNCHRONOUS INSTRUCTION**

Because of its flexibility and self-pace characteristic, the asynchronous learning platform according to Hrastinski (2008) improves cognitive participation by way of increasing the ability of the learners to reflect and process course information given by the teacher. Asynchronous learning environment also provides the students more time to consider all sides of an issue before offering their own educated input (Higley, 2013). Other major benefits of asynchronous instruction were summarized by Mayadas, (1997). These benefits include:

The asynchronous e-learning platform gives the students the freedom to access the course and its instructional materials at any time they choose, and from any location. This allows for accessibility for diverse student populations, ranging from traditional, on-campus students, to working professionals, international students in foreign countries as well as individuals in disasters zones or crises environment, including the IDP.

Asynchronous learning environments provide a "high degree of interactivity" between participants who are separated both geographically and temporally and afford students many of the social benefits of face-to-face interaction. Since students can express their thoughts without interruption, they have more time to reflect on and respond to class materials and their classmates than in a conventional classroom setting.

Asynchronous courses have the potential to reach far more students than a traditional course. Furthermore, course-wide updates or modifications can be disseminated far more quickly and efficiently than traditional lecture models.

Another major benefit of the asynchronous instruction is that there is a record of nearly everything that occurs in that environment. All materials, correspondence, and interactions can be electronically archived. Participants can go back and review course materials, lectures, and presentations, as well as correspondence between participants. This information is generally available at any point in time to course participants. Thus, historically, the majority of e-learning courses consisted of predominantly asynchronous technologies (Obasai, Eludire, Ajao, 2013).

## ASYNCHRONOUS INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH AS AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLING FOR THE IDP

On the basis of the numerous benefits of the asynchronous instruction vis-à-vis the volatile nature of the IDP environment, the need to adopt a more comfortable platform of instructional delivery such as that of the asynchronous instruction cannot be over emphasized. According to Meloni (2010) asynchronous communication and learning is by far the more popular learning type in crises/war torn environments such as those of the IDP because many of the learning tools are free, require minimal hardware, and are used at the student's pace. A number of educational benefits can therefore be observed from the use of asynchronous technologies in an online learning environment including:

1. enriched student products and portfolios- also known as Electronic portfolios (e-folios) demonstrate a student's skill and knowledge level over a specific topic. Online learners often create e-folios that combine text, images, presentations, video, audio, links, and a discussion space to demonstrate mastery of a specific content area or subject matter (eLearners.com, 2012). Many institutions have begun viewing e-folios as a replacement for traditional classroom high stake assessments (Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). E-folios help facilitate the exchange of ideas, discourse, and subject area feedback between student and teacher creating a meaningful learning experience for the student (Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). Due to the success of these e-folios some higher education institutions have also started using them to document and archive student's academic careers.
2. student and teacher collaboration- As with synchronous collaboration, studies have shown that collaboration increases overall student learning in online learning environments (Er et al., 2009). A sense of community is necessary to sustain the educational experience over time and this can be achieved through collaborative learning communities. In this learning environment the teacher's role is still about developing and facilitating a student's learning experiences. This facilitation can be successfully achieved through asynchronous collaboration, allowing students to thoughtfully consider learning objectives because they have the time to critically synthesize their learning (Bonk & Zhang, 2006).
3. Learner specific pacing geared to the individual student needs (i.e individualized learning) (Meloni, 2010).- Asynchronous learning technologies have been defined as personalized learning tools. With these tools, the teacher can assess what students understand and adapt future course assignments to facilitate a higher level and more in-depth understanding of the content (Bonk & Zhang, 2006; Hrastinski, 2008). These online learning environments create an opportunity for online students to become highly self-reflective. Perhaps most significantly, what is facilitated through the use of asynchronous tools provides a learning space where participants can confront debatable ideas and faulty thinking in more objective and reflective ways (Bonk & Zhang, 2006).

## CHALLENGES OF ASYNCHRONOUS INSTRUCTION

Asynchronous learning environments pose some challenges for instructors, institutions, and students. Some of these challenges include:

The initial setup and even subsequent course development can be costly. To buttress this fact, Palmer, Holt, Bray (2008) reported that institutions must provide a computer network infrastructure, including servers, audio/visual equipment, software, and the technical support needed to develop and maintain asynchronous learning environments. Technical support includes initial training and setup, user management, data storage and recovery, as well as hardware repairs and updates. Palmer, Holt, Bray opined that faculty members who are hesitant to teach in asynchronous learning environments are so because of a lack of technical support provided by their institutions. However, for faculty to teach successfully in an asynchronous learning environment, they must be technically proficient and comfortable enough with the technological tools to optimize their use.

To participate in asynchronous learning environments, students must also have access to computers and the Internet. Although personal computers and web access are becoming more and more pervasive every day, this requirement can be a barrier to entry for many students and instructors. Another major challenge with the asynchronous technologies, according to Obasai, Eludire, Ajao (2013) is that they require some discipline in using the tools for the purpose of teaching and learning. For example, email facility can be used for so many other activities apart from the distribution of learning materials.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the challenges associated with the asynchronous instruction, this paper opined that it still remains the best alternative for teaching individuals in war front and volatile environments such as that of the IDP. The mere fact that no teacher will be willing to take the risk of remaining in volatile environments where the IDPs are camped makes it imperative for educationist to search for alternative means of providing education for the IDPs. Above all, the need to search for alternative form of educating the IDP also becomes paramount especially that the united nation advocates that provision of education for the IDP should be seen as a fundamental right and not mere privilege.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the discussion and on the basis of the reality on ground, the paper recommends for a policy statement that will mandate telecommunication giants to support the IDP with access to free internet service while the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should liaise with ICT experts in Nigeria Universities to design means of instruction using the asynchronous platform. Furthermore, as a palliative measure there is the urgent need for government (at all levels) as well as non-governmental organizations to provide the necessary financial and moral support for ICT experts in our tertiary institutions to devote their time and energy as well as create effective synergy with the IDPs to ensure sustainable means of providing education for the IDPs.

## REFERENCE

- Adamu, M.J. (2015). A Survey of the Awareness Level of Employment Opportunities in Electrical/Electronics Technology among Unemployed Youths in Minna Metropolis. A paper presented at the monthly seminar series of School Of Technical Education, College Of Education, Minna, Nigeria.
- Aliyu, H.A., (August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015). Proper resettlement and rehabilitation of IDPs in Nigeria. *Daily Trust Newspaper*, pp.57
- Bonk, C., & Zhang, K. (2006). Introducing the R2D2 model: Online learning for the diverse learners of this world. *Distance Education*, 27(2), pp. 249-264.
- E-Learners.com (2012, April 2). Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Classes [blog]. Retrieved from <http://www.elearners.com/online-education-resources/online-learning/synchronous-vs-asynchronous-classes/>
- Er, E., Özden, M., & Arifoglu, A. (2009). A Blended E-Learning Environment: A model proposition for integration of asynchronous and synchronous e-learning. *International Journal of Learning*, 16(2), pp. 449-460.
- Francis, D. (2007). "The guiding principles on internal displacement". *New York, NY: United Nations*. New York: United Nations.
- Higley, M. (2013). Benefits of synchronous and asynchronous e-Learning. *Free E-learning Industry*. Retrieved from <http://elerningindustry.com>
- Higley, M. (2014). E-learning: Challenges and solutions. *Free E-learning Industry*. Retrieved from <http://elerningindustry.com>
- Hrastinski, S. (2008). Asynchronous & synchronous E-learning. *EDUCAUSE Quarterly*, 31(4), pp. 51-55. Retrieved from <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/eqm0848.pdf>
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). April 2007."Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2006.
- Lorenzo, G., & Ittelson, J. (2005) An overview of e-portfolios. *EDUCASE Learning Initiative*. Retrieved from <http://www.case.edu/artsci/cosi/cspl/documents/eportfolio-Educausedocument.pdf>

- Mayadas, F . (1997). Asynchronous learning networks: A sloan foundation perspective. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*1(1).
- Meloni, J. (2010). Tools for synchronous and asynchronous classroom discussion [online blog]. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/tools-for-synchronous-asynchronous-classroom-discussion/22902>
- Momale, S. B. (August 26, 2015). Supporting IDPs in North East. *Daily trust*. Pp56
- Mooney, E. (2005). The Concept of Internal Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as a Category of Concern." *Refugee Survey Quarterly*. (24) 3, 2005, p. 12.
- Mooney, E and French, C. (2007). Barriers and Bridges: Access to Education for Internally Displaced Children. online at: [www.brook.edu/fp/projects/idp/idp.htm](http://www.brook.edu/fp/projects/idp/idp.htm)
- Obasai, A.I., Eludire, A.A., & Ajao, T.A. (2013). A Comparative Study Of Synchronous And Asynchronous E-Learning Resources. *International Journal Of Innovative Research In Science, Engineering And Technology* 2,11
- Palmer, S; Holt, D; Bray, S (2008), "Does the discussion help? The impact of a formally assessed online discussion on final student results", *British Journal of Educational Technology*39, 5: 847-58.
- Reiser, R. (2001). A History of instructional design and technology: Part II: A history of instructional design. *Educational Technology Research and Development*49 (2).
- Sidi, M.S. (August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015). The imperative for children/school centered disaster risk reduction. *Daily Trust Newspaper*. pp.27
- Skylar, A. (2009). A comparison of asynchronous online text-based lectures and synchronous interactive web conferencing lectures. *Issues In Teacher Education*, 18(2), pp. 69-84. Retrieved from <http://proxy1.ncu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com>
- Wu, D; Bieber, M; & Hiltz, S. (2008). Engaging students with constructivist participatory examinations in asynchronous learning networks. *Journal of Information Systems Education*19 (3): 321-30.