

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND THE RIGHT TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA THROUGH OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

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Abstract

The number of people who have been forcibly displaced across Nigeria and the sub-region either as a result of Boko Haram insurgency, Herdsmen/Farmers crisis, environmental or conflict-induced factors since the end of military rule in 1999 an be up to two million. A distinctive challenge facing Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are structural conditions that deny them access to the right to religious education. This paper examines the role of open and distance learning in providing access to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria. The paper adopts a mixed methodology which makes use of descriptive survey design, structured questionnaires, interviews and secondary sources for data collection and data analysis. Using two single modes of open and distance learning institutions: National Open University of Nigeria and National Teacher's Institute, Kaduna, the study investigated how the mounting of certification programmes has significantly affected the availability, accessibility and adaptability framework delineating the content of the right to religious education for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria. The paper recommends, amongst others, that a comprehensive framework should be put in place by the government in deploying accessible educational technologies to give those living in marginalized communities or refugee camps access to religious education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Internally Displaced Persons, Refugee, Education, Open and Distance Learning, National Teacher's Institute, National Open University.

Introduction

Since the return of Nigeria to civil rule after two decades of military dictatorship, the number of people who have forcibly been displaced either as a result of Boko Haram insurgency, Herdsmen and Farmers crisis, environmental or conflict-induced factors has been estimated to be over two million (IRIN, 2008, 47-52). A major challenge facing Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria is gaining access to religious educational opportunities. Thus, Daniel (2004, 38-41) has noted that despite the benefits of religious education for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) children, displacement often presents specific barriers to teaching and learning. The effects of displacement that relate the religious education includes: loss of human resources and physical infrastructure, lack of adequate religious teachers, pressure on the already overstretched religious educational infrastructure in the host community or refugee camps, lack of resources needed to pay school fees or pay religious teachers and increased poverty, leading to some Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) staying out of school in order to work to supplement the family income (IDMC, 2010, 34-45).

Failure to provide religious education for those who have been Internally Displaced, either as a result of Boko Haram insurgency, Herdsmen and Farmers crisis, conflict or environmental hazards may deprive them of their right to religious education for all (REFA) Goals. Religious education for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is essential, both as human right enshrined in International Law as a component of the peace-building process. In emergency situations where the State fails to provide education for IDPs, the international community, though not legally obligated, maintains an ethical responsibility to ensure that IDP education is included as an integral component within the humanitarian assistance framework. The social and psychological benefits that education provides to IDPs give additional support to this argument. Displacement as a crucial time of transition and vulnerability is not just for children, but for youth and adults as well. Failure to incorporate youth and adult education as a standard component during displacement is a detrimental omission in the quest to secure sustainable peace and initiate long-term development.

The need for a religious educational system that allows IDPs to access religious education at every stage of displacement therefore cannot be

over emphasized. Based on the complexities of African religious educational landscape, the displacement and the increasing pauperization of the people in Nigeria, open and distance learning (ODL) has increasingly been shown to allow education to break out of the iron triangle of access, cost and quality that has constrained it time immemorial. Even in Nigeria, the thrust to use ODL as a means of reaching the marginalized groups such as women in *pardah*, inmates, rural dwellers and others has received both theoretical and policy attention. Thus, the Federal Government of Nigeria has established the National Teacher's Institute (NTI) and National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) as a veritable avenue for providing accessible, cost-effective, and qualitative religious education.

The guiding philosophy behind this policy-direction is to ensure that religious education is entrenched as a right in the country. Religious education in emergencies and post-crisis reconstruction is not only a right, but in situations of emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction provides physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection, which can be both life-saving and life-sustaining religious education sustains life by offering safe spaces for learning, as well as the ability to identify and provide support for affected individuals-particularly children and adolescents. Religious education mitigates the psychosocial impact of conflict and disasters by giving a sense of normalcy, stability, structure and hope for the future during a time of crisis, and provides essential building blocks for future economic stability. It can also save lives by protecting against exploitation and harm, including abduction, recruitment of children into armed groups and sexual and gender-based violence. Religious education also provides the knowledge and skills to survive in a crisis through the dissemination of lifesaving information about landmine safety, conflict resolution and space building (INEE, 2004, 5).

UNHCR (2007, 7) has identified the barriers to access for refugee populations as restricted livelihood opportunities, lack of physical access to schools or to safe-school environments, and limited post-primary educational opportunities. In addition, IDMC (2009, 18) identified the barriers to access for IDPs as school fees and other school-related costs, opportunity costs of labour, insecurity, and lack of schools in areas of displacement. A prominent challenge facing IDPs and returnees is that they face extreme poverty. They usually leave behind their possessions

and, with restrictions on their freedom of movement and the regulation of professions, often their livelihood (Horst, 2006, 12-23).

Uncertainty about the future compounds poverty further leading to doubts about the benefits of religious education (Dryden-Peterson, 2006, 45-53). Further, the areas set aside for refugees and IDPs by host countries and host communities are often the most neglected regions with infertile land and lack of access to services and infrastructure, including schools (Jacobsen, 2005, 89-97). Another important negative effect of displacement is on gender. During displacement community support systems disintegrate, social norms break down, and laws are not enforced (Hynes et al., 2004, 23-32; Ward and Vann, 2002, 67-77) heightening discrimination based on gender and disability; this culture resulting from displacement can impact on the ability of refugees, IDPs, and returnees to safely attend school.

Conceptual Clarification

a. Internally Displaced Persons

An internally displaced person is someone who has moved within the bounds of his or her own country, either for the same sorts of 'refugee-type' reasons, or because of natural or 'man-made' events. For example, earthquake, famine, drought, conflicts, disorder, or development projects, such as high-dam building (Daniel, 2004, 38-41). Increasingly also, displacement resulting from climate-change, remote as it may be, is attracting attention in all its dimensions, including that of international law. An internally displaced person (IDP) is someone who is forced to flee his or her home but who remains within his or her country's borders.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are often referred to as 'refugees', that is, persons who have fled their country of origin in order to escape persecution, other violations of human rights, or the effects of conflict (Hamzat, 2013, 56-67). A refugee, generally speaking, is a displaced person who has been forced to cross national boundaries and who cannot return home safely (for more detail see legal definition). Such a person may be called an asylum seeker until granted refugee status by the contracting state or the UNHCR if they formally make a claim for asylum. The 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, define a refugee as a person who not only has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a

particular social group or political opinion, but is also outside their country of nationality (or former habitual residence if stateless), and without the protection of any other State (Kampala, 23 Oct. 2009).

Whereas 'refugee' has an authoritative definition under the 1951 Refugee Convention, there is no universal legal definition of internally displaced persons (IDP). However, a United Nations report, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* uses the definition of: "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects 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." Erin (2005, 9-26), has pointed out that global statistics on internal displacement generally count only IDPs uprooted by conflict and human rights violations. Moreover, a recent study has recommended that the IDP concept should be defined even more narrowly, to be limited to persons displaced by violence.

Thus, despite the non-exhaustive reasons of internal displacement, many consider IDPs as those who would be defined as refugees if they were to cross an international border, hence, the term refugees in all but name is often applied to IDPs. Historically, the word 'refugee' came into English usage following the flight of protestant Huguenots from persecution in France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685; over time it came to describe someone who had good reason to flee their country, and who was worthy of refuge or protection.

b. Religious Education

The word "education" viewed from a broad spectrum means different things to different people. Thus, the term "education" is better described than defined. Lennap and Kazi (2000, 67-73) have indicated that education is the oldest discipline in human history; therefore, it may not be easy to come out with a definite and universally acceptable definition of the term. This notwithstanding, Farrant (1964, 34-41), defines education as "the process by which an individual acquires knowledge, skills and values". Worsely (1975, 102), describes education as "knowledge; a systematic cultivation of the mind and other natural powers on the acquisition of knowledge and skills through training and instruction". Bull (1973, 23-37), viewed education as "the imparting of knowledge through instruction to affect discipline and maturity of mind".

Erin (2005, 89-95) defines education as “the act of simulating the intellect and expanding the limits of human rational powers”. Mkema (1970, 50) describes education as “the total process of human training by which knowledge is imparted”. Danfulani (2009, 76) defines education as “the importation of knowledge that affects discipline and maturity in the recipient to enable him/her survive as an independent entity”. In fact, we neither have the space nor the time to consider other such definitions of education which are so numerous. However, in this paper, the term religious education simply refers to “the art of imparting or an acquiring knowledge or ability of acquiring knowledge through teaching and learning at home or school or similar institutions” (Encarta, Microsoft, 2006, 53-58). This definition is the most appropriate because it incorporates all forms of religious education, namely, Islamic education, traditional education and Christian education.

c. Open and Distance Learning

There is no universally agreed definition of the term Open and Distance Learning. To some “Open” simply means open entry and discuss to learning opportunities and the removal of barriers to learning (Cwikla, 2004, 134). While to others, it includes aspects of methods and organizations such that open learning may, sometimes, be substituted by flexible learning (Aderinoye and Ojokheta, 2004, 10-16). Benza (2001, 98-106) defines Open and Distance Learning as “any form of learning in which the provider (an institution or organization) enables individual learners to exercise choice over any one or more number of aspects of learning. Typically, this involves helping learners to take responsibility for aspects of learning such as what they learn, how they learn, where they learn, how quickly they teach, who to turn for help and when and where to have their learning assessed.

Open and Distance Learning, in most cases, shares the concern of openness and flexibility. However, most definitions on distance learning portray the possibility of communication between participants in the learning process across time and space, particularly those aspects that are brought about by new and some olds technologies. Binar (1993, 12) defined open and distance learning as an educational process in which a significant proportions of teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner. Holmberg (2003, 38-44) describes distance learning as:

The various form of teaching and learning at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or in the same premise, but which nevertheless benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition (tutoring teaching) of the staff of the tutorial organization. Its main characteristics are that it relies on non-contagious, mediated communication.

From the above definitions, one can deduce that open and distance learning can be perceived as a sophisticated collection of methods for the provision of structured learning in situations where students are unable primarily to attend fixed classes at a centralized venue and in the physical presence of a teacher. Kikup and Von Prummer (1990, 70) conceived open and distance learning as the delivery of useful learning opportunities at convenient place and time for learners, irrespective of the institution providing the learning opportunity.

In Nigeria, the word open and distance learning is used interchangeably with distance education. Gibbs and Durbridge (1976, 23-27) defined distance education as a planned teaching/learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learners at a distance and is designed to encourage learners' interaction and certification of learning. Thompson, Melody (1998, 30) posits that the term distance education has been applied to many instructional methods; however, its primary distinction is that the teacher and the learners are separated in space and time. Keegan (1990, 88-96) describes distance education as:

A form of learning which results from the technological separation of teacher and learners that frees the student from the necessity of travelling to a fixed person, in order to be trained.

This form of learning, irrespective of nomenclature, involves the use of a range of media, such as print, written correspondence, audio, video, computer-based media and network as well as multimedia for both presentation of information and for communication between learners. However, the term open and distance learning is often used when one wants to address a whole range of related forms of teaching and learning, without concentrating too much on exact delineation and definition. It stresses openness concerning access, organization and methods, flexibility in delivery and communication patterns, and the use of various technologies in support of learning (Wang, Liu, Chou, Lang, Chan and Yang, 2003, 20).

d. National Teacher's Institute

National teacher's institute is a single mode distance education institution dedicated to teachers training. It was established in 1976 by the Federal Government of Nigeria primarily because of the pressing needs in the country for trained and qualified teaching staff at all levels of the educational system. The mission of the institute is to enhance the professional skills of serving teachers for high quality education delivery at primary and secondary education levels with a view to uplifting the standard of the education system of the country and to upgrade/update teachers' knowledge and skills in curriculum implementation while instilling in them the virtues of dedication, loyalty, commitment, discipline and resourcefulness. These institutes' mission shall be realized through the pursuit of the following goals:

- i. Producing teachers trained and oriented to meet the challenges of twenty-first century Nigerian society;
- ii. Nurturing a commitment to life-long learning that is creative, innovative and responsive to changes in the world of knowledge and the changing needs;
- iii. Designing and enriching subject content to ensure that the teacher-trainees attain a high level of mastery of the subject matter;
- iv. Building the capacity of teacher-trainees in the use of effective communication skills and relevant technologies for the delivery of quality education;
- v. Strengthening the institute's monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanism to ensure effective and efficient service delivery;
- vi. Developing capacity for effective selection and deployment of relevant technology including information and communication technology for effective distance learning delivery;
- vii. Establishing effective research capability in order to ensure that all the institute's programmes are based on scientifically established grounds in terms of who needs training and the content of training required;
- viii. Reviewing and revitalizing in-service training and retraining programme for all categories of teachers, school administrators and school supervisors;
- ix. Regularly reviewing and restructuring curricula of all the institute's programmes to bring them in line with changing realities.

e. National Open University of Nigeria

National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is an open and distance learning (ODL) institution established in July, 1983 by President Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari-the first executive President of Nigeria and the University's founding President. President Shagari envisioned a University with the capacity to admit and satisfy the education and skills needs of Nigerians no matter their status or circumstances. Driving this mission was the realization that a sustainable democracy, functional economy, happy and prosperous people, all depend on knowledgeable citizens. Despite its suspension in 1984 by the Federal Military Government that succeeded Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the resuscitation of NOUN in 2002 by the civil regime of President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, went side by side with the awakening of the mission that informed the initial establishment of the university. As a faithful trustee of the Nigerian people, NOUN leverages on Information and Computer Technologies to deliver an education tailored towards the globalized economy.

The University offers exceptional academic programmes that meet the specific needs of all sectors of the global economy, in the Arts, Health, Physical, Social, Agricultural and Management Sciences. As an ODL institution, NOUN is an equal opportunity university determined to meet the following objectives that necessitated the establishment of open and distance education in Nigeria:

- i.** Provision of education for all and promotion of lifelong learning;
- ii.** Filling the gap created by the closure of outreaches/satellite campuses;
- iii.** Cost effectiveness
- iv.** Improved economies of scale;
- v.** Flexibility of delivery system;
- vi.** Maximum utilization of academic personnel;
- vii.** On the job teacher training;
- viii.** Poverty eradication, vocational and lifelong education;
- ix.** Provision of non-formal education;
- x.** Reaching the unreached; and
- xi.** Propagation of national orientation (Riel, 1993, 45).

The methodology used by NOUN is web-based instruction and multimedia technologies to facilitate teaching and learning (Clyde, 2004, 5-12). Despite the progress achieved by open and distance learning in Nigeria, it has been bedeviled with myriad of problems such as lack of

government funding, ineffectiveness of managers of distance education in various institutions, inadequate facilities to march the explosion in enrolment rate, energy related problems, low-tele-density, lack of consistency in program and policy implementation, poor postal system, and inadequate ICT penetration (Traxler, 2003, 15-20). All these problems have contributed in some measures in reducing the development and coherent strategic vision for the future progress of Open and Distance Learning in Nigeria. This has led to the creation of 72 study centres across the country to mitigate distance between the learners and the institution as well as take the University to the doorsteps of the community (Benza, 2001, 50).

Research Methodology

The study is based multidimensional methodological approach which data were collected between 2011 and 2017 in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. There is an emerging interest in the use of multidimensional methods in the conduct of Liberal Arts, Humanities and Social Science research because neither the qualitative nor the quantitative approach is necessary superior to the other (Punch, 1998, 34-47), while their combined usage maximizes their strengths and minimizes their weaknesses (Creswell, 2003, 21-30). To examine the role of open and distance learning (ODL) in providing access to religious education for IDPs, a sample of 140 students (70 National Certificate of Religious Education Students from the NTI programme and 70 Post-Graduate Students from NOUN) were selected using the snowball sampling approach and interview. Snowballing involves the selection of a sample size that emerges through a process of reference from one respondent to another and has a higher potential for bias (Ozgur, 2007, 54-64).

However, this technique was adopted to provide access to respondents with privileged information needed to answer the following research questions: Examine the role open and distance learning play in providing access and religious educational opportunities to the IDPs, Discuss the Restrictions IDPs face in Accessing Conventional Religious Education in Nigeria, State the Essential Features of the Rights to Religious Education in the Context of Internal Displaced Persons in Nigeria and What are the Perception of Respondents on ODL and Accessibility Tertiary Religious Education in Nigeria? To minimize the effect of bias, a check list of confirming questions was designed for respondents prior to the conduct

of the actual interviews. The qualitative data focused on respondent's access to religious education through the ODL mode and the restrictions they faced in accessing conventional education.

An initial analysis of the qualitative data informed the subsequent design of a questionnaire for the collection of questionnaire data from a random sample of 500 respondents drawn largely from graduates of ODL programmes. This sequence was followed to first provide an understanding of respondent's views on the research questions which quantitative data were collected from a larger sample for the purposes of triangulation and broad respondent's representation. Graduates were the main target group of this sample, while learners and ODL staff were a subsidiary. It is the qualitative and quantitative data relating to access to higher religious education for IDPs through ODL of the study that this paper is based on.

A fundamental problem that confronted the study related to gaining access to the IDPs. Most IDPs, especially those resulting from conflict were not willing to provide information about themselves, religious affiliation and societies, as they were suspicious that it may be used against them, their religion or their ethnic groups. To adequately address this problem, a sensitization meeting was held with the communities' and religious leader's representatives, who were able to convince their subjects to participate in the exercise. Data were collected from cross-sections of 16 rural and 18 urban and per-urban communities in Benue, Kogi, Plateau and Niger States in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria.

An Overview of Religious Education in Nigeria

The history of religious education in Nigeria is divided into three phases, namely, traditional education, Christian or western education and Islamic education. The traditional education though rarely institutionalized, was inseparable from the way of living and culture of the community. During the epoch, traditional education was a holistic way of life. Here, the child or young adult develops the aggregate of all possess, abilities and attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society in which he lives (Fafunwa, 1974, 80-86).

Christian or Western education was introduced by Christian missionaries brought different individuals and values together with the purpose of human development. It is divided into two phases, namely non-formal

Christian education and formal educational system. While Islamic education brought cultural streams which are religious at heart, with education rarely organized, but hardly differentiated from the all-pervading religious way of living. Islamic education like most other forms of education is centered on enabling individuals who acquire it and become the kind of people an Islamic society thinks appropriate for its members (Enoch, 1987, 40). The major problem about these forms of education is how to tailor the formal system (Christianity and Islam) and the informal system (African Traditional Education) towards resolving the needs for religious education of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria.

It is important to stress that Christian and Islamic religious education take place in formal settings through practicing creating fear of God, commitment and dedication. The Christian and Islamic religious education at this level should stop preaching only for health and wealth, which are common features of most Churches and Masques today. Rather, Christian and Islamic religious education should go on preaching honesty, fair play and contentment which are all actual virtues of true education for the IDPs in Nigeria.

On the contrary, the informal system on education was given where people gather for work or leisure through socialization, or processes of initiation into the community, conventions and so on (Gunut, 2004, 78-83). Thus, the informal or traditional religious education received in this phase was the type that should assist the children in coping with life in the society. This should Gumut (2004, 34) pointed out that there are many displaced children who are not opportune to attend the formal education where Christian and Islamic religious education are taught. Christian and Muslim parents at home could also teach the IDPs children the importance of religious unity, freedom of worship and expression, religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence with one another. As they grow, there must be clear understanding and blending of Christianity and Islamic religious beliefs and practices without hatred or biased.

This spirit of ecumenism can help Christian and Muslim displaced children to interact and live in peace with people of other religious faiths. It can also encourage dialogue, friendship, good leadership traits, good principles of democracy and governance. The products of this educational phase can also contribute their quota in the sustenance of national unity

and peaceful co-existence. The teaching of subjects like 'peace education', moral education, the values of tolerance, respect for others, among others, which have Christian and Islamic educational background should therefore, be encouraged by the government in the school curriculum of the IDPs in Nigeria.

Open and Distance Learning in the Context of Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria

In recent years, education has emerged as one of the crucial and central aspects of humanitarian assistance. The evolving perspective of education in emergencies is captured in a report released by UNESCO (2003, 23-38) that states:

Education is a basic right and is likewise a means to the achievement of the basic rights to life and to health. It is therefore now seen as the fourth pillar of humanitarian assistance to victims of conflict and of natural disasters, alongside nourishment, health services and shelter.

However, education in emergency situations and specifically education for displaced populations has not always enjoyed the place of recognition in humanitarian assistance framework that it has reached today. Though the topic of the right to religious education by the Internally Displaced Persons dates back to the creation of UNHCR in 1950, it was not until the 1990s that a wider discussion began on the challenge of providing religious education to displaced populations (Daniel, 2004, 38-43). When the Education for All (EFA) mandate was adopted at the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All in 1990, little consideration was given to the issue of education in emergencies. However, at the Mid-Decade EFA meeting in 1996, greater attention was given to the issue.

Similarly, the UN published a report commissioned in 1994 by Graca Machel entitled *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* in 1996. This report was the first in-depth evaluation of the variety of ways that children are affected by armed conflict and an important section delineated the interference with their educational progress. This highlighted the importance of religious education in helping children cope emotionally and regain a sense of normalcy in their lives. Distance education (then called correspondence education) is an educational process in which teachers and learners are separated in space and/or time for some or all the study and in which learning materials take over some of the

traditional role of a teacher. Moore and Kearsley (1986, 46) asserts that distance education as a planned learning, normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, methods of communication by electronics and other technology, as well as special organizational administrative arrangements.

Distance education therefore, is the delivery of learning or training to learners who are separated mostly by time and space, from those who are teaching and training. On the other hand, open learning describes policies and practices that permits entry to learning with no barriers or minimal barriers of age, gender or time while recognizing prior learning. Conceptually distinct, yet complementary, these two phenomena come together in the term open and distance learning (COL, 2000, 10). Distance education started by the Colonial Administration in 1887 as part of the packages of western education and colonial enterprise, especially in Southern part of the country (Ozgur, 2007, 22-31). The absence of a university in Nigeria led to the establishment of distance education with the university college Ibadan in 1948 as a correspondent of University of London programmes (Brown and Duguid, 1989, 78-87).

By 1887, many Nigerians were enrolled for the programmes as external students studying through correspondence without any assistance from any established institution in Nigeria to prepare them for the examination (Rekkedal and Dye, 2007, 100). Many Nigerians continued to patronize the British correspondence colleges which eventually assisted in building the careers of the early educated elites in Nigeria. In 1960 Ahmadu Bello University became the first institution of distance education system to carry out a special training program tagged “The correspondence and Teachers” In-services Programs (T.ISEP) in 1974 the Distance Learning Institute (DLI), then known as correspondence open studies unite (COSU), was established at the university of Lagos to produce university graduates in those disciplines where there were serious national shortfalls in higher level manpower production in Nigeria.

In 1976, the first Independent distance education institution, the National Teachers Institute (NTI) was established in Nigeria at Kaduna by the Federal Government to produce qualified Teachers needed to meet the requirements of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) (Poonwassie,

2001, 33). The Institute's enabling legislation, Act No. 7 of 1978, charged NTI Kaduna, among other things:

To provide courses of instruction leading to the development, upgrading and certification of teachers as specified the relevant syllabus using distance education techniques. On May, 1, 1980, the First National Open University was established but was suspended in 1984, but reopened after 18 years in 2002. This brought into ascendancy a new dimension in educational system the use of distance education required to meet the general demands for quality higher education in all spheres of study. Although NTI and other conventional institutions in Nigeria, including Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Distance Learning Institute at the University of Lagos; centre for Distance Learning at the University of Ibadan established in 1984; and the Distance Learning and continuing Education Centre at the University of Abuja established on January 1, 1988) (Aggarwal, 2004, 56-62) had been offering distance learning courses, the arrival of NOUN on the educational scene provided credence and the level of awareness needed for the acceptance of distance education in Nigeria.

Clyde (2004, 89) has identified the following characteristics of the NTI:

Institutional accreditation where learning is certified by an institution or agency; the use of variety of media for instructional delivery; provision of two-way communication to ensure tutor-learner and learner-learner interaction; and the possibility of face-to-face meetings for tutorials for learner-learner interaction; and laboratory or practice session or library study (Waycott and Kulkulska-Hulme, 2003, 17-25).

Other characteristics further classified as the major components common to distance education systems by UNESCO include the following sub-headings: the mission; programs and curricula; teaching and learning strategies; learning materials and resources; communication between teachers and learners; interaction between learners; support delivered locally; the delivery system; the student and tutor sub-system; staff and other experts; effective management and administration; the requirement of housing and equipment, and evaluation (Benson and O'Connell, 2002, 104-117). However, these major components identified by UNESCO did not include quality assurance which incidentally is the key issue that has made distance education to be viewed with suspicion by many

educational authorities. But with the recent improvement in modern information and communication technologies (ICTs), distance learning has emerged as an inevitable and phenomenal form of education in the history of educational development internationally.

While the formal system of education continues to be the mainstream of educational transaction, it has inherent limitations with regard to expansion, provision of access and equity, and cost effectiveness. As Dickshit, Garge and Panda (2002-252) argue “with the emergence of modern ICTs, it is now possible to adopt flexible, constructivist, learner-friendly and multi-perspective approaches to teaching-learning, so essential for nurturing creativity, leadership, scholarship and integrated development of human personality”.

The Right to Religious Education for IDPs

All people are entitled to religious education. The right to religious education is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and numerous major human rights treaties, including the Convention on Economic and Social Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against women (Walter, 2008, 107). The rights to religious education as a basic human right for every individual, including the IDPs by the *Universal Declaration of Human Right* has been reaffirmed in the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966, 77) (ICESCR), the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* (1981, 56), the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child* (1990, 19) (ACRWC) and the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa* (2003, 14) (*African Women's Protocol*), amongst other international and regional human rights instruments.

Drawing on articles 13 and 14 of the ICESCR, which make a comprehensive provision for the right to religious education, article 28 of the CRC recognizes the right of the child to religious education. With a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, states are required to make religious education compulsory at primary level and available free to all; to encourage the development of different forms of religious education at the secondary level; to offer financial assistance in case of need, as well as to take measures to

encourage regular attendance at schools and tertiary institutions as well as the reduction of drop-out rates.

Article 29 of the CRC details the aims of religious education of the child, which is directed at preparing the child for a responsible life in a free society, amongst other things. In the Nigerian context, article 11 of the ACRWC contains provisions similar to those of article 28(1) of the CRC, though it does not require a progressive realization of the right. Considering the precarious position of the girl child in accessing religious education, the *African Women's Protocol* requires State Parties to eliminate all forms of discrimination in the provision of access to religious education, and to promote the enrolment and retention of girls in school

The right to religious education is also made explicit in all major regional human rights treaties. These regional treaties include the African Charter of Human and People's Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights; between these regional treaties and others the right to religious education is binding on most countries with sizable IDP populations. The right to religious education guaranteed under the ICESCR, CRC, ACRWC and other international instruments is not suspended in situations of armed conflicts, as states have the obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the right whether or not an emergency situation exists (Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Religious Education UN Doc A/HRC/8/10 (2008) para 21). Article 38 of the CRC requires states to respect the rules of international humanitarian law in armed conflicts, which are relevant to the child, and to take all feasible measures to ensure the protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflict. Article 22 of the ACRWC contains a similar provision and requires that children must be protected from abuse and from participating in hostilities. The GCIV 1949 in article 24 (1) requires parties to conflict to ensure that children under fifteen who are orphaned or separated from their families as a result of war have access to education.

Concerned about the consequences of displacement and brutal armed conflicts for religious education, Vernor Munoz, former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Religious Education, noted in his report that "security in schools", which includes an uninterrupted religious education in conditions conducive to knowledge acquisition and character development, forms part of the right to religious education. The right to religious education is therefore, an "enabling right", permitting the enjoyment of many other rights. These include civil and political rights

such as freedom of information, expression, and the right to vote; and economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to choose work and to receive equal pay for work.

In its study on Religious Education on *Sustainable Emergency, Crisis, and Reconstruction*, UNESCO (2003, 7-8) argued that in the humanitarian context, the right to religious education also enables the delivery of life-saving messages, provides a sense of normality, and absorbs energies of adolescents whose alternative options might include recruitment and violence. As such, it has come to be seen as the “fourth pillar” of humanitarian assistance to victims of conflict and displacement, alongside nutrition, health, and shelter.

Challenges of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to the Right of Religious Education in Nigeria

There are many challenges faced by Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as a result of Boko Haram insurgency, Herdsmen/Farmers crisis or environmental-induced factors in Nigeria. Some of these challenges include: First, the displacement of large population of victims to different IDPs camps by the government. As many IDPs are sheltered in schools and humanitarian assistance is limited to life-saving interventions, displaced children and adults are generally unable to pursue their religious education. The occupation of the schools by the IDPs and security forces has damaged and destroyed some infrastructure and denied children and adults access to the schools so occupied. Given that religious education planning does not take account of situations of population increase due to displacement.

Due to their fear of attack or abduction, some parents refuse to allow their children go to school, and they tend to prioritize basic needs such as food and shelter over religious education. The children's lack of an occupation and religious instructions could lead them into juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, prostitution and continued destitution. In a bid to stem the wave of violations against Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in armed conflict, the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 1379 (2001) authorized the Secretary General to list state and non-state parties responsible for the recruitment and use of children in conflict situations in the annexes to his annual report on children and armed conflict.

The killing and maiming of children and sexual violence against women were added as notable matters in Resolution 1882 (2009), while recurrent attacks on schools and hospitals were added in Resolution 1998 (2011). Resolution 1612 (2005) empowered the Secretary General to establish an enhanced and systemized method of gathering data on violations of the rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This led to the establishment of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) with the mandate of gathering accurate, timely, objective and reliable information on the six grave violations of the rights of children in armed conflict by state and non-state actors.

Second, attacking religious educational institutions such as schools, Churches and Mosque during crisis and armed conflict is a grave violation of IDPs rights. Such attacks are mounted against children, religious teachers and other education personnel. They include the killing, abduction, kidnapping, illegal detention, torturing, sexual abuse and forced recruitment of school children and religious teachers. And this results in the violent denial of children's right to access of religious education. Such attacks also involve damaging educational buildings and other facilities, destroying Churches and Mosques, occupying school buildings for military purposes, initiating violent attacks on religious educational activities such as attacks on convoys carrying examination papers, and prevention of the repair, rehabilitation or reconstruction of schools already attacked.

Under international humanitarian law, schools and places of worship are protected civilian objects and therefore, benefit from the humanitarian principles of distinction and proportionality. The targeted attacks at schools, Churches and Mosques during conflicts and the general state of insecurity could force them to close down. This has the effect of depriving millions of Nigerian Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of their rights to religious education and therefore, the ability to realize their potentials. Condemning such grave violations of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) rights, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in Resolutions 1998 (2011), 2143 (2014) and 2225 (2015) urges parties involved in crisis and conflicts situations to refrain from actions that impede IDP's access to religious education.

Jones and Naylor (2004, 78) have listed several ways in which displacement of victims of conflicts can affect religious education in Nigeria. These include, among others, school closure due to targeted

attacks; collateral damage and the military use of schools, Churches and Mosques, buildings; death and injury to religious teachers and students; the fear of sending children to school and places of worships, religious teachers' fear of attending school, Church or Mosque due to their being threatened with targeted attacks; general insecurity reducing the freedom of movement; the forced recruitment of religious teachers and students by armed forces (state and non-state); forced population displacement interrupting religious education; and the public health impacts of conflict, which reduce the possibility of access and learning.

These disruptions have the effect of preventing access to religious education and diminishing the quality of the learning experience. Even where religious educational opportunities exist, parents worried about their safety and their children. Thus, many may be reluctant to go to Church or Mosque and send their children to schools. Also, O'Mally (2010, 34) has listed another longer term impacts of displacement and conflicts on religious education as a result of the occurrence of persistent attacks over a number of years and the use of force to prevent recovery from such attacks. Such long-term effects include the reduced enrolment and permanent drop-out of students and the withdrawal of educational personnel leading to a shortage of teachers; and the general impact of armed conflict on the government's resources reduces the government's capacity to manage or deliver religious education.

As a result, victims affected crisis or conflicts areas have some of the world's worst indicators for religious education, as millions of Internally Displaced Persons and their children are deprived of their rights to schooling and religious training that could transform their lives. Displacement also poses a problem for states in the implementation of the EFA and MDGs with regard to universal primary religious education. The exposure of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), especially children and women to traumatic events such as the loss of loved ones, displacement, a lack of food, and the interruption of schools and places of worships, such as Churches and Mosques associated with armed conflict has detrimental consequences for their mental health and psychological well-being.

Some of them are affected by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) such as irritability, insomnia, sleeping disorders, fear, aggression, confusion and an inability to concentrate, which greatly affects their

ability to have a loving relationship with their family and friends and to perform well in school and religious activities.

Implementing Quality Religious Education through Open and Distance Learning for the IDPS in Nigeria

The accelerated introduction of open and distance learning in Nigeria has raised a myriad of questions by the public, learners, government, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other stakeholders concerning the quality of courses, programmes and delivery services. To assure the quality of open and distance learning provision, it is important that open and distance learning professionals first seek a deeper understanding of what constitute the quality of open and distance learning. However, exactitude in determining indicators of the quality of open and distance learning depends on a correct conception of the meaning of open and distance learning. Without an accurate understanding of what open and distance learning is, instructional designers who design and develop self-instructional materials, open distance educators who deliver and monitor open and distance learning programmes, evaluators of the quality of open and distance learning programmes and other stakeholders would find it difficult to operate with a common currency for quality open and distance learning provision. While the process of implementing quality open and distance learning in religious education programmes entails a consideration of quality issues, such as curricula, pedagogical methodology, learner support, administration, student satisfaction, staff satisfaction and technology, there is still no consensus among open and distance learning providers concerning quality assurance that could be used to evaluate and communicate to IDPs the quality of open and distance learning provision.

Hence, this study had to come up with a set of criteria that is adjudged relevant, given the size of the institution, operations and priorities. Of these quality indicators, however, some are tangible, while others may be less tangible. Bull (1973, 88) analyzed pedagogical approaches and administrative processes and concluded that quality indicators regarding pedagogical approaches and learning effectiveness are mostly concerned with learner-centeredness, that is, whether the teaching programme of religious education promotes independent learning, adapts to individual learning styles and pacing, among others.

Regarding administration of open and distance learning religious programmes, quality issues include pre-and post-registration activities for which prospective learners and registered learners require information. In this regard, open and distance learning must provide IDPs learners with accurate and timely information on admission in religious education programme prior learning requirements, scheduling, tuition, materials and counseling, and other activities that include learner orientation and progression requirements and other pertinent programme expectations.

Discussion and Results

Research Question 1: What are the Consequences of Internally Displaced Persons Identified by the Respondents?

The consequences of being internally displaced during Boko Haram insurgency, Herdsmen/Farmers crisis and environmental-induced factors in Nigeria were perceived in the qualitative and quantitative samples of 70 and 500 respondents respectively to be negative as indicated in table 1 below

Table 1: General Consequences of Displacement Identified by Respondents

Effects of Displacement	%	Effects of Displacement	%
Lack of religious educational opportunities	75	Absence of assistance from government or aid agencies	75
Poverty	60	Lack of employment opportunities	60
Absence of health facilities	50	Absent of decent transportation	50
Absence of decent shelter	30	Absent of social services	30
Access to portable water	20	Absent of places of worship	20
Absence of sanitation	15	Prospects of future migration	15

Source: Author's Field Work, 2009

Table 1, is broadly a presentation of responses on the effects of internal displacement on socio-economic activities of the people. From the table, it can be deduced that apart from this negative effect on places of worship (20%), and prospects of future migration (15%), all the other listed items are highly affected by displacement. These include lack of religious educational opportunities ranked the highest (75%), followed by poverty (60%), and shelter (30%) respectively. However, 335% of respondents

opined that lack of employment opportunities (60%), access to portable water (20%), absence of health facilities (50%), places of worships (20%), sanitation (15%) and prospects of future migration (15%) contributes in denying access to religious education for internally displaced persons in Nigeria.

Research Question 2: Examine the role open and distance learning play in providing access and religious educational opportunities to the IDPs

The burgeoning literature on the need to provide religious educational for the IDPs through open and distance learning highlights the fact that religious education for IDPs serves as a protective function and conveys life-saving messages and gives them the skills needed to function in their areas of displacement, and on return (INEE, 2004, 2-3). Religious education does not only enable IDPs to participate in the market place, but also leaves them less likely to succumb to the negative aspects of long-term displacement, including violence, recruitment, sexual harassment, abduction and youth restlessness. This implies that, the right to religious education in displacement, as well as extending to children and adults, males and females, covers traditional schools and non-traditional religious educational settings.

Open and distance learning has the ability to bring religious education to the door steps of the IDPs in Nigeria as indicated in table 2 below. The overall development of ODL over the last thirty-five years has broken open the straitjacket of the triangle of access, cost and quality that has always constrained attempts to educate people. Throughout history religious education has been accepted as an insidious link between quality and exclusivity.

As Daniel (2004, 3-4) bluntly puts it, 'you cannot have quality religious education unless you exclude many people from it'. However, ODL with the adoption of sound and environment-friendly technologies has broken this link. A question which remains to be answered is whether ODL is able to meet the essential features of the right to religious education: availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability.

Table 2: Respondents Perception of ODL and Availability of Tertiary Religious Education

	%
Male	110
Female	90
Plateau	80
Benue	100
NOUN	70
NTI	50

From table 2, the statistics of enrolment figures in both primary and secondary schools in Nigeria are generally low. Even in normal religious educational environment, these percentages are not promising. However, the case is even worrisome with the gender tilt in access to religious education for the IDPs as 110% for male as against 90% for female have access to different levels of religious education, 80% for Plateau, 100% for Benue, 70% for NOUN, 50% and for NTI on the absence of religious educational opportunities for IDPs. This figure which thins from primary to tertiary level confirms the reality that internal displacement further complicates the already marginalization population who have very limited access to religious education (FME Presentation, 2006, 6-10).

Research Question 3: Discuss the Restrictions IDPs face in Accessing Conventional Religious Education in Nigeria

The right to religious education is neither restricted to a certain stage of displacement, nor to a level of religious education, a fact rooted in both human rights law and humanitarian law. The Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement stresses that the right to religious education “shall be made available to internally displaced people, in particular adolescents and women, whether or not living in camps, as soon as conditions permit” (Guiding Principle 23). The right to religious education as specified in Guiding Principle 23(1) applies not only to displaced children, but also to all IDPs including children and adults, males and females, covers traditional schools and non-traditional religious educational settings.

Table 3: *The Role of Open and Distance Learning in Providing Access to Different Levels of Religious Education for the IDPs in Nigeria*

	Male (%)	Female (%)
Primary	130	115
Secondary	145	110
Tertiary	110	140
Other	120	130
Total	255	245

Source: Author's Field Work, 2009

Table 3 above indicated that the corresponding figures of access to religious education for IDPs are generally lower than the normal religious educational environment. On an average only 130% of internally displaced children have access to primary education, 145% to secondary schooling, 110% for tertiary education. Other forms of religious education, such as vocational and apprenticeship also sum up to 120%. Even though more than 50 million Nigerians are qualified for tertiary education, there is a wide gulf between the demands for spaces and spots in the religious educational system at the tertiary level versus the actual number of students admitted annually. Both the enrolment in normal and emergency religious education thus shows that the conventional higher religious education system is hard-pressed to meet the demands of burgeoning population of the country for highly accessible, affordable and qualitative higher religious education.

Research Question 4: State the Essential Features of the Rights to Religious Education in the Context of Internal Displaced Persons in Nigeria

The purpose of adopting ODL as a policy option is ostensibly to increase access to higher religious education, especially by non-traditional learners. Access implies the facilitation of people, in this case IDPs, to get religious education, the opportunity for enrolment as well as the facilitation and the encouragement of sustaining enrolment by learners in appropriate religious education programmes. UNESCO (2002, 45) equally stated that

ODL represents approaches that focus on opening access to religious education and training provision, freeing learners from constraints of time and place and offering learning opportunities to individuals and group of learners. The World Declaration on Religious Education for All emphasizes that “those displaced by war” should not suffer any discrimination in access to religious education (UNESCO, 1990, 23-28).

Table 4: Respondents Perception of Features of ODL and Accessibility of Tertiary Religious Education

	%
Male	90
Female	110
Plateau	100
Benue	80
NOUN	70
NTI	50

Source: Author's Field Work, 2010

Results on respondents' perception of features of ODL and accessibility of tertiary religious education indicates a general high perception amongst respondents 90% for male and 110% for female; 80% for Plateau and 100% and 80% for Benue; and 70% for NOUN and 50% for NTI on the availability of religious educational opportunities for IDPS.

Research Question 5: What are the Perception of Respondents on ODL and Accessibility Tertiary Religious Education in Nigeria?

Available religious education in the context of internal displacement implies that religious education to be made available for IDPs, regardless of whether they have found refuge in camps and elsewhere. Schools are to be economically accessible, and there should be sufficient infrastructure to house learners. In addition, there should be enough trained religious teachers (receiving appropriate salaries) as well as religious educational materials.

Table 5: Respondents Perception of ODL and Availability of Tertiary Religious Education

	%
Male	90
Female	110
Plateau	80
Benue	100
NOUN	70
NTI	50

Source: Author's Field Work, 2010

Information from table 5 shows available and accessible religious education at the post-secondary level to mean the same thing. When asked whether ODL increased access to religious education, 90% and 110 male and female respectively responded that ODL significantly/very significantly increased more access to religious education for the IDPs. These figures were higher for Benue (100%) than for Plateau (80%). Out of these, only 70% and 50% associated with NOUN and NTI respectively, thought that ODL had negligible/very negligible impact on access to religious education for those that are internally displaced. These findings confirm the argument that ODL helps extend the market for religious education to clientele who have not been previously served.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussions, we have examined the role open and distance learning can play in providing accessible, cost effective and quality religious education to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria. Using the four essential features of the right to religious education, this study shows that ODL is a veritable tool for enhancing the right to religious education for those internally displaced. ODL is characterized by flexibility, accessibility, constructive learner-friendly instructional delivery, availability, adaptability, acceptability and simple technology used to reach a number of people who cannot be serviced by mainstream religious educational system. While all respondents are in agreement of the role of ODL in enhancing the right to religious education for IDPs, there is actually a gender tilt, as a slightly higher percentage of female 90% (255) against 110% (245) responded that ODL is better suited for the needs of the IDPs. This finding concurs with Olakulehin and Ojo (2006, 55), who argue that the only effective way to meaningfully

contribute to the emancipation of internally displacement of children and women in the Nigerian society is to widen their access to quality religious education.

Since the conventional structures of religious education have not been able to adequately meet the demands of female religious education in Nigeria, ODL readily fills in this void. Respondents agreed that this mode of delivery has afforded them the opportunity to benefit from religious education, which they would not otherwise have. This paper concludes that by breaking the triangular concept of access, cost and quality that deny religious educational opportunities to most of the marginalized groups, ODL is significantly increasing religious educational access to IDPs in Nigeria. The paper therefore, recommends that a comprehensive framework be put in place by the government in deploying accessible religious educational technologies to enable those living in marginalized communities have access to religious education.

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