

No study of quranic  
education. unlike the



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No meaningful analysis can be made of the factors that facilitated the spread of Boko Haram without considering the educational disparity between the Northern and the Southern part of Nigeria. This disparity could be traced to historical events related to pre-independence era and the colonial era.

On the one hand, the time Western education arrived at the shores of Nigeria through the colonial cum Christian missionaries, Moslems, who were the majority in the North, rejected Western education because it was perceived as a means by the Christian missionaries to Christianize the country. On the other hand, Muslim Northerners retained the traditional religious schools, popularly referred to as ' Tsangaya. These were Islamic schools dedicated to the study of Quranic education.

Unlike the Northern of the country, the Missionary was accepted by the South. They embraced it whole heartedly, and thus made considerable progress in education ahead of their Northern counterparts. This created a gap in the level of education which has remained till today and could be considered responsible for the spread of Boko Haram belief and ideology (Abdulmalik et al 2009). Consequently, disparities thus emerged between the levels of education of the natives of the two regions. Relative to their share of the national population, the Northern zone contributes less than 30% of the young people going to university (DHS, 2011).

This is a further attestation to the widespread discrepancies in primary school and secondary school enrollments between the two regions (see Table 1 and 2 below). The casual effect of this gap and discrepancies in primary school and secondary school enrollments is that without a primary and

secondary education - many of the Northern children of the country would never advance to the level of attaining a university education. In the same vein, a report by the National Population Commission found that literacy rates are much lower among states in the Northern part of the country than in any other geopolitical zone (NPC and RTI International, 2011).

Be that as it may, the report above does not erase the fact that some leaders and followers of Boko Haram are university graduates and flesh and blood of influential leaders of the country and affluent backgrounds. It is thus evidence that without any formal educational system most of the children fall back on the traditional Islamic school system. It is an open secret that many of these schools lack formal structures and curriculum but are orthodox interpretations of Islam which abhors Western education. One of such traditional religious schools was the Mohammed Yusuf-founded Ibn Taimiyya Mosque in Maiduguri, which was a school of ideology and orientation - which qualified as a bird nest for training Boko Haram recruits (Walker, 2008). Aggravated by the economic situation of the country which has robbed off negatively on many families in the North - this culture towards formal education has long been in place in that part of the country.

Such children who fall under such educational culture automatically fall prey to influential and affluent extremists who have the intent of promulgating their fanatical philosophy towards recruiting them as Boko Haram members. Poverty and social injustice also play a part in pushing hapless citizens to sign up with the Boko Haram group. Though economic conundrum is prevalent across the country, but the Northern part of Nigeria, where Moslems form the majority, is where this economic crisis

prevail themost. Statistics reveal that almost 70% of the people in Northern parts of thecountry live on less than one dollar a day – this is too poor compare to lessthan 50% and 59% across other geopolitical zones of Nigeria (SpiralingViolence, 2012). The aforementioned perspective points to the fact that thepersistent high level of poverty in the country is more of a Northernphenomenon that is responsible for high rate of militancy in that region. Froma wider perspective, many of the young hapless people in the region, unaware ofany other ways of coping with the pressure created by the economic situation, may give in to signing up with Boko Haram for solace.

This poor state ofaffairs fits perfectly into the political economy approach for mobilization asthe poor is left with no other option that to view their situation as resultantof government’s mismanagement of resources and elites’ corruption –subsequently, the hapless considers joining/supporting such an extremist groupas a show grievances against the state (Wickam, 2002; ICG, 2010). These peoplethis became like the proverbial drowning man who would hold on to anything forsupport. Boko Haram leaders see this situation as an opportunity to exploit andsway the hapless on their side with the promise that Allah would meet theirneeds in Aljanah, which the Government could not meet here on earth. The sprout and expansion of such an extremist group as BokoHaram could also be associated with the accession of Islamist movements intothe North Eastern part of the country.

Prior to 2001, there was no ounce offoreign agents or Islamists organizations in the Sub-Saharan Africa. Piombo(2007) opined that despite the common mantra that “ failed states lead toterrorism” – the case of African states is an

exception. Reason being that, extremist groups in this part of the world have tends to sprout in both stableand failed countries.

Example is the Al Shabab in Somalia and Kenya; Boko Haramand AQIM in Nigeria and Mali.