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# The Effectiveness of Thinking-Based Blended Learning in Developing Female Saudi EFL Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge and Performance

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## ABSTRACT

Blended learning, combining face-to-face and online learning, is a promising practice with potential to benefit diverse learners, including teachers themselves. The present study investigates the effectiveness of a thinking based blended learning pedagogy in a TEFL teacher training program. A quasi-experimental one-group pre-test/post-test design was adopted: a sample population of 21 in-service EFL teachers was trained in this model by the author, face to face, for 24 hours over six weeks, with an additional three to four hours of study online and one or two hours of portfolio tasks for each of five modules: Classroom Management, Presentation and Practice, Lesson Planning, Communication Skills, and Memorable Learning. The skills of teaching for thinking were simultaneously incorporated in the training sessions to train teachers on the use of specific instructional strategies that stimulate the students' thinking. A pedagogical knowledge pre-test/post-test and a classroom observation checklist assessing enhancement of learning were administered. The results show a significantly positive effect on both knowledge and performance, indicating that a well-structured blended learning-based program is an effective tool for teachers' professional development.

**Keywords:** blended learning, TEFL, teaching for thinking, teacher training, thinking skills

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT) in recent years has opened up immense opportunities for the development of teaching and learning. ICT offers rich avenues to innovatively address educational issues and provide solutions to the increasing demand for learning resources for both teachers and students. For instance, ICT offers new opportunities for interaction among students and teachers. E-learning, the most influential application of ICT in education, has progressed considerably in recent years and holds promise for the development of effective, non-traditional patterns of teaching and learning. Previously explored options for e-learning range from the use of web applications in traditional classrooms to the implementation of completely online courses without any face-to-face interaction.

However, many limitations of online learning and related problems have been reported (Connolly, MacArthur, Standsfield, & McLellan, 2007; Dobbs, Waid, & del Carmen, 2009; Marra & Jonassen, 2001; Melody, Allen, & Jensen, 2012; Sikora & Carroll, 2002; Weimer, 2012). One significant barrier to convincing faculty to teach online courses, as indicated by Kirtman (2009), has been faculty concerns that the use of online teaching may have a negative impact on student learning. Moore (2007) claims that administrators have the challenge of channelling practices at their institutions away from typical classroom roles into those more appropriate for the exploitation of educational technology.

The blended learning approach has emerged out of this situation. Blended learning utilises a combination of face-to-face interaction (in a traditional classroom) and web-based learning to get the “the best of both worlds” (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004, p. 3; Morgan, 2002) and optimise both environments. Blended learning has been described as “[...] the thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences,” integrating these communication modalities to create “[...] a unique learning experience congruent with the context and intended educational purpose” (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, p. 3). The concept has developed as a result of the increasing understanding of the strengths of each approach; blending them into one encourages better engagement in learning programs and allows for the adjustment of teaching approaches in order to maximize opportunities for learning that incorporate the use of content knowledge in meaningful interactive activities in person and online.

Blended learning has potential benefits for both teaching and learning. In the United States, the Department of Education's National Education Technology Plan (2010) has emphasised the importance both of employing blended learning and of developing an efficient approach to sustaining innovation. It has been reported that blended learning is more effective than either face-to-face or online learning alone (Nagel, 2009). In Canada, according to surveys, interviews, and research projects conducted at eight universities, blended learning practices have yielded positive results in terms of their effects on teaching and learning, learner flexibility, student satisfaction, and performance (Collaboration for Online Higher Education Research [COHERE], 2011).

Blended learning also presents an opportunity to enhance an institution's reputation (Vaughan, 2007). A meta-analysis conducted by Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, and Jones (2009), involving more than 1,100 empirical studies of online learning – mostly among older learners – published from 1996 to 2008, showed that blended classes produce better student learning outcomes than do classes with face-to-face interaction alone. Similarly, according to Hartman (2010), blended learning has the potential to improve the process of teaching and learning, increase access to a wide variety of learning resources for students, and provide a confluence of digital literacies for learning and working. The findings of Orhan (2008) reveal that the majority of students surveyed (90%) enjoyed being in a blended learning environment, and that the environment improved students' attitudes to their geography course and developed their critical thinking skills as compared to the traditional learning model. A positive correlation between students' attitudes toward a geography course and their critical thinking disposition under blended learning has also been found (Korkmaz & Karakuş, 2009).

López-Pérez, Pérez-López, and Rodríguez-Ariza (2011), in a large-scale study of 1431 students in 17 groups, show that blended learning reduced dropout rates and improved exam marks. It has also been pointed out, by Banerjee (2011), that blended environments that provide multiple modalities for learning, substantial interactivity, and constant connection with teachers and peers, are preferred by increasing numbers of students. The increasing interest in and employment of this form of approach to learning will significantly enhance learning experiences for students (Albrecht, 2006; Marquis, 2004) and benefit the learning process (Bourne & Seaman, 2005).

Blended learning has shown potential in the professional development of teachers as well, positively influencing their attitudes and content knowledge and motivating many to transform their classroom practice to varying degrees (Owston, Sinclair, & Wideman, 2008; Owston, Lupshenyuk, & Wideman, 2008). Berger, Eylon, and Bagno (2008) show that

appropriate use of an online environment in a blended program can lead to continuous learning among physics teachers. Owston, Lupshenyuk, & Wideman, (2008) found that blended programs were effective in providing teachers with the opportunity to learn on the job and collaborate with other teachers. Vaughan (2007) reported that surveyed post-secondary teachers suggested that blended courses create more chances for teacher–student interaction, increase student involvement in the learning process with more opportunities for continuous improvement, and create a more flexible teaching and learning environment. Blended learning has also been shown to improve achievement among pre-service English language teachers (Badawi, 2009; El-Deghaidy, & Nouby, 2008). Finally, the effectiveness of this form of program in Initial Teacher Education, that is, education for trainee teachers preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector, has recently been investigated by Bhote (2013) on behalf of the Institute for Learning in central London. The study concluded that the blended mode of training was as effective as traditional instruction in allowing learners to develop their professional knowledge and skills. In addition, the study found that this was a cost-effective means of delivering training to aspiring teachers.

In Saudi Arabia, higher education is moving increasingly to blended and fully online environments. Studies conducted by Alebaikan (2010) and Almalki (2011) conclude that blended learning has the potential to improve the quality and efficiency of Saudi universities, helping them offer successful learning experiences to Saudi students. In particular, a blended learning environment offers female Saudis the flexibility to engage in higher education while maintaining their own cultural values and traditions (Alebaikan, 2010).

Critical thinking is essential to cope with this rapidly changing world, for both students and teachers. Content learning and improvement of thinking skills can reinforce and contribute to each other in a highly integrated fashion (Prawat, 1991), and fostering proficiency in thinking skills is a basic goal of teacher education programs. For example, in the realm of language teaching, the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) programs are assessed for accreditation by the (US) National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) on the basis of evidence that they strongly promote a variety of thinking skills. These include problem-solving and decision-making skills (NCATE, 2008).

Beyer (2008) believes that the research indicates that such teaching is worthwhile, showing the effectiveness of instruction in thinking skills and the benefits resulting from it. On this point, Ong (2006) stresses that “the essence of efforts to improve students’ thinking is the conceptualisation and implementation of a well-developed thinking skills program” (p. 303). Online discussion can provide a wider range of perceptions than in-class discussion and can promote thinking skills and in-depth information processing (Chen & Looi, 2007). Further, Lambe (2007) indicates that a carefully constructed blended program can effectively support key aspects of pre-service training, such as facilitating collaborative learning, developing knowledge, developing skills in critical reflection, and understanding the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. Finally, Wannapiroon (2009) has found that problem-based blended learning and teaching are effective in developing undergraduate students’ critical thinking skills.

### **BACKGROUND TO THE CURRENT INVESTIGATION**

The improvement of teachers’ subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical skills are key objectives for teacher preparation programs and for colleges of education in general. Vaughan (2007) points out the importance of and need for continuing professional development for

teachers. Blended learning has come to the fore in all forms of teaching and learning as a result of the need to fully engage learners in the process of learning. Its practices can be used to support on-going teacher learning and help increase the independence of teaching and learning from time and space. Studies such as the one conducted by Owston, Sinclair and Wideman (2008) indicate that blended learning can be successfully used as a model for professional development. Its advantage in language learning lies in the fact that it is able to utilize both face-to-face and e-learning, allowing Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) to re-establish itself as an “[...] innovative component of general language teaching” (Neumeier, 2005, Abstract). However, a more recent study by Kocoglu, Ozek and Kesli (2011) casts doubt upon its benefits as part of an English language teacher training program, indicating no difference in content knowledge acquisition between individuals undergoing face-to-face classroom instruction and those undergoing blended learning. Although the increasing use of video communication, e-portfolios, and social networking tools such as blogs and wikis creates new blending potential, blended learning remains relatively new, and only a few studies have investigated the potential of blended learning in Saudi Arabia (Alebaikan, 2012).

The need for well-trained EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia is not always met by current pre- and in-service teacher training programs. Al-Hazmi (2003) finds in particular that EFL teacher training programs in Saudi Arabia are inadequate, and calls for a systematic approach to pre- and in-service education for EFL teachers. When surveyed by Zafer (2002), English-language teachers in Saudi Arabia concluded that the methodologies traditionally adopted in this field need to incorporate more communicative methods.

The challenges faced in delivering appropriate teacher training are various, and may include lack of time, support, or use of online resources to develop both content knowledge and teaching skills. In part due to these challenges, many EFL teachers lack training in stimulating students' thinking. The traditional means of providing professional knowledge to teachers is the lecture, which is not effective in engaging them in critical thinking (Garrison and Vaughan, 2008). Several studies have reported lack of knowledge or understanding among schoolteachers and university professors of how to successfully use and teach thinking skills, in various countries (Bataineh & Alazzi, 2009; Innabi & El Sheikh, 2007; Stapleton, 2011; Thurman, 2009). Active engagement and collaborative learning in the blended learning mode are more consistent in providing opportunities for students to develop higher-order thinking skills and outcomes (Palloff & Pratt, 2005).

Such insights and issues suggest a need for structured research on blended learning programs that promote certain thinking skills among EFL teachers in a non-English-speaking country like Saudi Arabia. Hence, this research is an attempt to investigate the significance of a blended program in developing in-service female Saudi English language teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills, while simultaneously incorporating attention to the skills of teaching for thinking, which will allow teachers to use specific instructional strategies to make sure that the classroom is a place that invites and stimulates the students' thinking.

### **Statement of the problem**

This study investigates the effectiveness of the integration of a thinking-based blended learning pedagogy into a TEFL program to develop EFL teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical performance.

### **Research questions**

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of a TEFL teacher training program based on thinking-based blended learning that can help female Saudi EFL teachers develop their pedagogical knowledge and performance?
- How effective is this program in developing EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge?
- How effective is this program in developing EFL teachers' pedagogical performance?

## DESIGN AND PARTICIPANTS

### Methodology

This study adopts a one-group pre-test/post-test design (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 1996). A sample population of 21 female Saudi in-service teachers was trained using blended learning. Face-to-face interactions in classroom amounted to 24 hours over six weeks. Online tasks for each module consisted of three or four hours of study and one or two hours of portfolio tasks. The study was approved by the institutional ethical board and all the participants gave written informed consent prior participating in the study.

### Instrumentation

#### *The TEFL teacher training program*

To answer the first question, "What are the characteristics of a TEFL program based on thinking-based blended learning that can help female Saudi EFL teachers develop their pedagogical knowledge and performance?" a teacher training program was developed comprising various TEFL teaching methods, on the basis of an in-service course developed specifically for English language teachers by the British Council named *Steps to success* (2012; henceforth, STS). This program is mapped to the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework. It is a general course suitable for teachers working in the primary, secondary, and tertiary, and private-tutoring sectors.

Training was based on a blended learning model (i.e., one comprising both face-to-face interaction in an ordinary classroom and online learning).

#### *Program objectives*

The program is meant to provide the knowledge, experience, and skills necessary for EFL teachers to teach English as a foreign language effectively and to enhance students' thinking in the classroom. It aims to:

- Expand teachers' knowledge of the methods and strategies used in English language teaching.
- Focus on communicative, learner-centred teaching.
- Allow teachers to observe and try out methods and resources.
- Relate course ideas to teachers' individual contexts.
- Develop reflection and professional development skills. (British Council, 2012)

#### *Program content*

The training program is made up of the following components:

1. A minimum of 24 hours of training through face-to-face interactions in the classroom, composed of five modules available online: Classroom Management, Presentation and Practice, Lesson Planning, Communication Skills, and Memorable Learning. Each module was complete in itself, and participants could take them in any order.
2. Online tasks for each module, consisting of three or four hours of study and one or two hours of portfolio tasks.

3. Online material for each module, including videos, activities, and portfolio tasks with checklists for both participants and tutors, a downloadable summary of the module, and links for further reading.
4. Comprehensive tutors' notes with detailed guides for portfolio tasks.
5. A portfolio task checklist for both participants and tutors.
6. Assessment criteria and assessment templates.

### ***Program delivery***

In-service EFL teachers received training in the five modules through face-to-face interactions in the classroom, amounting to 24 hours over six weeks, or four hour per week. Prior to each session, they were required to do online readings on the class's topic, and following each session, they had to access online tasks and activities for each module. Each participant was provided with a username and password in order to access the website on the Moodle platform. Participants completed online work on their own and put together a portfolio, to be marked by a tutor provided by the British Council. Tutors did not have to be trained moderators, but they did have to have basic IT skills and Internet access as they had to download the portfolio tasks and email the participants directly. Assignment criteria were provided.

### ***Training in the development of thinking skills***

A comprehensive approach to the development of thinking skills covering both teaching *of* thinking, and teaching *for* thinking (see below) was integrated into the program. It aimed to develop the EFL teachers' awareness of the importance of incorporating thinking skills into the EFL classroom as a basic competency for improving students' thinking and learning. The author presented ideas for implementing critical and creative thinking techniques that were relevant and applicable to the EFL teaching context.

Teaching *of* thinking means that "cognitive skills, operations, and dispositions are taught directly" to students (Costa, 2001 p. 355); it was practiced in face-to-face sessions. For example, in collaborative groups, the trainees were guided in a thinking activity using graphic organizers and thinking maps; they were also instructed in how to ask questions that would enhance their students' critical thinking and how to implement a framework for lesson design that would integrate instruction in thinking skills into content instruction.

Teaching *for* thinking, which despite the contrast with teaching of thinking is provided in tandem with it, implies the teacher's use of a variety of instructional behaviours to "encourage students to use their native intelligence" (Costa, 2001 p. 354). Such behaviours would include raising thought-provoking questions and using cognitive language. For example, trainees were instructed in how to ask questions that could challenge students' intellect and how to structure the classroom for thinking. Teaching for thinking, which is rooted in teaching of thinking, was the basis of the checklist used for teacher assessment because teaching of and for thinking are interrelated, and teaching of thinking leads to teaching for thinking.

### ***The pedagogical knowledge test***

To answer the second research question, "How effective is this program in developing EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge?" a pre- and post-achievement test was developed by the author to assess the participants' learning of the five modules covered in the program. It consisted of 50 multiple-choice items (with four choices each); each module was assessed by 10 items.

**Test validity**

To determine the test's validity, it was submitted to a number of specialists in English-teaching methodologies, accompanied by a copy of the summary of the five modules. Modifications were made in the light of their comments and recommendations.

**Test reliability**

To determine the reliability of the test, Pearson correlations were computed for each item. The test proved to be reliable. Results of this test are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Reliability of the TEFL achievement test**

No. of Items	Kuder-Richardson formula 20 (KR-20)	Split half
50	0.92	0.91

**The classroom observation checklist**

To answer the third research question, "How effective is this program in developing EFL teachers' pedagogical performance? A classroom observation checklist was developed by the author to evaluate teaching skills and behaviours in general and skills in teaching for thinking in particular. The observation checklist had three categories:

- Presentation, practice, and production of new material
- Classroom management
- Modelling and response behaviours

The author listed a number of related teaching skills, behaviours, and strategies, based on Alwehaibi (2012); a five-point Likert-type scale was adopted to assess these.

**Validity of the checklist**

The checklist was examined by five university professors, specialists in English-teaching methodology, to ensure its validity – that is, its appropriateness and congruence with the aims and objectives of the program. Some modifications were made in light of their comments and suggestions.

**Reliability of the checklist**

The reliability of the checklist was ensured using inter-coder agreement checks, namely Cooper's Formula (Ary et al., 1996). The author and a second rater – a university professor trained in this area – simultaneously observed the instructional skills and behaviours of 10 EFL teachers and assessed them using the checklist. Then, the agreement percentage between the two raters, which indicates reliability, was computed using Cooper's Formula. The checklist proved to be 83% reliable. Appendix (1) shows the classroom observation checklist.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

To answer the second question, "How effective is this (thinking-based blended learning) program in developing EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge?" a pre- and post-test was administered to assess learning of the five modules (Classroom Management, Presentation and Practice, Lesson Planning, Communication Skills, and Memorable Learning) by all participants. There was a two-month time gap between the pre- and post-applications of the test. The results are presented in Table 2.

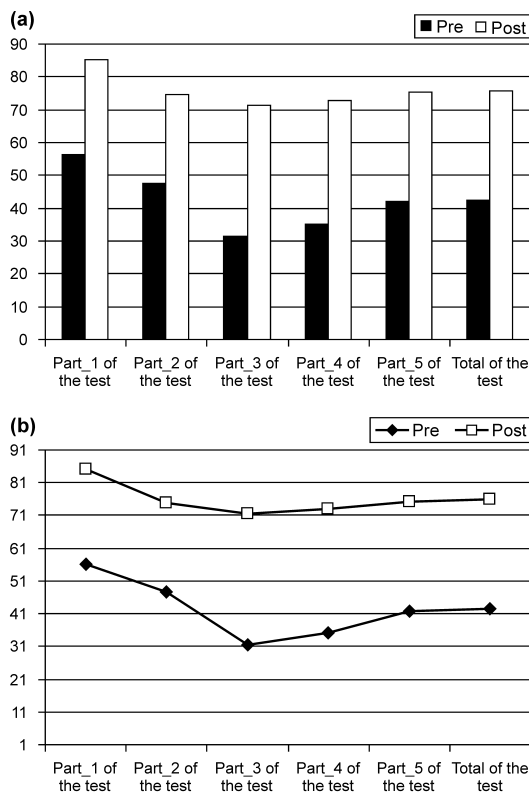


**Table 2. Wilcoxon test for paired samples for the difference between pre- and post- TEFL achievement tests**

Concept	Group	N	Sum of Ranks	Mean Rank	Z	Sig.
First part of the test	Negative ranks	0	0.00	0.00	3.96	0.000 (0.01)
	Positive ranks	20	10.50	210.00		
	Ties	1				
Second part of the test	Negative ranks	3	5.00	15.00	3.51	0.000 (0.01)
	Positive ranks	18	12.00	216.00		
	Ties	0				
Third part of the test	Negative ranks	0	0.00	0.00	3.95	0.000 (0.01)
	Positive ranks	20	10.50	210.00		
	Ties	1				
Fourth part of the test	Negative ranks	1	2.50	2.50	3.84	0.000 (0.01)
	Positive ranks	19	10.92	207.50		
	Ties	1				
Fifth part of the test	Negative ranks	0	0.00	0.00	3.64	0.000 (0.01)
	Positive ranks	17	9.00	153.00		
	Ties	4				
Total score	Negative ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.02	0.000 (0.01)
	Positive ranks	21	11.00	231.00		
	Ties	0				

As shown in the table, t-values are significant at the 0.01 level for each part of the TEFL Achievement Test as well as for total test scores, indicating statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-measurements in the five areas assessed, in favour of the post-test. Figure 1 illustrates the differences between the pre- and post-applications of the TEFL Achievement Test.

**Fig. 1**



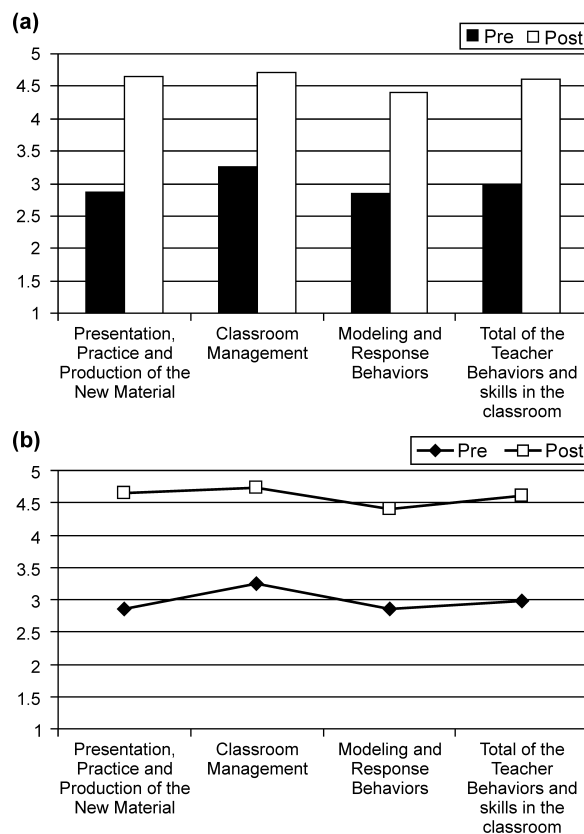
To answer the third question, “How effective is this (thinking-based blended learning) program in developing EFL teachers’ pedagogical performance?” the classroom observation checklist was administered in order to assess the participants’ pedagogical pre- and post-performance in three major categories: Presentation, Practice, and Production of the New Material; Classroom Management; and Modelling and Response Behaviours. The results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Wilcoxon test for paired samples for the difference between pre- and post-applications of the observation checklist**

Factor	Group	N	Sum of Ranks	Mean Rank	Z	Sig.
Presentation, Practice, and Production of the New Material	Negative ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.02	0.000 (0.01)
	Positive ranks	21	11.00	231.00		
	Ties	0				
Classroom Management	Negative ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.02	0.000 (0.01)
	Positive ranks	21	11.00	231.00		
	Ties	0				
Modelling and Response Behaviours	Negative ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.02	0.000 (0.01)
	Positive ranks	21	11.00	231.00		
	Ties	0				
Total Score	Negative ranks	0	0.00	0.00	4.02	0.000 (0.01)
	Positive ranks	21	11.00	231.00		
	Ties	0				

The table shows that t-values are significant at the 0.01 level for all factors as well as for total score. This result indicates the existence of statistically significant differences between pre- and post-measurements, in favour of the post-application. Figure 2 illustrates the differences between the pre- and post-applications of the checklist.

**Fig. 2**



## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The t-test results showed that the suggested program as a whole had a significantly positive effect on EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge and performance, as did each of the five modules individually. These results support various findings showing the positive impact of blended learning programs on teachers' professional development (Badawi, 2009; Berger et al., 2008; El-Deghaidy & Nouby, 2008; Owston, Lupshenyuk, & Wideman, 2008; Owston, Sinclair, & Wideman, 2008; Vaughan, 2007).

In general, the teachers' professional development was highly significant. These results support the principle that combining critical thinking skills in a blended learning context is effective, as shown in the studies of Lambe (2007) and Wannapiroon (2009). The findings thus imply that blended learning can be successfully integrated into EFL teacher training programs. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that a well-structured blended learning program integrating instruction in various thinking skills and dispositions can be an effective instructional tool for teachers' professional development. The findings of this study have important implications for in-service teacher training programs, in that they describe a framework for effective, flexible instruction to develop EFL teachers' knowledge and performance. It can thus be recommended that teacher training programs incorporating these approaches should be encouraged and supported, due to their efficacy in promoting professional development. Adequate training in ICT for education should also be provided, so as to enable teachers to handle diverse means of communication and develop further professionally in a context of increasing use of ICT in education.

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## APPENDIX

### Classroom Observation Checklist for English Language Teachers

Teacher: ..... Observer: ..... Name of School:

.....Level: ..... Class: .....

Please mark "X" in the appropriate column for each teacher classroom behavior/skill using a scale of 1 to 5 on the following items:

Teacher behaviors and skills in the classroom	5 Very Often	4 Often	3 Some- times	2 Seldom	1 Never
<b>I. Presentation, Practice, and Production of New Material</b>					
1. Uses appropriate warm-up activities.					
2. Arouses students' interest in the new lesson by linking it to their personal experiences and real life.					
3. Presents the new material in a meaningful context.					
4. Poses questions at different levels of Bloom's taxonomy to check understanding.					
5. Uses clear/real examples to facilitate logical thoughts.					
6. Uses outlining and mind maps to facilitate learning.					
7. Provides opportunities to practice the language in meaningful situations.					
8. Encourages students to produce sentences of their own using new language.					
9. Provides appropriate listening activities.					
10. Encourages students to speak the language through various types of interaction.					
11. Provides appropriate reading practice.					
12. Provides appropriate writing activities.					
13. Invites students to think hypothetically and creatively (e.g. posing "Why do you think so" or "What if" and "Suppose that" questions).					
14. Uses a variety of visual media (e.g., charts, chalkboard, maps, pictures, gestures) to develop cognitive processes.					
15. Uses appropriate correction techniques.					
16. Provides appropriate evaluation activities.					

<b>II. Classroom Management</b>					
17. Shows self-confidence and full control of her class.					
18. Speaks loudly, with a clear and expressive voice.					
19. Acts as a facilitator of learning.					
20. Moves around the room.					
21. Allows students mobility to practice the language.					
22. Creates a friendly atmosphere.					
23. Uses different class groupings for different activities.					
24. Uses varied elicitation techniques to encourage students to participate in classroom activities.					
25. Encourages more than one student to give points of view/solutions.					
26. Involves all students in classroom activities.					
27. Covers classroom procedures within the allotted time.					
<b>III. Modeling and Response Behaviors</b>					
28. Speaks the language accurately and fluently.					
29. Uses cognitive language (e.g., <i>compare, analyze, classify, predict, create</i> ) that invites students to think.					
30. Makes maximum use of English.					
31. Allows wait time (at least 10 seconds) for students' answers before restating or redirecting the question.					
32. Requires students to expand on answers.					
33. Reinforces students who respond to questions.					
34. Encourages further responses from incorrect students with supportive comments.					
35. Seeks evidence for stated claims by asking students to clarify and justify their responses.					
36. Encourages students to reflect on their thought processes and work.					





# Collective Bargaining and the Performance Rating in Italy

Barbara Grandi

## ABSTRACT

The big changes that have framed economies and societies all over Europe in the past decades have led to a changing role of the collective bargaining in the objectives it is pursuing<sup>1</sup>. This summary, presenting an overview on collective bargaining in Italy, is going to focus over the possibility for a collective agreement to determine the practices for better performance, the evaluation of such performances, as well as the connected monetary and/or non monetary recognition, in other words, the possibility for workers and their representatives to rate their own performance.

**Keywords:** Collective bargaining. Performance rating

## THE CHANGING ROLE OF COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION OF WORKERS

The big changes that have framed economies and societies all over Europe in the past decades have led to a changing role of the collective bargaining in the objectives it is pursuing<sup>1</sup>. This summary, presenting an overview on collective bargaining in Italy, is going to focus over the possibility for a collective agreement to determine the practices for better performance, the evaluation of such performances, as well as the connected monetary and/or non monetary recognition, in other words, the possibility for workers and their representatives to rate their own performance.

In Italian labor relations, the perspective which focuses over better performance and productivity is a relatively new one; Italian collective bargaining, typically centralized and State-connected, has traditionally had the aim to protect workers, rather than introducing them to improve productivity. The shift toward such a new scenario - involving workers in the search for solutions to productivity problems - is amongst the elements that have changed the social parties' approach to the capitalist economy, perhaps the most revolutionary of them all<sup>2</sup>.

First, I would like to specify that the phenomenon of "*collective representation of workers*" both in its contractual dimension (collective bargaining, just strictly meant) and in its political dimension (the role of trade unions in connection with national State policies)<sup>3</sup>, is here referred as a wide open legal category. This includes the concept of national collective bargaining and decentralized agreements, freedom of association, right to establish Trade Unions, joint bodies, tolerance/right to take collective action against employers' measures etc.

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<sup>1</sup> On trends for European industrial relations see also C. DELL'ARINGA, T. TREU (1992) *Nuove relazioni industriali per l'Italia in Europa*, ed. Il Mulino. For updating on workers' participation see <http://www.worker-participation.eu> consulted in 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

<sup>2</sup> About the contradictions amongst European policies, essentially framed by monetary targets and the national reforms on labour relations see S. DEAKIN, *The sovereign debt crisis and European labour law*, in *Industrial Law Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 3, September 2012 and cited readings.

<sup>3</sup> Some scholars refers to "negotiation" and "participation" as two possible dimension of workers' representation (G. BAGLIONI, 2008, *L'accerchiamento. Perché si riduce la tutela sindacale tradizionale*, ed. Il Mulino, pp. 231-241)

In time when the role of Trade Unions is politically under attack<sup>4</sup>, it is worthy to remind that Italian collective representation of workers too, finds its roots in the British Industrial revolution<sup>5</sup>, revolution which social effects have been spread all over the world and still are manifesting themselves nowadays<sup>6</sup>; *collective representation of workers*, in this common - worldwide spread - sense, have had the main aim of associating workers for protecting themselves from low pay, and from the full power of employers to manage the workers' life during the working time. Herefrom, we can better understand how the many historical approaches to collective representation of workers, as developed later on in the many European countries, have been shaped by several circumstances, particularly by the circumstance of the role as played by every national State.

The national social reform, at the beginning of 19th Century, led the Italian legislator, and many other European legislators indeed, to directly intervene for protecting workers against the risk of being abused by the employers' power. In other words the Italian Government too, intervened into the primitive bilateral relationship amongst workers and enterprises in order to make a new balance<sup>7</sup>, in order to save the personal dignity of those pressed in a relationship which is keeping them, as individuals, in the weaker position.

The content of *collective representation of workers* coming here in point formost, is the collective representation for determining the remuneration; particularly, we are dealing with determination and bargaining over remuneration and productivity remuneration. We know that some national States like United Kingdom and Germany<sup>8</sup> reached the adoption of a statutory determination of the minimum wage<sup>9</sup>. In Italy, instead, the minimum wage is still determined by the social parties, although the Government uses to intervene via some variable sort of social dialog and puts its premission over the Agreements, according to rules that may change through the years<sup>10</sup>: the collective bargaining fixes the minimum wage, it fixes a remuneration which is going to be considered mandatory on any employer (the mandatory nature of the bargained determination is granted *ex post* by the judiciary system, because of a shared and consolidated interpretation of art. 36 of the Italian Constitution<sup>11</sup>).

This summary is not dealing with what is, or should it be, a decent/minimum wage, neither with how such a measure should be determined. Rather the paper deals with this kind of "new dogma" framing labour relations that is their role in allocating remuneration beyond the

<sup>4</sup> The Movimento 5 Stelle, led by Italian comics Beppe Grillo, and achieving a great success at the 2013 24-25th February political elections, stressed its political campaign on abolishing the Unions essentially in their bureaucracy.

<sup>5</sup> Comparison between United Kingdom and Italy may turn to be fruitful, because in the most recent times too, not only at the origins, the debate over industrial relations takes its moves from Great Britain to develop in all the European Continent (this observation is by S. LEONARDI, *Per una bibliografia ragionata sui temi del sindacato e delle relazioni industriali*, *Economia&Lavoro*, 3/2008).

<sup>6</sup> K. POLANY (1944) *La grande trasformazione*, ed. Einaudi (The great transformation).

<sup>7</sup> M.G. GAROFALO, Ludovico Barassi e il socialismo della cattedra, in *Riv. Giur. Lav. Prev. Soc.*, 2001, 2003, 394.

<sup>8</sup> Germany is a country known to be deeply devoted to a centralized and statutory controlled collective bargaining (see M. FAIOLI, *Oltre la continuità, la contrattazione collettiva decentrata nell'esperienza francese e tedesca*, in *RIDL*, 2012, 3, 481)

<sup>9</sup> R. BORTONE, *I problemi della produttività e del salario in Italia*, 2008, in [http://www.robertabortone.it/htdocs/blog/?page\\_id=44](http://www.robertabortone.it/htdocs/blog/?page_id=44), argues that such a statutory provision is being gravely experienced in time of economic crisis.

<sup>10</sup> There can be participation, social dialogue, consultation, harmonization, information.

<sup>11</sup> Art. 36 of the Italian Constitution states that remuneration must be proportionate to the work done and sufficient for the worker and his family to live with dignity. Italian judges have interpreted such a principle as a measure to find in the national collective agreements.

recognition and distribution of the minimum standards. This kind of new dogma does represent a shift from a collective bargaining which is only protective over the workers, towards a bargaining that is doing something for pushing productivity, innovation of economy and society, forward.

This summary moves from a theoretic assumption (which is going to be debated elsewhere) that a decent wage or salary, to be granted as a fundamental right, is out of concern in Europe and all over the world, according to both general principles as declared in the European Charter of Fundamental rights and to the ILO Recommendations<sup>12</sup>. Such an assumption, in theoretical principle indeed, is to be considered as an achievement by the Unionism as a political and historical phenomenon, while it is going to be up to the political institutions, as in charge time by time, place by place, the decision over its implementation, its measure<sup>13</sup>, as well as over the instruments to establish it: every national State, in accordance with the civil society and the workers' representatives, should struggle (we are not dealing with an easy point) to find the best regulatory procedures and tools to establish, time by time, place by place, the minimum standards, in order to make that principle a reality for workers and citizens.

I take here as out of concern, nonetheless, that any *variable* part of the remuneration (connected to the merit of workers or to the productivity of the sector/enterprise) is distinguished from the *minimum standards*, although to be effectively connected to the national/minimum wage (either being the latter established statutorily or via collective bargaining having an *erga-omnes* effect). Given such a distinction, it follows that it is going to be at the higher/national level of determination that the substantial play for remuneration is taking floor, meaning that it is here that "the cake" (the existing production) is going to be shared; thereafter, the sharing of the resting part must be linked to that level in order to be identified. This assumption leads to consider that the way the society decides to share the cake, the tools it wants to use, the minimum standards and its components in any given sector, are strictly political matters.

It is true that collective labour relations is a topic particularly difficult to be analyzed from an academic point of view<sup>14</sup>; but if we leave to the social parties the determination of what is *fundamental* for a collective bargaining process to grant to workers, in term of a basic wage, on

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<sup>12</sup> The Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union sets several dispositions in order to grant minimum standards for workers: art. 27 Workers' right to information and consultation within the undertaking, art. 28 Right of collective bargaining and action, art. 29 Right of access to placement services, art. 30 Protection in the event of unjustified dismissal, art. 31, Fair and just working conditions, and all these norms, together, are meant to grant substantially and procedurally, minimum standards. Confirmed as an up-to-date standard by decision of the Governing Body of the ILO in 2001, Convention No. 102 has been ratified by 41 ILO Member States since its entry into force in 1952, and more ratifications are expected in the years to come, contains several statements aimed at granting workers' dignity. Moreover, see Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No. 95), Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131), "Rules of the game, a brief introduction to the international labour standards, Revised Edition 2009". It seems that, the more a society is culturally advanced and informed, the more these standards are going to be assured by Institutions, rather than by the benevolence of Men. In 1998 The ILO made an effort to secure commitment of States to four core standards: **freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, elimination of all forms of forced labour and compulsory labour, abolition of child labour and elimination of employment and occupational discrimination.**

<sup>13</sup> As well its eventual variations as related to the costs of living in a given society; circumstances emerging from the historical context, like the GDP (and GNP..) or the level of inflation etc. must be revealed when stating over the basic level of protection, otherwise the public intervention can go easily and unjustly towards determining stagflation.

<sup>14</sup> L. KINGSLEY, Is industrial relation an academic discipline? *Journal of Industrial Relations* Mar. 1974, vol. 16.

one side, it becomes theoretically and academically easier, to define what is a variable production-connected remuneration on the other side, by simply referring to this as to the rest of the net production. In other words, what is over the level of the basic standard, given a positive economic outcome by the enterprise, is going to be treated as a variable (to be shared according to some specific, *ex ante* specified, criteria).

Collective bargaining regarding such a variable (meant as the potential outcomes over the minimum standards, emerging in the varying economic contexts differently, according to the different performance of enterprises and workers) can be a major tool in pushing the productivity forward and the welfare of society that can be “possibly” coming along. Without a normative attention to diversity in the outcomes of the many enterprises, there is a risk of “workers de-motivation”<sup>15</sup> and breaks on productive/economic progresses, because both workers’ performance and progress/innovation would be given no recognition.

Because of the uncertainty of the economy and economic outcomes, Unions aiming at granting a minimum wage as well as a productivity/variable wage, are directly responsible for the determination of it; in other words the Unions are responsible for the objectives they propose to achieve. Joint bodies<sup>16</sup>, associations with active participation of both employers and employees’ representatives, meant to support and to finance the unemployment benefits, are examples of taking on responsibility in this perspective<sup>17</sup>.

What does it mean that collective bargaining may play an important role in determining the performance rating, the practice for better performance, its assessment and then the monetary (but possibly also non monetary) recognition? What is collective bargaining over the rating of performance about?

It is important to convey what productivity evaluation means, because it is quite obvious, for any labour lawyer, that the simple concept of “productivity” is ambiguous: to ask a worker to be productive may easily turn into that worker being exploited.

Normatively speaking, it must be clearly stated by the working agreement - arguably by a collective agreement - what is essential for the worker to do, to settle the time sheets in case of a dependent relationship; the worker’s manner to perform, in case of dependence and semi-dependence; and finally the performance itself, meant as a result, in case of a self contractor. - Given a certain remuneration to what is considered to be fundamental/essential in that relationship, the rest remaining is capable to be treated as a variable, meant as not essential, accessory. While the essential, or basic standard, with its own remuneration, need to be connected to a condition of dignity of workers, thus not negotiable, any reasonableness is preventing from negotiating the rest of the performance/remuneration within a meritocratically oriented management. Such a negotiation, both in a dependent type of work or in an independent one, can be granted normatively, but it could deliver none remuneration if the result as supposed to be achieved will be not actually achieved.

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<sup>15</sup> A. H. MASLOW (1970) 2° ed. Motivazione e Personalità, ed. Armando Armando, stressing attention on different level of motivation according to different level of need.

<sup>16</sup> For an Italian definition see C. LAZZARI (2013) Gli organismi paritetici nel D.lgs 9 aprile 2008, Working paper Olympus 21/2013 <http://olympus.uniurb.it>

<sup>17</sup> A. SPAZIANU e G. LEPURE (2009) I sistemi di gestione per la sicurezza e la salute dei lavoratori : il quadro di riferimento legislativo e la norma BS OHSAS 18001:2007 : manuale pratico per: datori di lavoro, valutatori e consulenti per la sicurezza, organismi di certificazione, enti bilaterali : aggiornato con il d.lgs. n. 106/2009 (decreto correttivo al T.U. sulla sicurezza nei luoghi di lavoro), Maggioli. EBER, Ente bilaterale Emilia Romagna (2002) Monitoraggio apprendistato : il ruolo degli enti bilaterali nella formazione per gli apprendisti.

Now, while determining what is essential (and what is not essential) we are facing with a preliminary, philosophical issue. If we do not offer a reply to this, the following dissertation about productivity is going to develop ambiguously.

The philosophical issue is about the “potential choice” of the worker: if we accept the idea that the choice of the worker is *never* a free choice, that he is forced *always* by the need to pursue the dignity of himself and the welfare of his family, then any discourse over productivity and merit may sound as putting a shadow over this preliminary and uncomfortable truth.

On the other side, when hosting the idea that the worker does have a choice, instead, we open the door to a more complex but challenging and sensible discourse over the different type of participation of workers to the economic and social growth broadly speaking.

The second perspective appears to be theoretically preferable for being more lively and active, it is more reliable because of its connection to real life indeed.

It is preferable also for the reason that any economic and social context, as well as any specific personal or objective circumstances, can be better observed from an external, rather than internal, point of view. Freedom of choice is something like an oversight over the (usually bilateral) employment relationship.

Also some others, typically legal, arguments, may come to support this view. For example, from a Trade Unions’ perspective, European collective bargaining is assisting to an increasing importance as just given to decentralized agreements<sup>18</sup>, also departing from the national bargaining level<sup>18</sup>, and this fact attest some consensus over the need to differentiate treatments according to a variable productivity<sup>19</sup>.

Furthermore, from a traditional civil law view, the contractual nature of the working relationship has never been completely denied by the social labor law studies<sup>20</sup>, and this fact is something confirming an active role played by the workers, notwithstanding the intervention of national States and the tendency to speak in term of a status position which highlights the protection of workers’ vulnerability.

### **ITALIAN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ON PRODUCTIVITY**

Italian labour relations focused their attention over productivity particularly since the 2009 Basic Agreement, but the Unions’ strategy to invest over the variable part of the economic outcomes was adopted already with the 1993 Protocol (Accordo Interconfederale 1993, July, the 23rd), signed at a national level by the three main Unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL) in agreement with the Government.

The 1993 Protocol was aimed at fighting inflation and matching the European standards to keep the public debt under a fixed percentage. That Agreement provided a contractual setting giving space to the local/work place collective bargaining, without denying the major impact of national bargaining on income distribution. Local bargaining was given the jurisdiction over

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<sup>18</sup>Rapporto 2008-2009 CNEL, Le Relazioni Sindacali in Europa, 24 luglio 2010

<sup>19</sup> G. BAGLIONI 2008, cited above, argued, furthermore, over benefits possibly coming along with an autonomous level of bargaining.

<sup>20</sup> S. DEAKIN & G. MORRIS, Labour law, 2005, 121; L. MENGONI (2004), Il contratto di lavoro, (a cura di M. Napoli), Vita e Pensiero (92-93).

topics and tools not already ruled at national level, and such a connected remuneration should have been strictly connected to the realization of programs - as previously agreed by the social parties – and having the objective to improve production, quality of the outcomes, or other competitive elements which the enterprises may use, including productivity margins and results linked to the economic trend of the enterprise.

Therefore, the idea in 1993 was to link a part of the outcomes, as variable in each local reality, to the achievement of some goals by one or more enterprises working together; there was no specification over the goals to be achieved, no specifications about whether the goals set should be individually or collectively achieved. This was left to national and decentralized collective bargaining. The State substantially submitted the Agreement by mean of a reduction in taxes which are to be paid regularly on remuneration: the taxes reduction concerns the productivity remuneration only.

The 2009 Basic Agreement (Accordo Interconfederale signed on 2009, January, the 21st) was confirming this kind of normative setting. It was not signed by all the unions; CGIL decided not to stay into the alliance, because of the denounced tendency of it to press too much toward a productive and flexible scenario rather than a protected once . The Italian Government submitted, and took the commitment to treat the variable part of the remuneration with lower fiscal pressure.

The 2009 Agreement, particularly, gave to the national contract the power to defend the salary against inflation and gave to the local bargaining the power to distribute the variable outcomes as connected to the productivity of the enterprise<sup>21</sup>, not differently from what was already stated in the 1993 Protocol. The social parties obtained to adopt a criteria for updating inflation which was much more akine to the “real economy”, if compared with the ruling dated 1993<sup>22</sup>.

The 2009 Basic Agreement stated once again that decentralized contracts should have jurisdiction over what not ruled yet by the national contract.

Differently from what submitted in 1993, nevertheless, the new pact provided for the local bargaining the possibility to depart from the national statements, but only, precisely, in case of economic crisis or in order to achieve occupational goals.

Another important achievement was the introduction of a sort of a “warranty clause”. This provided applicability of the national standard for productivity whereas the decentralized bargaining would not be present. This tool was not furtherly specified in details at this basic level of consensus, while a later Basic Agreement dated 2009, April the 15th (Accordo Interconfederale 15 Aprile 2009, not signed by CGIL, aimed at giving application to the January the 21st Agreement) furtherly specified that national collective bargaining should state over a measure for productivity remuneration to grant in case the decentralized bargaining would have failed to provide for it (art. 4)<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> C. DELL'ARINGA, Le nuove relazioni industriali, la partecipazione e la sicurezza sul lavoro, Dir. Rel. Ind.2012, 21

<sup>22</sup> The new index (IPCA) is the index for prices as comparable and harmonized in the European context.

<sup>23</sup> Art. 4 regards the so called “elemento di garanzia retributiva”; CGIL did not agree, by saying that it is formulated in such a way to be substantially not assuring any minimum wage at national level to those not covered by local bargaining (<http://www.cgil.it/dettagliodocumento.aspx?ID=11623> consulted on 2013, March, the 7th ). See also art. 4 bis as signed by Federmeccanica, Assital, Fim-Cisl, Uilm-Uil

Actually, what the 2009 basic negotiations did not achieve was a “territorial” level of bargaining to cover those small enterprises not yet capable to have collective bargaining inside of their own premises. Furthermore, some scholars seems to suggest that there was not enough clarity as if the real power of remunerations (control over inflation) should have been connected to minimum/national wages only, rather than to productive/decentralized remunerations too<sup>24</sup>.

Both the Basic Agreements of 1993 and 2009 are applicable to private and public sector as well.

In this respect, it must be recalled that 1993 is the date signing also the departure from a specific ruling for the public service in Italy, except for few categories (see D.lgs n. 29/1993): since that time, public and private employment are ruled by the same contractual norms. Thereafter we can observe a convergence amongst players of the public sphere (Parliament, Government and Trade Unions) with those playing in the private sector (private interests represented within the public institutions); such a converging trend has been confirmed in the later agreements and it is amongst the more, fundative, debated topics in Italian politics. Such a convergence is attesting an overall process of “contested liberalization” in Italy, begun in the early 90’s<sup>25</sup>.

New art. 40 of D.lgs 165/2001<sup>26</sup> as amended in 2009, ruling the collective bargaining for dependent workers in the public sector, although in a normative trend<sup>27</sup> aiming at reducing the Union’s power inside the public administrations in favor of both statutory law and public managers’ prerogatives, does provide expressly a remaining jurisdiction for the Unions on performance rating. The 2013 DPMC January 22nd, an act by the Minister of Labour, declared that the provided measure to support productivity (having the form of a reduction on taxes) only applies to the private sector.

The 2009 Agreements rised some extremely important cases regarding decentralized bargaining in Italy. The main one is the Fiat case in 2010, which exposed to the general public attention the matter over relations between national and local bargaining (matter perceived in the form of the typical struggle of the market reasons against the workers’ rights): what happened is that the Fiat management decided to renew the working conditions for the production of some new car models, by negotiating very circumstantially the production system and employment management in plants like that of Pomigliano d’Arco, Grugliasco, Mirafiori. For example, it negotiated the prevention of some typical forms of absenteeism rooted in the social culture of the South of Italy (Pomigliano D’Arco) with the introduction of severe penalties regarding false attestations of absence in place of real illness. The local contracts departed from the national collective agreement, therefore facing a hard opposition by the Unions, and by the FIOM-CGIL Union specifically: this latter decided not to sign the local agreement (considering it in contrast with national standards) and such a tight position lead the Fiat management to take distance from the national contract itself.

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<sup>24</sup> M. RICCI (2009), L’accordo quadro e l’accordo interconfederale del 2009: contenuti, criticità e modelli di relazioni industriali, *Riv. it. dir. lav.* 2009, 03, 353.

<sup>25</sup> L. ZOPPOLI, Contratti collettivi e circuiti della rappresentanza, *La riforma Brunetta due anni dopo*, in *Diritti, Lavori, Mercati*, 1/2011, 24

<sup>26</sup> D.lgs n. 165/2001 is the main law ruling the public servant employment relations.

<sup>27</sup> See Legge n. 150/2009 the so called Legge Brunetta

Several claims have been brought by the FIOM-CGIL associated workers before employment tribunals, in order to achieve a declaration of existence of their Union members rights based on the argument that the local agreement is in contrast with the national collective contract in force<sup>28</sup>.

The later Basic Agreement (again in the form of a trilateral understanding, included the Government) is dated 2011, June the 28th (Accordo Interconfederale 28 Giugno 2011) and has had the important impact to re-unite the three main Unions, CGIL included, after the chaotic experience of the Fiat case; essentially the settlement has been achieved through a new regulation over the matter of Unions' representativeness and their rights. There has been a great level of disappointment over the work done by the Unions in Italy; there was, and there is still, an idea that they are incapable of really representing the majority of workers, both because of the productive areas not covered by collective bargaining on one side, and the distance between Unions and their associated members on the other side. Herefrom comes the major importance of coping with the "representativeness knot". As for productivity, the new Pact confirmed the policy according to which decentralized agreements can rule over matters as just delegated by national contracts; as for decentralized contracts' legal effects, these are supposed to be binding over all the workers once approved by the majority, as sorted out in the premises which are involved in the bargaining. The decentralized collective contract can depart from the national contract, but remaining within the limits and procedures as normally present by the former, as it was in the past. Decentralized agreement, newly, can further derogate on national standards for experimental phases, in need to manage with circumstances of economic crisis, significant investments, to favor economic development and occupational protection; in such cases the local bargaining can cover matters of human resource management, meant as management of tasks and job-positions, timeshifts and so on. The autonomy of the local bargaining seems to be broader than in past; there is no mention of any economic tools, while the Basic Agreement asked generically for a governmental intervention to encourage the local bargaining aimed at "*allocating remunerations connected to productivity, income, quality, efficiency, efficacy and any other tool as capable to improve competition and economic results*".

The 2011 Agreement came just before an intervention of the State, having hardly destabilized the public opinion (Legge n. 138/2011 art. 8) by a statement according to which decentralized collective agreements could opt for departing from also statutory law, so far until European laws and constitutional principles were respected. Such a statement constituted a major news for Italian collective representation of workers, given that since the origins of collective association recognition, only few exceptional cases were allowing collective bargaining to formally depart from statutory law<sup>29</sup>. Many commentators have declared the law to be in contrast with the basic structure and fundamentals of Italian Unionism but surely it represented a strong intervention by the Government<sup>30</sup> aimed at giving to local bargaining a decisive impact on the human resource management<sup>31</sup>; it represented an authoritative intervention aimed to directly rule industrial relations at local level, giving them efficacy and

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<sup>28</sup> See particularly Modena and Torino employment Tribunals decisions in 2010 concerning the applicability of 2008 and 2009 collective agreement <http://www.pietroichino.it/?p=14214>. It is waited a decision by the Constitutional Court regarding Unions' representatives rights.

<sup>29</sup> That is the case for collective bargaining in the public sector as for wages (see D.lgs 165/2001 art.2)

<sup>30</sup> The Basic Agreement is dated June 28th, the law is dated September 14th.

<sup>31</sup> A. PERULLI e V. SPEZIALE (2011), *L'articolo 8 della legge 14 settembre 2011, n. 148 e la "rivoluzione di Agosto" del Diritto del lavoro*, in WP C.S.D.L.E. "Massimo D'Antona", n. 132/2011; , sul punto p. 6 ss.



direct legal effect<sup>32</sup>, thus establishing a prosecution of a policy that dates itself back in the 2001 Libro Bianco<sup>33</sup>. The 2011 law took the view that decentralized contracts might rule over information technologies and distant controls, tasks of the workers, classification of workers and job positions, fixed term contracts and other flexible contracts like triangular relationship, time-sheets, hiring processes, discipline procedures, economic remedies against dismissal, expect for dismissal due to a discrimination. All of these aspects might play a major part in the ruling over productivity.

CGIL, on its side, expressed the critic of being this law an impediment along the way for national collective bargaining coordination: while the Basic Agreement was granting a coordination between the national contract and the local once, the new statutory norm was concerned as denying any coordinating role to be played by the national contract<sup>34</sup>. After a relatively successful strike, announced by the CGIL leaders in September 2011, an important understatement for the application of the Agreement was achieved by the three main Unions thereafter re-united: the Statement signed on September the 21st declared that “*Confindustria, CGIL, CISL, UIL agree that industrial relations are a matter for Unions (only) in their own autonomy; by consequence, the parties agree that they will apply the June 28th Agreement at all levels of bargaining*”. This understanding clearly represents a substantial frustration of the law in point (recalled as “art. 8”): it is true that the law can prevail over a contract, but so far until the law is willing to rule over the autonomy of Trade Unions, it turns to be useless without the Unions’ consensus.

From an outstanding point of view, the issue is open still for autonomous Unions and worker’s representatives (those standing outside the basic understatement as nationally agreed) willing to play out from the national bargaining system.

Of a paramount interest for gaining consensus about productivity management amongst Unions has been, then, the Basic Agreement in 2012 (Accordo Interconfederale, dated November the 16th)

This Agreement has had the form of a strong invitation to the Government and Parliament<sup>35</sup> to intervene on the process for *structural reforms aimed at achieving an economic reprise in the long run, by means of a major support to collective bargaining managing productivity*; collective bargaining appears to be a coordinated tool for social relations between central and decentralized Unions, and it expressly recognizes agreement in the work place (decentralized agreements) as a useful tool to gain foreign investment, to avoid exportation of Italian productions, to realize an overall objective of protecting occupation via an economic development at local level.

Relevantly for the Italian traditional legal system, this Agreement is asking for a new ruling on “equivalent tasks” directly by collective bargaining rather than by law (“*equivalenza delle mansioni*” ex art. 2103 Italian civ. cod.), as well as a new ruling on working time and information technologies.

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<sup>32</sup> A. GARILLI (2012), L’art. 8 della legge n. 148/2011 nel sistema delle relazioni sindacali, WP C.S.D.L.E. “Massimo D’Antona”. *IT* – 139/2012

<sup>33</sup> 2001 Libro Bianco is a government statement over labour policies, and it was inspired by the main contribution of Prof. Marco Biagi.

<sup>34</sup> Read more on <http://it.ibtimes.com/articles/24244/20110911/art-8-del-d-l-138-2011-cosa-cambia-per-i-lavoratori-le-ragioni-della-cgil-camusso-manovra-ferragosto.htm#ixzz2JB2HSxTS>

<sup>35</sup> Notwithstanding the limits deriving by Legge n. 114/2012, ratifying the European pact for the public balance stability.

The Agreement, submitted again without the support of CGIL<sup>36</sup>, is evidently a continuation of the mentioned policy making started in the late Nineties, tending to provide an active participation of workers in the progress to increase incomes and it's been supported by the Government with a provision of around 2 billions euros financing the reduction in tax payment on those incomes as just connected to productivity results<sup>37</sup>. But then again, the Trade Unions unification has been re-stated, occasionally for the Basic Agreement dated 2013 April the 24th. This late Agreement in 2013 is signed to give application to the DPCM already mentioned and regarding the State support to the productivity remunerations and presents a model for a territorial bargaining over productivity: the social parties propose a model which destiny is to be overruled by any eventual agreement in the workplace and precise that employers will be given the State benefit as provided by the DPCM (reduction in taxes) "*on those performances others than those offered to comply with normal work-time*"<sup>38</sup>.

The resulting normative system on productivity, as just framed by DPCM, and the 2013 Agreement 24th, is rather centered on a meaning of productivity remuneration which seems to be strictly linked to the measure of the working time. There is the risk of linking the meaning of productivity to only a matter of quantity (time spent on the working place) rather than to also really innovating procedures and contributions that are not strictly connected to the hours spent on working. Nevertheless, it does not exclude the consideration of linking the State support to other kind of performance rating: for example it is considered as a productive type of work that as offered as a mission<sup>39</sup> or "any changing of the working time" (art. 4) that is a consideration going beyond the mere "increasing" of the working time. The Ministerial Act (DPCM) then refers to:

1. New definitions of the working time;
2. Flexible distribution of holidays;
3. Measure tending to use technologies in order to comply with fundamental rights;
4. Flexibility in job position and tasks, also via technologies innovations<sup>40</sup>.

### **PROS AND CONTRAS OF DEALING PERFORMANCE RATING BY COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

I have just recalled how the matter of productivity is in Italy a complicated mixture of rules managed at different levels, significantly also by the statutory law.

Generally speaking, collective bargaining appears to be desirable as a source of law based on searching and achieving agreement amongst parties with divergent interests, "*by means of a mutual availability to build with patient intelligence, even with experiments and errors, successive evaluations and adjustments, temporary solutions but with a normative and binding effect*"<sup>41</sup>. This means that collective bargaining is a kind of flexible, soft law that is particularly adequate to fit society in time of changes and complex economic realities, like the one we are living in.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2012-11-16/accordo-produttivita-camusso-scrive-122949.shtml>;

<http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2012/11/20/accordo-sulla-produttivita-modello-marchionne-isola-cgil/420117/>

<sup>37</sup> See DPCM January the 22nd.

<sup>38</sup> In Italian: "*erogate a fronte di prestazioni lavorative diverse da quelle rese in osservanza degli orari di lavoro applicati in azienda*".

<sup>39</sup> The State benefit is expressly recognized in the 2013 Agreement for workers sent in mission; it is arguable that the Agreement is here referring to intermediated type of employment contracts.

<sup>40</sup> Circolare Minister of Labour n. 15/2013 dated April 2013 is giving some more indexes to allocate productivity remunerations which seems to be not limited into a bilateral relation "more work-more productivity", and provides for a control over the correct application of the provided measures.

<sup>41</sup> I. REGALIA (2003), cited above, 428

The first argument “pro” collective agreements dealing with performances might be the positive experience of some joint bodies, as forms of employers’ and workers’ representation slightly different from a mere collective bargaining, embracing social dialogue in a more articulated form. These have reached some major results in the fields of professional training and health and security in the work places<sup>42</sup>; these are fields very much near, as for their complexity involving many competences and level of management, to that of performance rating.

Perhaps the main obstacle facing the use of joint bodies (which are operating on the base of a collective agreement anyhow) may come from the unionism itself, whenever it considers joining the management like putting at risk its own autonomy.

The second argument is of an economic nature, and it concerns the idea that collective bargaining should be used whenever it is economically proficient to share information: the more the negotiation is asking for disclosure, the more it is preventing from taking decisions based on incorrect factual assumption<sup>43</sup>. The matter of “shadowed attitudes”, which are by nature not economically efficient, is going along with opportunism.

The third argument is the authentic democratic nature of any process involving directly the workers in the measuring of their own performance. Workers given voice at saying what and how should be better to rate when workers themselves (as well as the entire enterprise) are watched with the lenses of productivity, and can grant a directly informed, a professionally instructed, and a directly interested point of view. It follows that, as long as we consider democracy like a good method to rule a social context, then collective bargaining on performance rating should also be valued.

According to some studies<sup>44</sup>, only a personal incentive may stimulate a rational person belonging to a group to act in a “group-oriented” manner, that means that only a benefit strictly reserved to the members of the group is capable to motivate their real participation and contribution<sup>45</sup>; this argument support the idea of a democratic decisional procedure, and might be used once considered all the individuals working in an enterprise to be a group indeed.

Moreover on democracy, I can recall sociologists’ theories that are describing human society as a movement which is naturally forcing against changes caused by the supremacy of the market economy<sup>46</sup>: resistance is a word that expresses humanity, and the society as a group of human beings is expressing resistance against the pressure of economics whenever representing an abuse or a threat to human dignity. This argument embraces the philosophic approach according to which it is the sense of rejection and fighting against humiliation that moves history rather than the sense of attraction towards the better<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> C. LAZZARI (2013), Gli organismi paritetici nel decreto legislativo 9 aprile 2008 n. 81, in Working papers Olympus 21/2013; A. SPAZIANU e G. LEPORE (2009) I sistemi di gestione per la sicurezza e la salute dei lavoratori : il quadro di riferimento legislativo e la norma BS OHSAS 18001:2007 : manuale pratico per: datori di lavoro, valutatori e consulenti per la sicurezza, organismi di certificazione, enti bilaterali, Maggioli. EBER, Ente bilaterale Emilia Romagna (2002) Monitoraggio apprendistato : il ruolo degli enti bilaterali nella formazione per gli apprendisti.

<sup>43</sup> R. B. FREEMAN (2006) Searching for the EU social dialogue model, NBER Working Paper No 12306 Cambridge MA.

<sup>44</sup> M. OLSON, 1990 The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups (trad it. Logica dell’azione collettiva, Feltrinelli)

<sup>45</sup> Such a theory does imply the consideration that “rational” members of a group can act to achieve private goods but not public goods as well.

<sup>46</sup> K. POLANY (1974) cited above

<sup>47</sup> Z.BAUMAN, Voglia di comunità, Laterza, 2001, 17

An argument as just connected to this late one, is the consideration that the matter of performance management could be dealt with direct democracy procedures - not mediated by Union’s representative’s, not expressed by act of a workers’ delegate, but by act of the workers themselves: many aspects of the performance rating could be decided indeed on a direct basis, rather than on a delegated one.

The modern information technologies (IT) would deliver the tools to such a direct kind of workers’ participations, insofar as the choice would imply an “aut-aut decision”<sup>48</sup>. Workers and employers representative (delegated) could keep the role to manage the whole decisional process formally, and to supervise it from an institutional point of view (preventing, adjusting and mediating on procedural faults, keeping the archives, technical support etc.). Here below are some examples of the aut-aut options that a direct negotiation concerning productivity rating could set.

<b>Object of the productivity rating</b>	<b>compensation/remuneration of productivity</b>	<b>contractual options</b>
Individual productivity (by tasks, projects, items, etc.)	free hours (time off)	to whom (personal scope of the clause)
Team/enterprise productivity (by tasks, projects, items, etc.)	percentage on output and services delivered	for how long (temporal scope of the clause)
Leadership	Leadership	adjustments with past ruling (opting between old and new clauses)
Innovation	social services	derogability of the clause (possibility for opting out)

Scholars recall that the Ford’s model of production and the post-Ford’s model imply two opposite relations between the individual growth and the control over production<sup>49</sup>: Ford’s model was pressing the individual power of knowledge and control over the production but it was including the person inside the big industry, thus promoting the feeling of belonging to a community, whereas the post Ford’s model is doing the opposite. The post Ford’s model is apparently doing the reverse, by letting the person growing in knowledge as well as in control over her performance, but then leave her alone in the “open society” and in a network of soft laws.

If this is true, inevitably the perspective of workers’ participation in the management and organization of work is becoming a necessity in our nowadays society. But for tons of inch just used to underline, on the other side of the river, that the employment relationship is, in its nature, conflictual, which is comprehensible as well; participation of social parties (which is also based on a Constitutional principle in Italy, art. 46) is not excluding the conflict. There is no need for an aut-aut option here: insofar the conflict would rise, there information procedures might come to support.

As for the “contra”, the major argument coming in mind against the idea of collective bargaining as a source for ruling performance, is its cost, compared to the cost of a unidirectional management by the employer, which is the regular path for any employer in a liberal economy.

<sup>48</sup> S. Kierkegaard, Aut-Aut ed. 1956, Mondadori, p.3

<sup>49</sup> S. LEONARDI, op. cit.

Any shared procedure implying confrontation amongst potentially contrasting interests does require much effort in terms of time spent and procedural tools to buy or to use (for delivering information, spaces for discussion and express opinions, options, choices).

IT is offering a major help to cope with such costs: it offer shared platforms for discussing and voting directly also. The experience of the so many social network that in these last decade are reversing their echoes over the public opinion and political institutions might be taken seriously also by the Unions, which are about to play an active role at the local level as well on higher levels of bargaining<sup>50</sup>: the cost of technology service is potentially well underneath its potential benefits, not only in time of conflicting situations, but specifically because of the voluntary and competent participation of the interested employees in the day by day living of the enterprises.

A relevant experience for the cut on costs of democracy, is the so called “liquid feedback as a program for interactive democracy”<sup>51</sup> developed by the Public Software Group in Berlin<sup>52</sup>, Germany, whose basic idea sounds like this: *“a voter can delegate his vote to a trustee (technically a transitive proxy). The vote can be further delegated to the proxy’s proxy thus building a network of trust. All delegations can be done, altered and revoked by topic. I myself vote in environmental questions, Anne represents me in foreign affairs, Mike represents me in all other areas but I can change my mind at any time. Anyone can select his own way ranging from pure democracy on the one hand to representative democracy on the other. Basically one participates in what one is interested in but for all other areas gives their vote to somebody acting in their interest. Obviously one may make a bad choice once in a while but they can change their mind at any time”*<sup>53</sup>.

A mixture of direct democracy and directly delegated democracy would allow, with a cost that is supposed to be rather lower then any kind of material ballot, a participation to anyone who directly cares, a delegation to those who prefers to delegate, as well as a passive role in case the single worker just don’t care in giving his opinion.

The system was engaged by the so called Pirate Party<sup>54</sup> in Germany, in 2009, willing to perpetuate the chances for each and every party member to participate in both the development of ideas and decisions.

It is acknowledged by the developers of the system that the operation of it in the context of economy and corporations requires the understanding that in such a context democracy is not the matrix of the interested social relationship: it is not going to be easy to give voice to employees whose interest is “generally” in contrast with the interest of the employer/corporation. In other words, the main problem with this approach is the balance between reliability of IT procedures expressing consensus and dissenting opinions on one side, and the ultimate right of the employer to decide and to manage his business on the other side. In order to grant, specifically, the genuine nature of social dialog within a company, it must be decided who is going to control the security and maintenance of the IT software.

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<sup>50</sup> <http://strongerunions.org/2013/03/02/how-are-union-members-using-the-internet/>

<sup>51</sup> <http://liquidfeedback.org/>

<sup>52</sup> Public Software Group ; the software is basically free to everybody; other similar softwares are [Adhocracy](#) and [CrowdVote](#). For a short reading: <http://daily.wired.it/news/internet/2012/09/11/democrazia-diretta-elettronica-183456.html>

<sup>53</sup> <http://liquidfeedback.org/mission/>

<sup>54</sup> [http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partito\\_Pirata](http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partito_Pirata)

From a progressive perspective, nevertheless, “*visionary boards are interested in unleashing the creativity of their employees*”<sup>55</sup>, employers looking toward society as a changing scenario, employers staying open in remaining on the market in a stable and sane position should constantly look at the future in all its complexities, and the opinion of workers is included with priority in this complex vision.

### **CONCLUSIONS: THE UTILITY OF A COMPARATIVE EXPERIMENTATION**

I propose a conclusion by passing through two considerations. First, the complexities of the Italian labour relation system are exposing the latter to a critic of non-efficacy<sup>56</sup>. It has been observed that labour relations can establish an efficient regulation when they, openly and largely, let the State and its agencies to intervene (the Scandinavian model is an example of this pattern), while reversely, a system like that operating in Canada or in the USA, having a tradition of bargaining connected to the market logics, rather than to State policies<sup>57</sup>, can reach an efficient regulation hereby. Italy, like the United Kingdom, is some in the middle, and faces the problems connected to such a compromise.

Second, the experience of the world economic crisis, so far, has shown that social dialogue can help to preserve or even improve competitiveness (“Member States with strong social dialogue mechanisms have weathered the storm best. National cross-industry negotiations have developed in response to the crisis in a number of countries with little tradition of such dialogue”<sup>58</sup>).

It follows that some experimentation are inevitably essential to adopt a collective bargaining over the performance rating, both in the public and in the private sector; a comparison between some more “American oriented” collective bargaining and some more “State centered bargaining”, along with comparable companies from the USA and, Sweden for examples, would be highly beneficial.

Nothing is preventing from the adoption of a matrix for a collective consultation/bargaining/deliberation over the performance evaluation as far as it is proved that its effect has added something to the value of the company also in term of competitiveness<sup>59</sup>. The scenario of a real full democratic process to share the outcomes of business is still representing an utopia but here again the utopia is moving towards a better regulation insofar the whole system is gaining from it a real benefit as for the wellness of society: perhaps, the Eden is the far point of arrival, and already the point for the next departure, insofar we call good intention both trains to.

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<sup>55</sup> A. H. MASLOW (1970) 2° ed. *Motivazione e personalità*, remind us the importance of an olistic vision of any evolving society, where also higher ambitions of people (not only the instinctual once) are determining the behaviours, and further more where ambitions and desires are continuously changing because of the so called circle of satisfaction.

<sup>56</sup> C. DELL’ARINGA, T. TREU (1992) *Nuove relazioni industriali per l’Italia in Europa*, ed. Il mulino, 14 registered that Italian productivity rate was amongst the lowest in Europe.

<sup>57</sup> C. DELL’ARINGA, T. TREU cit. above; according to these countries experiences, not only the part of the salary which has been connected to productivity is relying on the economic performance, but also the rest of is under negotiation.

<sup>58</sup> Social Europe Guide 2012, Volume 2, European Commission (<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=7384&langId=en>)

<sup>59</sup> S. SCIARRA, 2010 *Experiments in the Open Method of Coordination. Measuring the impact of EU employment policies*, RIDL, 2011.



# A Study of the Government and Media Discourse on Active Ageing in Singapore and its Effects on the Lived Experiences of Singapore Seniors

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## ABSTRACT

Similarly to other countries around the world, Singapore is facing the problem of an increasingly ageing population. The number of elderly is expected to triple in the next two decades. One effect of this is the requirement of an elderly workforce to maintain social and economic stability. However, for this to be an effective solution to the demographic dilemma, the elderly must be healthy. Thus, an emphasis on active ageing through engagement in sport participation is encouraged. However, it seems that despite the government's rhetoric that it is implementing diverse and wide-scale programmes in a bid to help the elderly age successfully, actual participation among seniors in these activities, remains low. One reason for this, emerging from empirical interviews, is that despite knowledge of the ageing population, and the benefits of regular exercise, seniors are not sufficiently aware of the programmes implemented by the government. Based on the data compiled from this study, it is therefore recommended that more be done to maximise the potential of sporting campaigns at community and wellness centres.

**Keywords:** Active ageing, sport participation; governmentality, embodiment.

## INTRODUCTION

There has been a burgeoning discourse on population ageing around the globe. The global population of older people, also known by the United Nations as the population aged 65 years and above, will experience a steep increase from 0.46 million in 2010 to 1.41 million in 2030 (Asher & Nandy, 2008). This number is projected to increase to 2 billion by 2050. It is argued that this change will mean a significant shift in the global age structure and a historic crossover with the population of the elderly as large as the child population (0-14 years). Similarly, in Singapore, the median age has increased from 20 years in 1970 to 24.4 years in 1980 and to 35.7 years in 2003 (Department of Statistics, 2005a). It is reported that this will heavily affect the old age dependency burden. According to the 2013 Singaporean Department of Statistics the old-age support ratio has fallen from 9.0 in year 2000 to 6.4 today. It is expected to decrease even further to 2.1 by year 2030, according to a recent National Population and Talent Division White Paper (2013: 12).

During the ageing process, an individual's immune systems tend to decline, and physical dangers become more apparent (Mirowsky, 1995). This physical vulnerability amongst the elderly is increased because this section of society cannot provide for its own needs and dependence on family systems; even in Asian societies, it is becoming less plausible for the elderly to rely solely on their family to support them. In such a situation, the elderly might be increasingly exposed to marginalization. The result could lead to increasing isolation, loneliness and fear. Sport participation has long been promoted in Singapore by the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) to shape its people. This is particularly evident in the

implementation of policies such as Trim and Fat (TAF) and the national fitness test (NAPFA) in schools, which seek to maintain young citizens in both physical and mental health. One effect of the ageing population, already cited, is the requirement of an elderly workforce to maintain social and economic stability. Active ageing through engagement in sport participation is one way to maintain a healthy elderly workforce and to promote autonomy and independence amongst the elderly. However, this concept is a highly controversial one, and its opponents belong to the tradition of *critical gerontology*.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Gerontology refers to a wide range of theoretical studies, ranging from constructions and deconstructions of aging, stemming from the phenomenological tradition, to study the lived experiences of the elderly, to issues of how discourses about the elderly are related to issues of power and control in society (Estes, Linkins, & Binney, 1996; Phillipson & Walker, 1987). This paper considers two concepts related to the field of gerontology *governmentality* and *embodiment*.

#### Governmentality

The body can be perceived as a 'space' upon which societal and cultural meanings are inscribed. The term '*governmentality*' (Foucault, 1977) can be used to analyse how the body is this object shaped through external social and political forces that govern populations (Foucault, 1977; Burchell, Gordon & Miller, 1991). In his work, "Docile Bodies," Foucault (1977: 170) argues:

*Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and instruments of its exercise.*

The body can be said to be controlled by diffusive 'soft' power (ideological force) and coercive 'hard' measures (physical force). These forces, through surveillance and regulation, have been normalised in modern societies so that individuals are moulded to possess characteristics and values which resonate with a government's desired goals.

One of the constructions of control is the discourse in contemporary capitalist societies that considers the concept of *ageing*, in particular, *successful ageing* through *active ageing*. Although the term *active ageing* had been used in the social sciences of gerontology since the 1920s (Estes et al., 2001; Katz, 1996), it did not really appear in international policy or media until much later in 1988 (according to Walker, 2006) through OCED reports. Similarly, '*successful ageing*' can be traced back to the 1950s, but was popularized in the 1980s. It has since become ubiquitous and is inextricably linked with '*active ageing*'. In international policy-making, *active ageing* appeared for the first time in 1997 in a US Department of Health and Human Services' paper 'Active aging: a shift in the paradigm' (as reported in Moulaert & Paris, 2013), which saw the need to remodel ageing from a stage of dependency and decline. The term was then adopted by the WHO (2002: 12), who defined it as:

*Continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force.*

However, this broad focus on cognitive and social as well physical health was soon overshadowed by a new narrative. In 2006, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) entitled its global report on ageing: *Ageing and Employment Policies. Live Longer, Work Longer*. Thus, contemporary ageing is related to two dominant narratives: health



and productivity. *Active ageing*, through work, became a way to combat the chronic illnesses (mobility and autonomy difficulties) of *usual ageing*. At the same time, there was a discourse of 'responsabilisation' and a transferral of responsibilities from the state to the individual. In other words, health promotion is carried out to ensure that the subject governs itself while simultaneously presenting this activity as one of freedom and choice. As Rose (1999: 268) states:

*Subjects are to do the work on themselves, not in the name of conformity, but to make them free.*

Drawing on Cohen's (2002) model, Pike (2011) argues that *critical gerontology* should analyse the existence of this kind of regulating discourse by a concept such as the creation of a *moral panic*. According to Cohen (2002), there is a need for three elements for an effective moral panic: first, a group pinpointed as a national burden is required; second, a group perceived as a victim because it is required to support this burden; third, a consensus in society that the problem is a serious one and requires an agenda (Pike, 2011). This paper aims to analyse if this notion of constructing *moral panic* is evident in Singapore, and if so, what the effects of this are on the elderly.

### **Embodiment**

In contrast to *governmentality*, the term *embodiment* is used to describe the subjectivity of the lived body in everyday life. This has its intellectual origins in Merleau-Ponty (1962). Much research based on a symbolic interactionist approach (Gubrium, 1986; Hazan, 1994; Katz, 1996) has led to a greater understanding of the interaction between mind and body to form selfhood during the process of ageing. A person experiences policy or *governmentality* through both the official objective body and the subjective body of lived experience. *Embodiment* thus examines the social space between identity, experience and social interaction, which creates a person's biographical narrative. This approach to understanding ageing is fundamentally different to the Foucauldian analysis of *governmentality*, which focuses on institutionalisation and the standardisation of human experience, not the actual experiences and subjectivities of embodiment felt by individual seniors in society.

### **RESEARCH PARADIGM**

Research into how the role of government discourse and newspaper coverage constructs the 'successful' ageing concept has been conducted for the United States (Rozanova, 2010) and Canada (Laliberte Rudman & Molke, 2009). However, research based on the 'mentalities of government' (Dean, 1999) in Singapore, which help to legitimize these meanings is not common. This aspect of the research was facilitated through qualitative observational methodology to interpret current and historical data from both primary sources (Singapore Government documentation; salient local and international newspaper articles; and online blogs from both Singapore and overseas). In addition, phenomenological studies of Singaporean seniors are uncommon. As a sports sociologist, I also wished to find out from the grass roots what seniors thought and did about *active ageing*. Therefore, an interpretative approach using qualitative methodology through interviews was also chosen providing a life history approach with particular reference to the everyday sporting lives of the participants. Thus, both the lenses of *governmentality* and *embodiment* are used. By studying the public discourse on active ageing through sport participation as well as examining how seniors themselves live through these discourses, it is hoped that a deeper and more meaningful

understanding of the 'ageing body' and its relation to the 'sporting body' in Singapore will be attained.

Interviews with ten Singaporean seniors from Chinese, Malay and Indian origins were conducted. The interviews occurred in the field in three separate areas of Singapore. Six seniors are female and four are male. Two of these females were interviewed together. They were both part of the same Pétanque team. The participants' ages range from 62 to 81 years. All seniors are cited using pseudonyms. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain an in-depth view of the social realities of elderly Singaporeans. The research questions asked were open and were organised around the following themes:

- Personal health regimes;
- Knowledge and opinion of the Singapore's government's efforts in promoting sport participation amongst the elderly;
- Retirement/ working situation and attitude to work;
- Knowledge of the ageing demographic in Singapore.

Direct questions were not posed so that the interviews would be more 'reflexive' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Interview transcripts were studied for thematic categories and interesting connections in the data identified. These were then coded into meaning units or categories to present the data.

## RESULTS

### What the government and media say

In Singapore, ageism permeates the functioning of the economy. There appears to be an orthodoxy that the social contribution of seniors can be through work. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong stated in his National Day Rally (2007) that:

*We've got to get the employers to recognize the value of older workers, deploy them effectively and make the most of their abilities and strengths.*

With the ageing population, as noted by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's National Day Message in 2005, Singaporeans need to:

*Keep active, stay healthy and work for as long as possible, so that as they age they can enjoy financial security, afford good medical care, and live more fulfilling lives.*

In response to this challenge, many funding systems are in place to provide opportunities training to those over 40 (Employability Skills Systems; Skills Development Fund; Lifelong Learning Fund; National Continuing Education and Training Framework, Secondary Education Programme, Basic Education for Skills Training Programme and the Re-employment Assistance Programme). Thus, it is very common to see the elderly working in public spaces in Singapore. This is very much in contrast with the US and UK state-run systems and the philosophy that there is 'more to life than work' (Gilleard & Higgs, 2007; Harkin & Huber, 2004). The health system in Singaporean society is not welfare-centric. As stated in Teo (2006):

*Singapore is well aware that market forces alone cannot deliver an equitable system of care for older people.*

Consequently, the Singapore Council of the Third Age (2014) is promoting sport participation among the elderly to combat the inevitable decline that accompanies usual ageing and has put

in place several programmes for the elderly. This is presented within a holistic discourse entitled 'Six Dimensions of Wellness'. The six dimensions are spiritual, social, intellectual, physical, emotional and vocational wellness. In the same way, the latest campaign launched in April, 2014 by Sport Singapore, formerly known as the Singapore Sports Council, is ActiveSG. This is described as:

*An all-encompassing and inclusive national movement for sport where all can experience the joy of living better through sport.*

ActiveSG is one of the key recommendations for *Vision 2030*, which is a joint project set up by Sport Singapore (SS), and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. This explores, in part, how sport can contribute to a healthy lifestyle. A senior's subcommittee is working to develop a multi-tiered outreach programme to meet the emerging needs of older people engaged in sport as well as to diversify sporting possibilities. The government's *Vision 2030* website is full of citations from the elderly discussing such as:

*We may be getting older but we are young at heart. Sport keeps us socially, mentally and physically active.*

In addition, sport is an important aspect of the work of the People's Association (PA), through the PA Wellness Programme. The PA's mission is 'to Build and To Bridge Communities in achieving One People, One Singapore'. It comprises a network of 1,800 grassroots organisations, five Community Development Councils, the National Youth Council, National Community Leadership Institute, Outward Bound Singapore and the Social Development Service. Through community centres, it offers diverse activities and courses at community clubs (CCs) to enable to the populace to maintain physical, mental and social health. Such activities include pickle ball, brisk-walking, yoga and taiji. Residents' Committee Centers and Wellness Centres as well as regional sports clubs are being asked to serve as platforms to generate more public awareness of these activities (for more information, see website in reference list). In a recent Straits Times article (January, 2014), the chairman of the PA Active Ageing Council stated:

*Beyond regular health-screening sessions, we encourage seniors to follow through with the necessary corrective medical attention and also participate in community activities to keep physically and mentally healthy. When our grassroots volunteers come across seniors who require assistance, they will also offer the necessary support, such as providing suitable financial assistance and working with the right partners to meet seniors' needs.*

It can therefore be observed that despite ageism permeating the functioning of the economy, the discourses used in the media and by the government associations in Singapore do not predominantly focus on the medical self to achieve *active ageing* but tend to equally promote the health of the mental and social self. This is a positive characteristic of the state ideological structure. Such notions reflect Gaullier's (2002) proposition for support through 'plural identities' in later life.

However, one must still ask whether there is a centrality of work which seeks to overshadow holistic ageing. In a very recent *Straits Times* article (March, 2014), Senior Minister of State, Heng Chee How said that unions, employers and the Government have agreed to work on extending the re-employment age of workers to 67 as well as improve workplace health practices to protect workers against premature loss of employability and employment. In addition, there is still a tendency for positivist data to be published which tends to evoke the sort of moral panic noted above. According to a Ministry of Social and Family Development

National Sports Participation Survey in the State of the Elderly (2009 is the latest available on the government's website), only about 38% of seniors in Singapore are regular sports participants, that is, those who participate at least once a week for a period of three months. Indeed, the majority (61%) are described as 'sedentary': those who seldom participate in sports or do not participate in any form of sports or physical exercise at all. In addition, according to the State of the Elderly (2009), 54.6% of the elderly in Singapore suffer from high blood pressure (Profile of Older Men and Women, 2011) and 62% do not exercise regularly.

### **What the seniors say**

#### **Positive attitudes towards exercise**

Eight of the ten interviewees were aware of the importance of sport participation and conducted regular exercise, at least three times per week. They consider themselves moderately fit. One stated that she exercises at least five times a week for two to three hours each time. Another woman does qigong 'every single day.' Each of these seniors stated that sport helped them to sleep better, and to feel more energetic. One senior stated that she exercised to keep her weight down; another to improve the condition of an injured knee. He said:

*I can sleep better and I experience less numbness in my limbs because of better blood circulation.*

Walking, cycling and then swimming were selected as the main sports conducted. Two of the seniors play Pétanque.

Only one of the seniors, a housewife of 75 years of age, does not exercise at all due to her rheumatism. When asked if she thought some soft exercise might help the condition, she replied:

*No, I am afraid of worsening the current condition of my leg if I exercise.*

#### **Knowledge of programmes at Community Centres**

Two of the seniors are currently part of a Pétanque team from a community centre. Four of the ten seniors had not heard of a government campaign; two had heard of something but knew nothing about it; one seemed very familiar with the local programmes. She stated:

*There are many sports available and older people take part every morning.*

This senior continued:

*I think the government is doing great. In Clementi, we have Zumba, which is very popular. It is good for older people to come out of their houses and make more friends.*

One of the Pétanque team members stated that It is fun to be part of the Pétanque team, and meet with other people through sport. However, the use of the local sporting programmes amongst the seniors interviewed is relatively low.

#### **Growing sporting activity in in local communities**

One of the seniors involved in Pétanque stated that sport had grown quite considerably since the financial support from the Singapore Sport's *Learn to play* scheme was introduced and more Pétanque courts were built in various community centres. (There are now more than 60 courts in Singapore). Also, the Senior Pétanque Championship is held annually for serious

elderly Pétanque players to participate. Similarly, three seniors stated that sport participation amongst the elderly had grown in recent times. One stated:

*From what I see, older people are already becoming more aware and are exercising more. For instance, when I go for my swim every week, I realise that more than half the swimmers are actually older people.*

Therefore, despite a lack of knowledge about community programmes, it seems that the elderly in Singapore are taking more responsibility for their health through regular sporting activity. When interviewees were asked why they thought that more seniors were engaging in sport, all three remarked that it was needed to stay healthy.

### ***Positive attitudes towards work***

Four of the seven women are housewives. All of them spend some quality time every week looking after their grandchildren while their own children are at work. The other six seniors are working. One woman is a retired teacher who is currently a vendor in a primary school canteen; another is a kindergarten teacher; one woman is a cleaner; three men also work as cleaners. When asked if they would like to stop working, all of the interviewees stated that they were happy keeping active and that they would be bored if they stayed at home. Work for them is a way to remain connected to people in society and this is important.

### ***Knowledge of ageing demographic in Singapore***

Seven of the seniors were aware that the Singapore population is ageing although none of them were aware of details such as the expectancy that by 2030 a quarter of the population in Singapore will be over the age of 50. The other three did not know about this but did not appear surprised and said that the elderly can work until late in life so could be very useful.

## **DISCUSSION**

From a study of the PAP policies and associated websites, it can be seen that terms such as mental, physical and social health are constantly associated together with regards to ageing. Thus, a healthy ageing process is not solely represented from a medical perspective, which reflects the original definition of active ageing set out by the WHO before this was overshadowed by the OECD. However, as reported, from the analyses made of the *Straits Times*, and the positivist expectations that the old person support ration will decrease to 2.1 by year 2030, already mentioned in the government White Paper (2013), it appears that there is some PAP political discourse that lends itself to Cohen's (2002)'s regulating discourse of *moral panic*. In another light, this discourse might also reflect the pragmatic nature of the PAP, and its response to the statistical figures presented.

In addition, it appears that the seniors are positive about maintaining their working lives in order to remain active and age harmoniously. Several gerontologists working in policy making (Estes et al, 2001; Guillemard and Jolivet, 2006; and Phillipson & Walker, 1987) have argued that the classic old-age retirement model retracts from the elderly's' human rights as it excludes them from society and forces them to relinquish independence. This ultimately disempowers seniors in society. Through work, old people interact with others and the material production processes and are therefore defined as contributors to the nation. Townsend (1986) argues that the institutionalisation of retirement is a social construct that condemns the aged to an existence of poverty whereas maintaining a working identity is anti-ageist as individuals retain their social status.

However, one caveat regarding the data about work from these interviews is that seniors might have been unwilling to admit that they needed to work to sustain them rather than working through choice. After all, the majority of interviewees are involved in jobs which albeit essential are very menial tasks. For the retired teacher, currently a vendor in a primary school canteen, this might be difficult. In this case, seniors could have been involved in 'impression management' (Goffman, 1959) during the interview. As Goffman (1959) posits, in situations such as these, actors construct identities to convey the appearance that they are involved in the appropriate social role and acting as they are required to do. Goffman (1959: 251) states:

*... The very obligation and profitability of appearing always in a steady light, of being a socialized character, forces one to be the sort of person who is practiced in the ways of the stage.*

Through the pressures that individuals face in social interaction, definitions of reality are constructed. Thus, interviewees might have been responding in the most appropriate way possible to the questions.

Another critical analysis might be that it is the political discourse of the PAP (as cited above) that moulds these seniors' embodied selves. From this perspective, the ideology of sport and active ageing may have been internalised to reinforce the dominance of the PAP and preserve the status quo in society (Dannefer, 1984). Healthy living is also a method of sustaining cheap labour (according to the study commissioned by the Government in November, 2012, entitled Adequacy of Singapore's Central Provident Fund Payouts: Income Replacement Rates of Entrant Workers Seniors"), the elderly earn about 20% less than they did when 25. Recently, Health Minister Gan Kim Yong's provided a speech about a new PAP action plan to improve the elderly's lifeworlds (reported in an article in the Straits Times, May 28, 2014) entitled: "Govt plan to engage public on ageing issues". This was examined in *Real Singapore: voices of average Singaporeans* and responded to:

*Instead of nice sounding words like "from one of worry to one of celebration" and "to have their days filled with excitement" – shouldn't we be at least talking about or addressing the widespread age discrimination in Singapore that may have led to so many elderly Singaporeans working very long hours for very low pay?*

It should be stated that the phenomenon of a drop in earnings of 20% is a common phenomenon observed also in the US, UK, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden (Bosworth et al., 1999; and Mastrobuoni & Taddei, 2011).

Similarly, in an article reported on the website '*LittleSpeck*' (written by Seah Chiang Nee), it is stated that around 40% of the elderly working today are cleaners or are doing related menial work, where incomes are low (less than \$S1000 per month). The site quotes Rick Lim responding to a government backbencher's comments:

It's not that the elderly don't want to retire, many simply cannot afford to. It is therefore feasible that seniors are attempting, through 'impression management' during these interviews, to deal with the stigma of the subaltern. Goffman's (1963) theory of social stigma, states that in society, groups of individuals are mentally classified by others in undesirable stereotypical ways; this is referred to as *virtual social identity*. Goffman (1963:2) posits:

*Society establishes the means of categorizing persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories. [...] When a*

*stranger comes into our presence, then, first appearances are likely to enable us to anticipate his category and attributes, his "social identity" [...]. We lean on these anticipations that we have, transforming them into normative expectations, into righteously presented demands.*

In this way, it is possible that by arguing that they were ageing actively through work, seniors were counteracting this stigma.

These are, of course, only hypothetical musings. What is clear is that this is a contentious issue in Singapore. On the basis of the interviews conducted for this research, seniors find that regular participation in sporting activity is useful and part of the process of *successful ageing*. Nevertheless, one thing is clear from the data: as much as the government is attempting to enhance successful ageing as mental and social constructs in addition to the usual medical focus, it seems that the outreach of current measures is not effective enough. In the interviews conducted, six of the ten seniors were practically unaware of the government's effort in promoting sport participation through local community centre programmes. Solely one of the interviewees could elaborate on the plans or programmes in some detail. Additionally, one interviewee seemed to lack medical guidance with regards to her physical problem of rheumatism, sure that exercise would worsen this condition, rather than help her to cope. Existing measures are therefore not effectively reaching enough older people. *Sport Singapore* might need to collaborate more with Community Centres (CCs) in the neighbourhoods to help disseminate the programmes being developed.

Additionally, current measures encourage older people to engage in only one or two sports. Having spoken to the interviewee from the Clementi area, this researcher visited the website *OurCommunity.sg* (<http://www.ourcommunity.sg/>) to find out about the sporting activities offered by the Residents' Committee Centers and Wellness Centres there. The only sport activity provided is Hapkido, Hatha Yoga (elementary and intermediate levels) and Zumba. Sixty seven residents have attended Hapkido; 12,635, Yoga elementary; 5,415 Yoga intermediate; and 15,380 have attended Zumba. These are therefore very popular but it seems that a more diverse range of activities should be offered. It is recommended that training plans for older people should encompass a wide variety of sports and activities to maintain psychomotor skills (Meusel, 1984). Hatha yoga is an excellent form of balance exercise that requires stretching and thus improves flexibility helping to eliminate risk of falling (Council of Third Age, 2013); and Zumba is an excellent opportunity for the elderly to partake in aerobic activity to maintain the cardiovascular system. Epidemiological and clinical studies demonstrate that moderate, rhythmic and regular exercise of this kind has substantial benefits for all ages (Meusel, 1984; Waddington, 2000), particularly preventing illnesses such as osteoporosis, coronary diseases and diabetes, increasingly common among older people (Waddington, 2000). However, more team activities might increase social, spiritual and emotional wellness more effectively than these individualised sport forms. Older people tend to prefer to use sport as a platform to socialise, as well as derive pleasure and satisfaction (Meusel, 1984). In the process of building new relationships through sport, it is hoped that the elderly might be able to find new meanings and purposes in their lives as they age (Council of Third Age, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

Waddington (2000) theorises that people assume that they control their lives without realising that many of their actions are based on moral imperatives set by society. In the context of this paper, it could be said that promoting sport participation among older people is necessary for

the economy. However, it appears that seniors are seeking wellness through sport and the exercise that they do as active workers. From the interview responses, this activity seems to act as part of their self-actualization as they experience the ageing process. Critics (Moulaert & Biggs, 2013) often argue that the lifecourse for an elderly person in such a situation consists merely of *more of the same* and is thus existentially barren. However, Ngiam (2005: 60–61) posits that in Asian countries with Confucianist cultures, self-care is essential, and if this proves impossible, the family and then community care are engaged. This is colloquially defined as the ‘many helping hands’ approach with these various sectors joining to offer a safety net for those in need. The state is responsible as a last resort. According to Rarick (2007: 26):

*‘Confucius recognized that in order to build a nation, certain sacrifices would have to be made by the individual. Personal sacrifice in order to advance the interests of the nation is found in all Confucian societies, including China.’*

The work of the seniors, seen in this light, is highly respected. In addition, with regards to the argument that working at retirement age is *more of the same*, one of the male Muslim seniors, when prompted, stated that every day of his life had always been the same: working during the week; going to religious education sessions in the evenings at the Mosque; and then cycling at the weekend with his family. Contrary to potential assumptions, the interviewee did not find this at all negative; he seemed very happy that he had been able to manage his life in this way.

It is clear that the elderly will be essential to Singapore’s future. If it is true that seniors in Singapore do have a strong Confucian work ethic, and thus are motivated in the continued drive of Singaporean development to be essential social actors, perhaps more information age successfully. The results from these interviews suggest that a broader sporting agenda accompanied by an effective publicity campaign that communicates these programmes to seniors would be beneficial. Further research will surely continue into the next decade to follow the lived experiences of seniors and the ageing dynamic in Singapore. It is hoped that analyses of both government discourse and the everyday lives of individuals will continue to provide in-depth understandings of this phenomenon.

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# Social Media and Public Participation in Nigeria: Challenges and Possibilities

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## ABSTRACT

The advent of social media in the world of information has added a very unique dimension to the participation of more people in those affairs that particularly has direct effects to their day-to-day lives and survival. Social media has already occupied those spaces that were hitherto un-occupied by the owned media. This is against the back drop of the aftermath effects of social media on regime change in the world, particularly the Arab springs and other hot spots in the world. This has equally brought human race together in a more globalised world. The aim of this paper is to look at social media and public participation in Nigeria, vis-à-vis the challenges and possibilities. The paper shall be pivoted on the theory of participatory democracy. It is mainly a qualitative paper; hence no primary data will be made used of.

**Key words:** Social media, public participation, participatory democracy, Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

Social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, and You Tube, are increasingly been adopted by politicians, political activists and social movements as a means of engaging, organising and communicating with citizens worldwide (Loader and Mercea2012).

It is therefore no longer strange to locate the face book accounts, or the twitter handles of political figures such as the presidents, the prime ministers, cabinet members, civil right activists, and engages them as frequently as the case may be.

This application provides an unbridled opportunity for the users to have direct conversation with one another even when they are millions of miles apart from one another. It has therefore taken over those spaces that were before now left un-explored by the owned media, such as the radio, the television, the newspapers and others.

Nigeria as a nation-state formerly joined the other comity of nations on social media with the lunch and approval of licences to Global Satellite Mobile (GSM) network service providers by the administration of Olusegun Obasanjo in the year 2000 (Punch,2013).

The introduction of social media into the information space in Nigeria is now been use for various means in public participation by the citizens, such as canvassing for votes in elections, showing either support or displeasure towards the government and government policies, such as occupy Nigeria effort on the increase in fuel price protest, enlightenments of the people on health related issues such as the dreaded Ebola virus, Hiv /aids and others. In essence, the advent of social media in Nigeria information space could be said to have increase the level of public participation of the citizens in one way or the other.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The appropriate theoretical frame work that this paper will be built on is the participatory democracy theory. According to Aragon and Sanchez (2008) participatory democracy is a process emphasizing the broad participation of constituencies in the direction and operation of political system. The etymological root of democracy, Greek demos and kratos simply implies that the people are in power meaning that all democracies are participatory. However, participatory democracy tends to advocate more involved forms of citizen participation than traditional representative democracy. Participatory democracy strives to create opportunities for all members of a population to make meaningful contributions to decision making and seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities.

Participatory democracy is a process of collective decision making that combines the elements from both the direct and the representative democracy. Citizens have the power to decide on policy proposals and the politicians only assume the role of public policy implementers. The electorates can monitor the politicians' performance simply by comparing citizens' proposals and wishes with the actual policies being executed by the politicians. In view of this, the absolute powers enjoy by the politician is severely restricted to the barest minimum (Aragon and Sanchez, 2008).

According to Adegboye (2013:241-250) political variants of participatory democracy include consensus democracy, deliberative democracy, demarchy, and grassroots democracy. Deliberative democracy differs from traditional democratic theory in the sense that authentic deliberation, not mere voting, is the primary source of a law and legitimacy. Any law or conclusion without authentic deliberation is therefore illegitimate, null and void and of no effects as far as deliberative democracy is concerned.

Deliberative democracy adopts the elements of both consensus decision making and majority rule. When practiced by small groups, it is possible for decision making to be both fully participatory and deliberative. But for large political entities, the democratic reform dilemma makes it difficult for any system of decision making based on political equality to involve both deliberation and inclusive participation (Adegboye 2013).

## **CHALLENGES TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA**

### **Inadequate electricity supply**

This possesses a major threat to the ability of most citizens, not only in ordinary day-to-day conversation via the cell phone, but also the opportunity to have access to social media applications too.

This is due mainly to the inability of successive of successive administrations in the country to provide adequate electricity supply to the citizens. The needed megawatts of electricity in Nigeria by 2020 have been estimated around 40,000 megawatts (Africacheck, 2013). However, the country currently only generates 2.628.6 megawatts (Punch, 2014). Hence, communication appliances are available, but the needed electricity to power them is not available.

### **High cost of tariffs**

Closely related to the problem of inadequate power supply, is the expensive call rate/ high tariff on call rate/high tariff on services. A good number of the service providers, such as MTN, Air tell, Visafone, Globacom, Etisalat and others relies heavily on alternative power supply such electricity generators, diesel, petrol and others in other to remain in business.

According to the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), over 50% of Nigeria's 160 million people receive no electricity at all. 40% of the production cost of manufacturing goes into the provision of electricity, compare to 5-10% in other similar economies (Guardian, 2013).

In doing this, the huge liabilities that are subsequently inquired from the service and maintenance of these alternative power supplies are transfer to the ordinary citizens who forms the main consumers. This has deterred more people from the use of the social media.

### **Poor coverage**

Coverage areas, this is spatially uneven particularly in the rural areas for example, the Global Satellite Mobile (GSM) network is also underdeveloped particularly in the rural communities, and therefore citizens are left out of the loop. Similarly, in urban areas, the cell phone/internet coverage is uneven, particularly in developing countries, such as Nigeria. Thus, this makes the use of social media to be restricted among most subscribers (Punch, 2013).

According to Njoku (2007) most subscribers have often complaints also about the rates of drop call charges that are not refunded to the customers. A situation that leads to frustration and anguish among most Nigerians.

### **Government Perception**

The Nigerian government like some other governments in the world, often feels that the power of the state is gradually been eroded with the advent of the social media. The social media is now been embraced by more and more people, particularly the youth (Loader and Mercea2012).

Nigeria situation even become more pertinent judging from the long years of military rule which do not accommodate any dissenting voices or opinions. Thus, criticism of government policies on the social media is often perceived as an unpatriotic exercise, even when they are being done objectively.

This has not encouraged citizens to offer constructive ideas on how to move the nation forward on the social media. Some citizens have even become apolitical in any government policies. Leading to the growing list of people been disenchanting in governance.

Furthermore, there has also been reported abused on the use of social media by the citizens in sharing unverified and wrong information to the public. These in most cases has caused panic, fear and anxiety among citizens, through the raising of false alarms like armed robbery on the high ways, car accidents that are non- existence and so on.

## **OPPORTUNITIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA**

### **Better space for engagement**

The introduction of social media into the Nigerian information space, has led to more and better participation/engagement of the citizens in governance. Citizens now use the social media applications to commend and condemn the activities of government official. The medium is also been use to canvass for votes in elections and voice out political opinions and ideologies (Study mode, 2012).

In essence, it has provided a veritable platform for the citizens to contribute positively to governance in their local community, local government, state and national government. They

are now in a better position than before to express their opinion even in the comfort of their houses and not necessarily going on public protest or riots.

### **Moved citizens closer to the government**

The phenomenon has also moved the citizens closer to the government. This is in view of the fact that bureaucratic barriers that will entail booking an appointment with their representatives have been removed. The government and the governed can now discuss freely on public policies and make their opinion known to their elected representative without any form of intimidation or harassment (World Bank, 2013).

The advent of social media has also reduced drastically the burden of travelling long distance in order to engage public representatives. The distance has been reduced to the barest minimum, and the people can discuss with their representative even on audio-visual devices. In essence, less energy, time and cost are dissipated by citizens in engaging with their representatives.

### **Reduction of anarchy, protest and riots**

Social media has also reduced drastically the incidence of anarchy and violence protest. It has provided the public with avenues to vent their anger and disappointment on government programmes and policies, via the face book, twitter and you tube, not necessarily taking to the street to destroy public infrastructures (Kombol, 2014).

Furthermore, protests have become better organised, more efficient and effective. This is in view of the fact that the message gets faster across space and time to the target audience and participants.

### **Means of public enlightenment**

The government is also better positioned than before to explain and enlighten citizens on government policies and programmes, such as the enlightenments on health issues, like the dreaded Ebola virus, security related issues like the efforts of government in curbing the Boko Haram insurgency in north-east Nigeria and a host of other government activities and programmes (Placing 2013).

The space created by this enlightenment has not only eased the spread of information by the government to the citizens, but it has also spread political awareness, consciousness and civic education.

It is also being adopted to canvass for votes among political parties, spread party manifestoes, policies and programmes. Hence more political parties have equally created their official face book accounts, twitter handles and have messages on the you tube.

### **Feedback mechanism**

Feedback mechanism on government programmes and policies has also been further enhanced with the introduction of social media apparatus. Issues that would have taken many weeks before reactions and feedbacks are received from the citizens are now being received by government in minutes within the revelation of such programmes. In essence, it is a case of instant actions and reactions by both the representatives and the citizens respectively (Channels TV, 2013).

Furthermore, the advent of social media has impacted greatly on the practice of journalism. Journalists do not just inform their audience or readers alone, but are now better placed to also

have both the positive and negative feedback and responses from their ardent listening citizens.

### **Employment opportunities**

This has been enhanced with the advent of the social media. A good number of Nigerians, particularly the youth have become actively engaged. These they do by helping to repair and service damaged cell phone and lap top, helping the non-computer literates to create web pages, opening twitter handles and face book accounts for money. Others are also engaged in the sales of air time and recharged cards. In other word, it has also boosted the economy of the country and reduced crime rate (Academia2014).

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Proceeding from the above, it is obvious that there are challenges and opportunities for social media applications in Nigeria. However, in other to improve on the present level of from efficiency to effectiveness this paper suggest the following.

One, the Federal Ministry of Power and Mines, must as a matter of urgency put all hands on decks and work out a pragmatic, realistic and workable solution to the ever presence epileptic power supply in the country. This will not only have direct impact on the effective usage of social media applications, but will also improve greatly the economic situation of the citizens.

Two, the Federal Ministry of Education, must equally come up with a reliable National Policy on Information Communication Technology (ICT). This is still absent in the education sector in Nigeria. This has to start from the elementary schools to the tertiary institution. What we presently have is an uncoordinated effort by some private school to implement what they thought is best for their students (UKessays2014).

This will make more citizens to become computer/ICT literate, and will be in better positions to avail themselves of the vast opportunities that comes with the social media applications.

Third, the service providers such as MTN, Cell tell, Globacom, Viasfone, Etisalat and others must not only advertise better and sophisticated technology to the consumers. They must be seen to be improving and constantly upgrading obsolete technology in their companies. They should also seek ways of further reducing their tariffs, as more and more citizens' groan under these burdensome tariffs. Doing this will not only improve the accessibility of the people to social media, but will also improve the affordability too.

### **CONCLUSION**

The paper set out with the aim of looking at the challenges and the opportunities of social media in public participation in Nigeria. It provided an introduction on the subject matter and equally backed up the work with the theory of participatory democracy, as this is one of the essences of making use of the social media, for citizens to participate effectively in governance.

The work went on to explain some of the challenges and opportunity to Social Media and Public Participation in Nigeria. Provided some recommendations that if taken seriously by the government and the service providers will not only make more Nigerians benefit from social media applications, but will equally help them to become active citizens, that is also able to benefit from participatory democracy. After all, democracy and public participation is all about the people, and not the government.



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## Theoretical Reflections on Research in Educational Policies. Epistemologies of Education Policy Approach

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### ABSTRACT

**This paper intends to introduce a theoretical reflection on the epistemological perspectives used in education policy research and the way in which those perspectives greatly influence the definition of the object of the theoretical field using the analytical category of the Epistemology of Education Policy Approach as a basis for analysis, leaving aside the State focused classical definition of the object of study of education policy. The premises assumed on this paper are, on the one hand, considering that education policy as a theoretical field is defined through the perspective and epistemological positioning of the person who interprets/characterizes it and, on the other hand, that that definition from a specified epistemological positioning responds to an episteme of epoch in terms of Foucault.**

**Key words:** education policy researchers, objects of study, Epistemologies of Education Policy

### INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to describe some epistemological notes on the field of education policy in Latin America, taking the category of the Epistemologies of Education Policy Approach (Tello 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013) as a starting point to think about and reflect upon knowledge production in this field.

Given the field's historical and epistemological process current stage, the Epistemologies of Education Policy Approach (EEPA) comes to warn about two issues that, though not unknown, must be considered, namely: a) research and knowledge production non-neutrality (Habermas 1981, 1984; Leblond 1975; Sousa Santos 2006, 2009; among others), particularly in this paper, in education policy, and b) the need to determine the researcher's position, i.e. the epistemological position from which the research process is carried out, and on the basis of which epistemological perspective they develop their analysis and achieve certain outcomes (Tello 2010, 2011, 2012). It is worth mentioning that these two issues (a & b) converge as focal points of the category of education epistemologies, as it will be explained later on.

In this sense, this paper supports Boaventura de Sousa Santos' (2006) thought, when he reports that knowledge production from a positivist perspective is taken as independent from culture. We can search for some sort of relative objectivity, since there are some methodologies that allow us to do so, but, we can never, as education policy researchers, position ourselves in a neutral ground, as Atilio Borón (2006) poses, given Max Weber's "value neutrality" postulate, which assumed, just as positivism, the fallacy of a "value-free" science and a radical separation between cognizant subject and cognizable object. Thus, not laying down the epistemological position would leave the researcher very close to a positivist position (which considers the neutrality of sciences and of knowledge produced) or near epistemological unacknowledgment

to carry out an investigation. On the assumption that the position from which one speaks “is clear,” many times the researcher does not review or explicitly states the epistemological postulates in the research process.

The epistemologies of education policy have, in the researcher's perspective, two dimensions of study, which are inherent and consecutive. The first dimension is the theoretical category in itself, understood as a conceptual structure that gives rise to the second dimension: the analysis and development of policy education research in epistemological code. In this paper, some general features of the first dimension will be outlined; the second dimension refers to what has been called meta-analysis in education policy research (See Tello and Mainardes, 2012).

On the basis of the suggested theorization for the development of education policy research through the EEPA, the traditional way of conceiving the object of study of education policy, i.e. the State, begins to be questioned. This issue will be revisited later on.

### **SOME CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN EDUCATION POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA**

In a recent study (Tello and Mainardes, 2012), 118 articles in the education policy field from indexed journals listed in the Network of Latin American Scientific Journals (Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina, Redalyc) comprising authors from Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela were analyzed. There, it has been observed that one of the main difficulties in the analysis of research studies entails awareness of the fact that the conceptual development carried out by researchers, based on some researcher-referent<sup>1</sup>, becomes methodology for the analysis, but the epistemological and ontological bases with which the theoretical referentials were constructed are disregarded.

Another missing element detected during the survey was the absence of the epistemological positioning of the researcher and, in some cases, the inclusion of epistemological matrices that led to research studies with poor theoretical consistency in their analysis and outcomes. Thus, the concern about the absence of an explicit epistemological positioning in recent field studies arises, as it has been pointed out somewhere else (Cf. Tello, 2009; 2010). As Mainardes puts it (2009) “many researchers do not explicitly state the theoretical assumptions that support their analysis [...] we observe the use of a set of authors (often of different epistemological matrices) in order to support their analysis. This renders the bases for these types of research studies vague and inconsistent” (p. 7). In the context of the discussion on theoretical-methodological bases of education policy research, the “epistemological positioning” category (Cf. Tello, 2009 & 2010) is constructed, constituting itself in the focus of this study; its main idea being that the development of a piece of research relies on a certain worldview and, thus, an epistemological perspective is inevitably adopted. In this line of argument, it should be understood that the authors that develop categories of analysis assume specific epistemological positionings<sup>2</sup>, and the researcher's epistemological position is inherently linked to the perspective or to the relations among perspectives constructed and assumed in an investigation.

Therefore, it is necessary to point out that the education policy researcher can adopt an eclectic epistemological position, but they need to explicitly state and combine theoretically the

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1 Among the main referent-authors used by researchers, we find: Stephen Ball, Roger Dale, Rolland Paulston, Peter McLaren, Tomaz Tadeu Da Silva, Baudelot and Establet, Giroux, Apple, Pierre Bourdieu, Basil Bernstein.

2 For example: “Globally structured educational agenda” by Roger Dale; “Social cartography” by Rollan Paulston; “The policy cycle” by Sphen Ball, among others.

concepts and/or relations between perspectives, with a little more effort and accuracy than those who assume just one epistemological perspective for the development of their research.

It must also be considered that on many occasions, when conducting these epistemological procedures, 'opposed' or 'quite distinct' epistemological matrices are linked. In this case, the researcher will be facing the construction of a 'new epistemological perspective,' not to be confused with epistemological eclecticism<sup>3</sup> or epistemological pluralism, as some analysts pose.

### **APPROACH TO THE EPISTEMOLOGIES OF EDUCATION POLICY**

The EEPA is one possible way of dealing with the analysis of the research field in education policy, as it has been mentioned elsewhere (Tello, 2012), whether as a facilitative approach for the education policy researcher or as a means to develop studies on what has been called the "field of epistemological studies on education policy" (Tello, 2011, 2012), studies that the researcher in this paper considers meta-analytic studies on education policy.

Thus, the first use as a facilitative approach relates to the exercise of epistemological vigilance (Bourdieu et al., 2008) on the very process of investigation, contributing to set and specify the epistemological positioning of the education policy researcher. The concern that triggered the development of the EEPA was the mixture encountered in different texts referred to as "research."

The EEPA is believed to be an approach that deploys an analytic plan for the researchers of the field. In this sense, it is argued that the Approach should not be assumed as a prescriptive instrument to "know" how to conduct research on education policy. On the contrary, it is a flexible plan that aims to promote, through its components, the reflexivity on the process of investigation of the education policy field.

The Epistemologies of Education Policy Approach, EEPA, is made up of three elements: the epistemological perspective, the epistemological position and the epistemological approach<sup>4</sup>. The "Epistemologies" category is used in plural here since there are a number of epistemological positionings and perspectives to develop and carry out education policy research, i.e., there are several epistemologies in education policy as a theoretical field. On the basis of this premise and in a relational way, it can be pointed that depending on the different epistemologies, there will be various objects of study selected for analysis.

It is worth mentioning that in recent scenarios, knowledge frameworks are losing clarity and new lines of thought are emerging. Traditional knowledge frameworks, once believed to be stable, are being questioned. A growing number of authors consider knowledge foundational approaches, whether positivist, interpretive or Marxist, as incomplete or problematic. For example, Torsten Húsen (1990) acknowledges that no single paradigm can answer all questions. In other words, a paradigm, by definition, excludes those questions that considers irrelevant. This situation is configuring an epistemological scenario characterized by an emerging heterogeneity (Paulston, 1995).

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<sup>3</sup> There is a difference between 'new perspective' and 'eclecticism' since when stating an eclectic perspective, the researcher should pick epistemological matrices related in some way, in this case, we speak of what we have called "coherent linkage" of epistemological perspectives (Tello, 2010). When no such epistemological coherent linkage exists, we speak of a 'new epistemological perspective' or some sort of incoherent and inconsistent mode which affects the construction of the perspective and, thus, the development of research.

<sup>4</sup> For further development and depth on these concepts, refer to Tello (2009; 2010; 2011; 2012a; 2012b; 2012 c; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c)

Khun states that paradigms are completely relative, given that they are restrained and, at the same time, restrain the cultural and academic context of research and, in a way, there is no “theory” above paradigms.

This poses a big challenge to education policy researchers: Which are the epistemological flexibilities that we have in order to develop theoretical frameworks that allow us to understand reality? How do we conceive epistemological Marxism, post-structuralism or pluralism to understand the realities of education policy?

However, this idea also brings the possibility of a positivist approach in research since, if no epistemological positioning from which knowledge in education policy is produced, is specified, it could be argued that the researcher holds a neutral position, and that is never true. Thus, the education policy researchers' challenge consists of locating themselves in “a place” in order to look at reality therefrom; we all do that from a certain place. Furthermore, in the production framework of scientific knowledge, it should be understood that every piece of research must enrich itself from other research perspectives that give visibility to different knowledge areas, other entries and angles to approach a specific object of study. Believing all these aspects could be handled by a single research study supposes a degree of epistemological arrogance on the part of the researcher, given that they will never be able to go into the object of study in any depth, but rather border their object of study from multiple perspectives. On the other hand, if they have an epistemological perspective of analysis and include others as possible viewpoints, they will go deep into the object of study, leaving clues for others to go into these topics from other perspectives.

In this article, just the first two elements of the EPPA are considered in order to present ideas, assuming that the Epistemological Perspective in education policy research means the worldview adopted by the researcher in order to carry out their inquiries; we refer to the General Theory in terms of Glaser and Strauss (1967). Examples of perspectives may include: Marxism, neo-Marxism, structuralism, post-structuralism, existentialism, humanism, positivism and pluralism.

On the other hand, the Epistemological Positioning emerges from the Epistemological Perspective itself, or should emerge in a consistent and sound research. The Epistemological Positioning, i.e. the Substantive Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), as it is understood in this paper, relates particularly to the object of study, that is, to the theoretical strands typical of the field, considering that substantive theories are those which directly relate to the empirical and theoretical content of the research's data. This is the focal point and the ribs of the EPPA, since it is in this point that the researcher's worldview is at stake; worldview meaning “a set of presuppositions (assumptions) that we hold about the basic constitution of reality” (Sire, 2004, p. 17). That is, not only ways of reading the reality, but also ways of building it in terms of epistemological reflexivity. In this sense, the epistemological positioning becomes the researcher's political and ideological position that relies on their choice of epistemological perspective, with which research will be conducted. Among the positionings, we may find: new institutionalist, institutionalist, legal, political constructivist, complexity, eclectic, post-modern, post-modernist, hyper-globalist, skeptical, neoliberal, transformational approach, functionalist, critical, radical critical, critical-analytical, resistance theorists, critical-reproductivist, humanist, economicist, etc.

Several studies reveal that there is no researcher's "empty head"<sup>5</sup> and various methodological terms have been used to name this issue, for instance: "researcher's assumptions" or "meaning anticipation" (Sirvent, 1999), among others. In short, the epistemological positionings and perspectives do not emerge from an "empty head," on the contrary, they have substance and support. The difficulty arises when the education policy researcher cannot name what is happening to them as epistemological perspective or positioning and tries to build research from pseudo-neutrality, it is in that same line that they assume the object of study of education policy as a fossilized object.

Thus, Espina Prieto (2007) holds that object observation cannot be separated from the observing device. This assumes an object and a subject who knows it from within. That is, from our EEPA proposal, the object is not understood as a neutral entity, isolated from its context, where the researcher is not involved, but rather assumes a mutual involvement as starting point, what in terms of Norbert Elías (1993) would be "involvement with and detachment from" the object of study, and it is at that moment that the object "is selected." The isolation, construction and design of an object of study of education policy are carried out from an epistemological positioning. In this way, the intellectualist assumption of modern epistemology which assumes the reality as reflected in a mirror is excluded (Rorty, 1989).

That is why the epistemological assumption of reflexivity supposes the interaction between the subject, who begins their research from an epistemological positioning and perspective, and the object to be investigated, where subjectivity is understood as a constituent and builder of reality and knowledge, involved in a rhizomatic fold.

The term epistemology, of Greek origin, is usually understood as a synonym for theory of knowledge, i.e. the theory of knowledge production. Thus, it refers to the methodical and systematic knowledge, i.e. scientific knowledge. In terms of Bunge (1981), epistemology studies scientific research and scientific knowledge. That is, the modes of production and diffusion of a certain type of knowledge.

Taking these issues into account, "the epistemologies of education policy" refer to the analysis of the scientific nature of education policy as a theoretical field. Thus, epistemology does not confront reality, empiricism, real life. Epistemology studies scientific processes. From this paper's perspective, the scientific processes are inseparable theory and reality, development of knowledge and social processes.

However, it is worth mentioning that, on certain occasions, scientific knowledge discredits and sets aside the doxa, folk wisdom or the so called common beliefs. The discredit of such knowledge does not constitute a pillar of this paper's definition of epistemology. That is, it is believed that all kinds of knowledge should have a space, a "voice," it is just that there are a number of different types of knowledge; and some people believe that systematic knowledge is more important than folk wisdom, and this is an erroneous way of understanding knowledge from this paper's viewpoint. Notwithstanding, and according to the researcher's arguments, education policy epistemologies study the research processes of the field, and have no intention to deny the different types of knowledge and ways of knowing.

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<sup>5</sup> The "empty head" category is understood here as the position of a researcher who considers themselves as tabula rasa at the moment of beginning the research process.

For some other authors, epistemology is that part of science, the object of which (though not the only one) is to go over the history of the subject as regards the construction of scientific knowledge, i.e. the way in which that subject has objectified, specialized and granted a scientificity status to such construct; but, at the same time, the recognition that this type of knowledge has on the part of the scientific community. This epistemology is the one that studies the genesis of sciences and searches thoroughly into the way the human being has transformed or understood their environment through several methods in an effort to explain and understand phenomena.

Thuillier (quoted by Mardones 1991) assumed the latter conception when considering the epistemology idea as “a science or philosophy of science that does not impose dogmas to scientists but studies the genesis and structure of scientific knowledge.” Epistemology, for this author, is not a dogmatic system made up of unchanging and imposed laws, but rather a backward and forward movement through scientific knowledge that moves in the epoch imaginary, the reflections on it and the breakdown or “crisis” of the rules that support a particular paradigm typical of a scientific community (see Kuhn 2001).

What is meant by this is that “education policy epistemologies” do not confront empirical reality, whether material or symbolic, since empirical reality is the object of study of an education policy researcher. Epistemology that confronts empirical reality is nothing but a mere indolent abstraction. In this sense, in a conference given by Pedro Flores-Crespo in Buenos Aires, the researcher held that “it will be necessary to question the traditional epistemologies that have recently guided the analysis of policies. This inquiry cannot be separated from empirical evidence” (Conference, 2012).

The distinction between these categories becomes necessary to understand the EEPA, given that the approach may be understood as an epistemologism or a hyperbolic exacerbation of the epistemological construct.

Thus, we make Nietzsche's words ours in our epistemological conception:

*“Remain faithful to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue. Let your gift-giving love and your knowledge serve the meaning of the earth. Thus I beg and beseech you. Do not let them fly away from earthly things and beat with their wings against eternal walls. Alas, there has always been so much virtue that has flown away. Lead back to the earth the virtue that flew away, as I do—back to the body, back to life, that it may give the earth a meaning, a human meaning” (Nietzsche).*

Considering that an epistemology is always an “antropoethus” in terms of Edgar Morín (2001), the EEPA is assumed here as Sharon Gewirtz and Alan Cribb's challenge, which consists of conducting an “ethical reflexivity on the research work” (2006, p. 7) in order to give reality a meaning, give the earth a meaning, a human meaning (Nietzsche).

### **Education Policy as a Theoretical Field and the Epistemologies of Education Policy**

The field of education policy is defined here as a theoretical field equivalent to the academic field in terms of Bourdieu, insofar as from that field, knowledge (research) is produced, knowledge circulation (academic training) is triggered and use or application of such knowledge is developed (profession as political decision making), considering that these three spaces are not necessarily consecutive. As it was already stated, education policies constitute the object of study of education policy, in terms of its very own socio-educational reality in its

multiple dimensions. Undoubtedly, this definition may be ascribable to the sociology of education, pedagogy, history of education, among others. However, it should be considered that various epistemic approaches generate an object in constant construction (Galindo Cáceres 1999). That is, the angles of analysis of the socio-educational reality allow for the theoretical field of education policy to be constructed from several axes that will merge into its object, for instance, the State, jurisprudence, micro-politics, political discourse, political debates, educational governance, right to education, among others.

The incipient characterization of the epistemologies of education policy may come to the aid of the epistemological status of the field; by this, the researcher here is not referring to a theoretical nucleus of "education policy" and it is not this paper's intent to set and define its nature as a discipline or science<sup>6</sup>, but rather its relation to several theoretical nuclei and methodological approaches, i.e. to the epistemologies of education policy. Therefore, the political and educational aspects constitute the focal points of the field, in the broad sense of the terms.

One of the main contributions this paper is believed to afford relates to its contribution to the epistemological strengthening of the theoretical field, without being its aim to distinguish between science, discipline or sub-discipline. On the contrary, the epistemological strengthening of the theoretical field takes place insofar as it assumes its multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary complexity in the development of education policy research, which becomes evident in the multidimensionality of its epistemological positionings, epistemological perspectives and epistemological approaches. It is this multidimensionality that constitutes the epistemologies of education policy.

Basically being a field of the social sciences, it deploys from its own theoretical multiplicity, which does not question –from our perspective– its epistemological strength but rather places it as a solid and fertile space, given its diversity, to analyze education policies.

We can think of the possibility of defining some features of the epistemologies of education policy, but never consider that the "theory of education policy" could be defined, the latter meaning an epistemological reduction, since the current epistemological arguments do not demand "demarcation" between disciplines, that rather responds to classical studies and conceptions in the epistemological field that, for instance, distinguished between: science-pseudoscience-disciplines, entering in the fake path of scientism; on the contrary, in this paper, the researcher assumes, in Wallerstein's (1997) sense, a position in favor of science and knowledge and against scientism.

In some European countries, some arguments and debates related to the assignment of a scientific status to the education policy field are taking place; such is the case of Spanish Jiménez Eguizábal et al. who wonder: "Are we facing the construction of a science of synthesis called the Science of Education Policy?" (2006, p. 263). Other debates focus on pedagogy in general –though these debates began decades ago–, as José Manuel Touriñan López (2008, p. 177) stance, that holds that each scientific discipline should have functional autonomy. In his words:

*"functional autonomy means the possibility of conceiving a field of knowledge that should develop itself, not as a result of*

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<sup>6</sup> Demarcational positions are not supported given that, from this perspective, a distinction between discipline and science should be established.



*external pressures and recommendations coming from other fields equipped with a strong theoretical structure, but rather as a result of internal regulations deriving from the very field of knowledge, so that the theory of that field be restrained by the concepts, hypothesis and methodologies of the field and not by the theories pertaining to other fields.”*

Then, education policy field internal regulations are structured in some way on the basis of their relation to other fields of study, and that is where the epistemologies of education policy (using a term that appears to be contradictory) in its original state are to be found, and it is said “that appears to be contradictory” because its “original state” as a field relates to its connection to complex fields. In this way, the field of education policy is considered as a reticular space, insofar as a field of knowledge is defined from a contemporary epistemology as the possibility of new conceptual constructions that allow for numerous and reciprocal interactions between different fields of knowledge. In terms of Gianella (2006, p. 79): “The reticle has a doubly complex structure, given that in the lattice, elements that are in themselves lattices are admitted.” In this way, we could adopt Deleuze rhizome perspective to think about the field of education policy, insofar as the fluency of any part of the rhizome can join another part.

However, returning to basic levels of research on social sciences –sometimes disregarded–, it is necessary to state once again a vital principle: research is not neutral, there is no such thing as an “untraceable position,” on the contrary, the researcher produces knowledge from an epistemological position, particularly in education policy.

Epistemology, in its current conception, is understood as the Theory of Science. From this paper's perspective, the various approaches do not constitute “a theory” of the field, but rather it is the theories of education policy that form the theory, i.e. the epistemologies of education policy inherently understood, not as a science, but as an approach, method and systematic reflection; an epistemology that supports social, political and cultural connotations of knowledge and research.

We must consider Ball's argument (2006) when he refers to research on education policies and distinguishes between the structure of a piece of research, what he calls the “surface epistemology,”– i.e. the relationships between conceptualizations, research design and conduct– that constitute one way of doing epistemology, and what he calls “in-depth epistemology,” –i.e. the explanation methods: realism, essentialism, critical perspective, among others– which should be considered for the soundness and consistency of such epistemology. Taking these considerations into account, it can be pointed that there may be a Level I and a Level II epistemology, like the steps in a piece of research. As each level is advanced, these inherent steps offer feedback, for example, research design is not just a mere technical task nor is it devoid of epistemological positioning; and, as it was stated earlier, research is supported from its very beginning (the design, the objectives, the object construction, among others) from a given worldview. It would be naive to believe that any of these levels, mainly Level I, are devoid of epistemological positioning. According to Ball's postulates (2006), the problem is that a lot of research is conducted from what we call Level I, i.e. lots of research on education policy is research that develops and specifies just a “surface epistemology,” however, these research studies do develop Level II to some extent given that they inevitably adopt an epistemological positioning.

In terms of Bourdieu (2000), knowing the position “from which one speaks,” which is the researcher's position, inviting to reflect on education policy epistemologies would consist of stating explicitly the epistemological positionings and approaches, as well as the epistemological approaches of education policy research so as to cross and go beyond the first epistemological level.

It should be considered that the presence per se of a theoretical framework and a methodological approach in a piece of research does not express the epistemology of education policy research, in that case, it would be a Level I epistemological analysis. It could be countered that those may be present as underlying elements, but, in that case, we will be facing an epistemological difficulty in terms of Bourdieu, given that what is not explicit refers to what is not conscious, as the author states, and in the “sociologist trade,” it is very difficult to reflect on what is unconscious, because the researcher deploys their position in a 'naturalized' way: just for themselves.

Level II would account for the presence of an education policy epistemology. What is meant by this is that the theoretical framework of a piece of research is a supply for the analysis or epistemology of education policy, however, exercising the epistemologies of education policy is, in terms of Gewirtz (2007, p. 7), to conduct an “ethical reflexivity on the research work,” reflect on the possible ethical consequences of research, in which way that work recognizes certain positionings as lawful and not others. In short, the ethical reflexivity is the way in which the researcher assumes the reality, in terms of Sousa Santos:

*“This is very important since with our positivist epistemology, we learn that science is independent from culture; however, the cultural assumptions of science are quite clear. Therefore, we are going to discuss how can we be objective, but not neutral and how can we distinguish between objectivity and neutrality as regards science. Objectivity, because we have common methodologies in social sciences in order to have knowledge; we hope the latter to be strict and defend us from dogmatisms; and, at the same time, we live in very unfair societies towards which we cannot remain neutral. We must be capable of doing this distinction, which is very important” (2006, p. 18).*

As Galindo Cáceres (1998) points out, for many [researchers], this issue, i.e. the epistemological dimension, is irrelevant, as if it were beyond the scope of the researcher's trade. McLuhan states: “We don't know who discovered water, but we know it wasn't the fish.” Actually, the people immersed in a process naturalize their own positionings without noticing the need to make them explicit. And here is where it is necessary to go back to Gewirtz's category, given that he believes that knowledge production “ethical reflexivity” in education policy impacts on the social world the researcher analyzes, and there lies the ethical responsibility of research as regards the requirement to state explicitly and clearly the researcher's epistemological position.

Education policy researchers often take the epistemologies of their research for granted, i.e. the elements of Epistemological Positioning, Epistemological Perspective and Epistemological Approach from which they conduct their research. These elements make up what has been called the Epistemologies of Education Policy Approach (EEPA) (Tello 2012).

## CHARACTERIZING THE OBJECT OF STUDY OF EDUCATION POLICY

In order to define the object of study of education policy, the epistemological positioning and perspective categories must be adopted in opposition to the demarcational epistemological arguments, thus, the definition of episteme of epoch in terms of Foucault is assumed, mainly as regards education policy as a teaching and content transmission space. In this sense, Castro (2006) explains:

*"It is not Foucault's intent to present the way in which the history of a given discipline turns out to be intelligible from the meaning tradition that inspired it from its founding acts, on the contrary, he aims to show that its emergence conditions respond to historical conditions of possibility that, on the one hand, are common to all or several bodies of knowledge of an epoch, and on the other hand, change from one epoch to another. Under the episteme notion, knowledge is not analyzed from its rational form perspective or objectivity, but from the point of view of the discontinuous homogeneity that governs the formation of different discourses that belong to the same epoch" (2006, p. 4).*

It is in this line of analysis that the object of study of education policy is defined by its episteme of epoch, understanding that the object of study of education policy is just a contextual and historical construct.

The episteme of epoch may be observed in the various lines adopted by different countries when studying education policies, e.g.: Great Britain's political sociology, USA's politics and policies, the most traditional French strands in Education Management and Politics studies, or the latest conceptual developments in the sociopsychanalytical perspective on education policy research or what on the French strand has been called the sociology of public action or cognitive analysis, that, in a way, begins to supersede traditional studies focused on the State. Pluralistic perspective analyses can also be seen in other studies (Tello and Mainardes, 2012) like Cochran (1993); Muller (1990, 2000); Muller and Surel (2002); Bronfenbrenner (1973, 1979 y 1993); Rossetti-Ferreira, Ramon and Silva (2002) productions.

Thus, the impact of these strands on the field should be considered. In a brief historicization, as a historical outline of the field of study of education policy, it could be stated that the foundational milestone of political science registers in 1948: at the request of UNESCO, experts and scholars meet in Paris in order to attempt the redefinition and delimitation of its object of study. After deliberations, the famous "List of subjects and fields of investigation"<sup>7</sup> was produced under a strong influence of Anglo-Saxon thought. Although the list is just a pragmatic enumeration of subjects, sixty years after its creation, it continues to be a benchmark for the formulation of theoretical frameworks and university curricula in relation to political science, including the curricular area in current education policy in pedagogy and education degree courses in Latin America.

It is from this date onwards, that political science as an object of study with "scientific aspiration" begins to be developed in several Latin American universities, and almost exclusively, from a legal-institutionalist approach (Barrientos del Monte, 2009).

As a result of the end of Second World War, welfare policies focused on issues like health and education were developed. Thus, the incipient emergence of a new way of conceiving public policies is observed in Latin America. Considering the deployment of welfare policies,

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<sup>7</sup> Subjects proposed are grouped in four categories: I. Political theory: a) Political theory. b) History of political ideas. II. Political institutions: a) The constitution. b) National Government. c) Regional and local government. d) Public administration. e) Economic and social functions of government. f) Comparative political institutions. III. Parties, groups and public opinion: a) Political parties. b) Groups and association. c) Participation of the citizen in the government and the administration. d) Public opinion. IV. International relations: a) International politics. b) International organization and administration. (UNESCO 1948).

governmental organizations turned to social science researchers looking for solutions to issues posed by state activities, including those related to the growth and reform of the education system, i.e., as it was stated earlier, Laswell's pragmatic perspective.

In this framework, the more political science began to develop as a field of study, the more volume and variety of subjects to study; this became a problem at the moment –which is very common in emerging fields of knowledge– since it entailed a great effort in order to set a coherent logic in a growing number of subject matters that the field should study, but that opening effort (Bourdieu, 2000) would in some way give rise to education policy as an incipient space emerging –from the historical-epistemological perspective of the time– as a sub-discipline of political science.

Endowed with the main characteristics of political sciences, education policy emerged as a theoretical field in the fifties, with a strong approach focused on law making and comparative education, in some cases. The latter lacked the current epistemological development, and basically consisted of establishing legislative comparative axes between different countries and the structure of the education system, among other subjects of linear comparison, virtually decontextualized; though it undoubtedly responded to the analytical matrix of political sciences in Latin America, with a legal-institutionalist approach.

It is in this decade (1950) that in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Colombia, among other Latin American countries, some “institutionalization” of education policy as a field begins to be noticed through the creation of departments of education policies. It is worth mentioning that the researcher is not referring here to the beginning of political reflections on education, given that those could be tracked back to Aristotle or Plato, but rather to the “institutionalization” process in terms of Gómez Campo and Tenti Fanfani (1989), when they explain that when some practices are detached as specific practices, by way of the creation of a subject, a degree course, a private school or a department in the university sphere, it shows a historical process and the real presence of an institutional space that allows the circulation and production of knowledge.

As it was already stated, education policies constitute the object of study of education policy, in terms of its very own socio-educational reality in its multiple dimensions; it should be considered that various epistemic approaches generate an object in constant construction (Galindo Cáceres, 1999) That is, the angles of analysis of the socio-educational reality allow for the theoretical field of education policy to be constructed from several axes that will merge into its object, for instance, the State, jurisprudence, micro-politics, political discourse, political debates, educational governance, right to education, among others. Burch (2009), opposing to the classic definition of the object of study of education policy as a State action, explains that supporting the traditional model of the object of study of education policy is getting more and more difficult since the field is becoming increasingly congested: new relationships and forms of relationships are being established in and in relation to policy. Besides, he states that “the boundaries between state, economy and civil society are being blurred” since there is a multiplicity of voices within policy conversations and new conduits through which policy discourses enter policy thinking. As Ball puts it (2011, p. 11) “Education and social policy within government, are now thought, influenced and done in many different sites and the education policy community is increasingly diverse and unstable” which involves a shift in the development of “relations involving mutuality and interdependence as opposed to hierarchy and independence” (Peterson, 2003, p. 1. quoted in Ball, 2011). What is meant by this is that although there are methods of analysis of education policies focused on the State, those

methods and analysis approaches cannot be the “classic” ones, given the new state configuration; it will be necessary to think of new plans of analysis applicable to the State-focused analysis. Nevertheless, as explained below, the State cannot be the center of education policy in terms of research, but just an element of mediation. Remember this statement is made in analytical terms for research purposes, i.e., State should be relativized in terms of research on education policy; meaning if education policy research focuses on State, the remaining elements of political mediations that will not be investigated shall be assumed, and vice versa, if education policy research does not focus on State, it shall be assumed as just one element of the framework.

Bearing in mind this consideration, the common characterization of the object of study of education policy as a State action in relation to the education field can be questioned in some way. And therefore, in this paper, the researcher asks: What happens when the “state action” category is too vague? What happens when:

- the object of study of education policy constitutes itself as the way in which classes' interests are to be understood in connection with capital (neo-Marxist epistemological perspective)? or
- the state becomes a supranational state (hyper-globalist epistemological positioning)? or
- an analysis of power circulation at school is attempted (critical post-structuralist epistemological positioning)?

Whitty and Edwards (1994, p. 15) put forward the necessity of giving a definition of education policy assuming Jennings' argument (1977) in some way by summarizing politics as the product of a decision. For this purpose, the authors' state:

*“But to reduce education policy to the sum of innumerable individual decisions, even decisions seen as partly predetermined or considerably constrained, is to ignore what in some analytical traditions would be called the power relations between different parts of the system and in others how decision-makers are positioned by different discourses.”*

However, it is clear that the authors try to give an operative definition in terms of organization of the field, since it is necessary to “reduce” [...] the sum of countless individual or collective decisions. The researcher's question here is why do the authors want to reduce?

The object of study of the education policy field is decision making. It is there that decisions may be observed at different levels of the education system as policy cycles in terms of Ball (1994) or complex decisions in terms of coalitions (Sabatier, 1988).

Thus, the researcher does not attempt to reduce the theoretical characterization of the object of study of education policy and assumes, as a conceptual approach dealing with the study of political decisions in the educational field, that there are political decisions at different levels of the education system and that those individual or joint decisions refer to the use of power. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish the angles of study of this complex and rhizomatic object of study, for instance: curricular policies, teaching policies, funding policies, etc., that can be observed through the exercise of power of the government, the labor unionists, the teachers, the technicians, etc. at the micro, meso and macro-level of the education system or in their interrelation.

It should be considered that modern State's rational approach assumed political exercise and decision as a "top down" line. However, some decision making goes far beyond government decisions; i.e. there are decisions beyond those made by the state government.

Here is the dilemma: the object of study of education policy should be defined for field organization purposes, or it could be pointed that its definition is not possible, unless it has an operative and strategic goal, as Whitty and Edwards have stated, setting the object of study of education policy as the decisions made solely by state governments. In this paper, the researcher's position is diametrically opposed to that definition.

Roth Deubel (2008) thus explains that there is certain centrality in the study of education policies, from a specific epistemological positioning as the Public Choice, that according to the author "focuses on the analysis of institutional agreements, mainly the design of state institutions and legal and constitutional rules" (Deubel, 2008, p. 80). In this sense, the Advocacy Coalitions position is adopted in this paper, structure created by Paul Sabatier, that began the search of a summary of the best devices provided by top down and bottom up approaches in the implementation study, incorporating actors' roles in a better way.

Flores Crespo and Mendoza (2012) explain that though it is possible that Sabatier's theoretical referential should not be widely known in Latin America due to the authoritarian and linear state actions in the region, it constitutes a powerful analytical plan for the study of education policies where multiples actors in several levels of decision making exist; and, at this point, it is necessary to go back to the category of episteme of epoch to ask ourselves: wouldn't be our own style of state government in the Latin American region that leads researchers to focus on it?

Bowe et al. (1992) warn about the difficulty of understanding and analyzing education policy in a vertical way; similarly, Raab (1994) explains that the State should be understood as one more element in the complex structure of education policies. In this sense, reflecting on Sabatier's theoretical referential, Deubel states that: "the unit of analysis cannot be limited to government structure but to a <political sub-system>. This sub-system, as part of the political system, is made up of a wide variety of public and private actors, actively involved or interested in a political problem or a controversy" (Deubel, 2008, p. 82).

Thus, the complex mobility of public policies is defined here in terms of swarming. This category, which lacks a clear Spanish translation, refers to bees moving in search of a place to build the honeycomb. The bees move together, and it is virtually impossible to identify their traditional hierarchy, since the search of the honeycomb building place is not restricted to the queen's decision.

In this sense, education policies as political action have multiple actors, connections, decisions, power struggles, actions, impact, implementation, etc. Considering the swarming image, the key question here is: can education policies be defined and conceptualized? Our argument is that an answer to that question will demand the writing of several encyclopedias that will never come to an end. However, in order to build an object of study, clearly artificial and from an epistemological positioning, an epistemethodological<sup>8</sup> reduction may be carried out; i.e.

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<sup>8</sup> In Tello (2012), the epistemethodological category has been defined as the methodological moment at which the researcher chooses a methodology. 'Methodological approaches' are not considered as mere instruments, whether of data collection or analysis, but rather as a "logos method," i.e., the way of thinking the logos. Then, the researcher prefers the term epistemethodology, category in which method introduction and researcher's epistemological position merge. Although the methodological

building an object of study to research on education policies involves acknowledging the swarming reduction and, at the same time, not being unaware -at least- of the main features of swarming and of the fact that that object will not be moving any more. It should also be noted that the analytical models for education policies analysis should not be determining factors. For instance, the attempt of answering these questions: where do education policies begin? or where do they end? is, undoubtedly, a way of assuming an epistemological positioning and perspective. From a top down or bottom up point of view, for example, this entails acknowledging the beginning and end in a pseudo-positivist vertical analysis. And if education policies could be thought of as a horizontal movement in a decisions continuum, which change step by step, gradually, from the authorities of a state government to a teacher, where decision making shows changes and more changes in the disorganized development of political action, where some include and change the others?

Thus, having made this characterization, it can be pointed that an education policy researcher who aims to characterize the theoretical field and its object of study will observe the theoretical field (swarming) from an epistemological positioning and an epistemological perspective, and never with an “empty head.”

Some people consider education policies as a swarm, a honeycomb, located at some place, motionless, fossilized (though the bees are working inside). On the contrary, education policies are never still. For instance, a legislative decision involves decision making, perspectives, analyses, debates among every education system actor in a spiraled development that continues as a subjective construct, an intertextual trajectory. Stephen Ball has defined education policies as text and discourse; when referring to education policies as text, the author (Ball, 1994) explains that they are the product of a sinuous and unexpected trajectory, generated in the context of different political arenas, through struggles, commitments, interpretations and recreations of public authority, that will later be decoded by the actors who, in turn, will add different meaning, making minor context adjustments in a complex way. However, in this characterization, a vertical point of view with stages is kept regarding political trajectory (policy cycles) with main and supporting actors. In the education policy proposal as intertextuality, as swarming, texts are in constant change in political action. It is at this point that confusion arises with respect to the political trajectory, i.e. between those that have greater or lesser power in government actions. What is meant by this is that power struggles are carried on, but not necessarily, won by those with greater power. The process is much more complex, given that the mutual implications between the actors with different power levels change the other actor's power in an intertextual and rhizomatic perspective. Deleuze & Guattari (1972:13) defined the rhizome as a descriptive model in which the organization of the elements do not follow hierarchical subordination lines –with a base or root from which a number of branches develop, according to the famous tree model of Porfirio–, on the contrary, in this model, any element can affect and influence any other element. In a traditional tree or hierarchical model, like policy cycles taxonomies, what is asserted about the higher level

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approach has an epistemology, for common use distinction purposes, the latter term: epistemology is preferred. That is, it must be considered that methodology becomes epistemology insofar as this is related to the other elements: epistemological perspective and epistemological position. By itself and, for instance, for teaching purposes, it refers to methodologies alone; with greater conceptual precision, methodology could be understood in terms of methodological techniques, techniques that are many times taught as epistemologies in some cases, and without epistemological support in some other cases. Bourdieu (2000, p. 62) is sharply sarcastic regarding this prevalence stating that it is taken as a “series of recipes or rules that ought to be respected in order not to know the object but to be acknowledged as an expert on the object.” Considering this warning, it is necessary that methodology in terms of research turn into epistemology, insofar as it constitute a consistent element of the three elements framework that make up the EEPA.

elements is necessarily true about the subordinated elements, but not the other way around. In a rhizomatic model, any statement asserted about an element may influence the conception of the rest of the elements in the structure, regardless of its mutual position. Thus, the rhizome has no center.

In short, this paper aims to put forward the idea that education policies, in terms of political actions, make up a swarming-like rhizomatic intertextuality.

### CONCLUSION

We are undoubtedly facing the emergence of a new way of understanding reality, the effects of which are changing radically our way of knowing the world and our way of relating to it as well. In this sense, it is believed that the epistemological debate in this theoretical field is yet quite limited. One of the main contributions this paper is believed to afford relates to its contribution to the epistemological strengthening of the theoretical field, without being its aim to distinguish between science, discipline or sub-discipline. On the contrary, the epistemological strengthening of the theoretical field takes place insofar as it assumes its multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary complexity in the development of education policy research, which becomes evident in the wide variety of positionings and perspectives.

From the Latin American Network of Epistemological Studies on Education Policy (Red Latinoamericana de Estudios Epistemológicos en Política educativa, ReLePe)<sup>9</sup>, theoretical field studies are fostered, considering that concepts and categories used to analyze reality are not value-free. On the contrary, the selection of certain knowledge structures, paradigms and/or epistemological perspectives implies a positioning on the part of the researcher.

Thus, the consequences of the ideological crisis that impacted on the theoretical practices during the transition of the previous historical period to the current one, with the disqualification of the so called mega-narratives and the widespread deployment of the paradigm crisis idea should not be forgotten. As a result, general analytical models were abandoned and post-modernism was embraced, with the consequences showed by Perry Anderson: structures without history, history without subjects, theories without truth, a real suicide of theory and of any attempt of rational explanation of the world and its social relationships.

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## Sectorial Perceptions of Parental Involvement: Similarities and Dissimilarities

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined the perceptions of *parental involvement* among 320 Arab-sector and 319 Jewish-sector elementary-school teachers in Israel. On a questionnaire listing potential components of the concept, participants indicated the degree of pertinence of each. Findings showed that teachers in both sectors agreed that parental involvement includes three components: pedagogy, control, and resources. Both sectors identified the three most significant parental activities as related to the hiring and firing of teachers, understanding classroom social dynamics, and fundraising for extracurricular activities. A cross-sector conceptualization of the term *parental involvement* creates a shared language and facilitates public discourse on educational issues.

**Key words:** Parental Involvement; Elementary schools; Teachers' perceptions

The relationship between school and parents has been a debated issue in the last three decades and has yet to be resolved. This relationship is characterized by a combination of expectations and hopes, both of the parents and of the teachers, but it also involves a degree of conflict that cannot be dismissed lightly (Friedman, 2011). Teachers' tendency to have a positive attitude regarding this relationship is typical of society and Western democracies in general, and of Jewish teachers in Israel, specifically (Fisher, 2011). However, very little has been written about the manner in which this relationship is perceived by teachers in the Arab sector Israel. Not only has this issue been overlooked for the most part in the Arab sector, no comparison between the Jewish and Arab sectors has been conducted, to date. The Israeli Ministry of Education attributes great importance to the strengthening of the relationship between school and parents in both the Arab and Jewish education sectors, and indeed has stated that parents are considered full partners in the educational process by means of Director General Code of Bylaws (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005, 2010). Hence, it is important to understand the attitudes of the teachers and design a policy accordingly. The assumption that there are conceptual differences between the two sectors is based on the understanding that teachers' beliefs and perceptions, much like many other processes, are influenced by prior learning experience and cultural background (Farr, 2010).

The teaching and learning processes of Jewish and Arab (both Christian, Muslim, and Druze) teachers are based on their attitudes towards the cultural background in which they were raised, particularly when it comes to the continuum between individualism and collectivism.

Jewish teachers have been found to be closer to the individualist end of the spectrum, whereas Muslim Arab teachers were characterized as closer to the collectivist end of the spectrum, and Druze teachers were found in between the two sectors (Eilam, 2003). A number of studies have shown that Arab teachers who studied in teacher education colleges with a mixed population which included Jewish students, underwent a democratization process and experienced Western-style teacher training over the course of their studies. Nevertheless, when they returned to teach in schools in the Arab sector, they also returned to teach according to the cultural norms with which they had been raised (Eilam, 2002, 2003). Once the training was completed and as they began to teach in schools, Muslim Arab teachers who had been exposed to educational models associated with the Western democratic world found that they felt conflicted, since the models that they had learned are partially rejected by traditional Arab society. Counter to the expectations of Jewish Israeli society that Arab teachers become agents of change within traditional Arab society, novice Arab teachers in their first year of teaching do not fulfill this mission (Toren, & Iliyan, 2013).

Based on the information presented, the current study it intends to examine similarities and differences between the two sectors regarding their perceptions of parental involvement.

### **Parental Involvement - Definition and Conceptualization**

Over the last two decades, public discussion of parental involvement has focused on its contribution to children's academic achievements (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Duch, 2005). However, many of the studies conducted were unable to explain the varying degrees of parents' involvement in the education of their children. The most problematic aspect has been the absence of a clear definition of the term *parental involvement*, and researchers have defined it according to their own perspectives and studies.

Various terms have been used to describe the relationship between family and school or other types of educational frameworks: relationship, involvement, involvement versus intervention, partnership, cooperation, integration, participation, and empowerment, to mention but a few. The professional literature has described parental involvement as including home behaviors as well as school behaviors. We can also find in the literature other similar dimensions: (a) the location of the family's activities, whether in the home or at school, and (b) the extent of the family's participation in school activities and policies. In regard to parental activity in the home, it is customary to refer to parents' involvement in preparing assignments, providing their children with encouragement and emotional support in issues related to their experience in the educational framework, creating a supportive environment even in situations of failure, monitoring homework, and supporting various academic activities. Regarding parental involvement that takes place within the educational framework, it is customary to refer to activities such as volunteering at school, providing assistance in the classroom, participating in decision-making processes, fundraising, and providing technical assistance (Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004; Smith, Woblstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011; Greenbaum & Fried, 2011).

However, in recent years, this assumption has changed and parental involvement in the home (i.e., discussing experiences that took place at school and helping children plan their school-related activities) is considered to be the more effective of the two types, in terms of students' academic achievements (Smith, Woblstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011). In all of these instances, the definition of *parental involvement* was suggested by one of the involved parties (i.e., teachers, parents, students, or policymakers).

The more traditional conceptualizations of the term refer to the parental activities, without distinguish of the location, such as helping their children do homework assignments and

frequently attending school functions (Domina, 2005; Epstien, 2002). Some define the term as a spectrum, whereby desired parental involvement can range from baking cakes for school events to supporting and operating self-managed schools. The more recent approaches suggest that parental involvement or parental engagement should refer to more subtle social variables, such as parental expectations and the quality of parent child communication (Jeynes, 2010; 2005).

In the past decade, there has been an attempt to approach parental involvement from the community perspective; this approach tends to replace the traditional term, “parental involvement” with the term “community–school relations” (Epstein, 2002; Schutz, 2006). However, as Schutz (2006) emphasized, perusal of the relevant literature demonstrates that a school-centric perspective persists and, in fact, the focus is mostly on the parents per se and not on the community in general.

Fisher (2011) recently attempted to define parental involvement as a concept based on the perceptions and thoughts of teachers, principals, parents, students, and policymakers. Findings reported that the concept of parental involvement at school is manifested in a wide array of 44 parental activities, related mostly to organizational approaches in the school and beyond school grounds. These activities can be active or passive and can pertain to the school as an organization or to the personal needs of the individual child. These activities are categorized according to four domains: parents' contribution to school resources (participation in committees, raising funds for a particular class or for the entire school, voluntary teaching, etc.); monitoring of processes at school (i.e., criticizing the curricula or the lessons or conducting surprise visits to class); involvement in the realm of pedagogy and lifestyle (attending parent-teacher meetings, questioning grades, or supporting a particular side of a debated issue); and activities related to the school's welfare (accompanying school trips, organizing school fairs, etc.). This type of definition actually encompasses several approaches: the approach that focuses on the location of the activities of involved parents, i.e., activities at home, at school and those related to the relationship between community and school (Smith et al., 2011); the approach that emphasizes the activity itself (Lee & Bowen, 2006; and the approach that emphasizes the initiator of the activities; specifically, activities initiated by the educational framework are referred to as co-optation and management, while a mutual relationship between parents and the educational framework is viewed as engagement and coalition (Smrekar, Cohen-Vogel, & Lee, 2010).

### **Parental Involvement in the Arab Education System**

Very few studies have examined the issue of Arab parents' involvement in Israeli schools (Bishara & Shachar, 2008; Majadla, 2005). The common conclusion from these studies indicates a low level of parental involvement in the Arab education framework in Israel, which is in complete contrast to the situation in the Jewish educational sector (Bishara, & Shachar, 2008), although the level of involvement in the former has been increasing over the last decade. Based on the few studies conducted on the subject of parental involvement in the Arab sector in Israel, it appears that parents consider the school responsible for the educational aspects, i.e., students' academic achievements. The recent increase in parental involvement is due to several factors. First, parents put greater emphasis on their children's academic achievements, as they consider education to be an instrument that can lead to socioeconomic improvements on both the individual and the collective level (Abu-Asbah, 2005; Arar & Abu-Asbah, 2007). Furthermore, the increase in the level of parental involvement in the Arab sector is related also to social and cultural changes that the Arab population is undergoing in Israel, and the adoption of democratic values, as a result of the interaction with Jewish society, which is characterized by Western values. An increasingly strong criticism of the Arab education

system is also due to the students' poor results on international and local examinations as well as on higher education institutes' entrance examinations. An additional factor of course is an increase in the level of education of the parents (Abu-Asbah, 2007).

Despite Arab society's transition from a traditional to a more modern society, a transition characterized by a rise in the population's education level (Abu-Asbah, 2005, 2007) and the adoption of democratic values (Arar & Rigbi, 2009), the anti-democratic authoritarian culture still dominates in Arab schools, due to the sociocultural milieu in which the Arab schools function (Majadla, 2005). Organizational culture in Arab schools deters Arab parents from becoming involved and participating in the management of the school, and they make do by observing from the sidelines. Although parents' increased awareness of goings-on at school is apparently encouraged to a certain degree, this involvement is limited to the level of information sharing (Majadla, 2005). Another possible explanation for the low levels of parental involvement in this sector is the high social and professional status attributed to teachers. Parents view teachers as the highest source of knowledge and educational authority: consequently, they avoid getting practically involved in the education of their children or the educational management of the school, due to the view that teachers are the ones best suited to carry out these functions. Parents' lack of conviction regarding their right to be involved is yet another factor that contributes to the current scenario, and it is likely coupled with the fear that if they do become involved, in the end they might lose face if they do not manage to attain their goals (Bishara & Shachar, 2008).

The web of relationships between the Arab school and the parents is characterized by a significant social distance. In other words, parents are aware of what takes place in the school, yet they refrain from participating in its pedagogical or educational management (Majadla, 2005). This pattern of cooperation coincides with the category of "informed parents" (Fisher & Friedman, 2009). The great social distance between school and parents in the Arab sector is detrimental to the children's education, particularly since this distance increases teachers' sense of frustration and leads to a decline in the students' achievement levels (Friedman, Horowitz, & Shaliv, 1988). Additional evidence of the detrimental effect of the distance between the parents and the school on students' achievements was demonstrated in the study of Bishara and Shachar (2008), which examined factors that affect a school's efficiency and included the measure of parental involvement in the Israeli Arab and Jewish sectors on students' achievements.

Arab schools generally refrain from involving parents in the professional and pedagogical issues, since they perceive this type of involvement as undermining and invading their professional territory; nevertheless, Arab schools demonstrate an openness towards parents and invite them to share in activities related to the condition of the school facilities. Yet the lack of openness of Arab schools towards parents in other matters creates a sense of unrest, which characterizes the relationship between the two parties, especially due to the importance attributed by parents to the education and academic achievements of their children. It appears that parents and children from the Arab sector attribute a great deal of importance not only to the academic achievements, but also to the prominence of homework assignments as part of these achievements. Arab parents were found to be more involved than their Jewish counterparts were in helping their children in everything related to the homework assignment (Kashti, 2011).

Demographic characteristics of parents from the Arab sector have an effect on their level of involvement. It has been shown that urban parents are more involved in their children's education than parents from rural areas. In addition, parents from a high socioeconomic level were also found to be more involved in their children's education than parents from the low-

or middle class socioeconomic level. Finally, young parents (between the ages of 21 and 30) were found to be more involved in their children's education than were parents over 40 years old (Majadla, 2005).

The increased disparity between the Jewish and Arab education sectors in Israel is related to the degree of support the schools enjoy from the parents, as well as from local authorities, particularly since the schools themselves have become major players in determining their education budget (Swirski & Dagan-Buzaglo, 2009). These changes in the budget-allocation method did not help the Arab education sector escape its marginal status, especially since the majority of Arab towns are at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale. More than half of all Arab families (54.3%) live below the poverty line, and the unemployment percentage in this sector is much higher than in the Jewish sector: specifically, unemployment rates among men are 11% and 5.4% in the Arab and Jewish sectors, respectively, and unemployment rates among women are 18% and 5.8% in the Arab and Jewish sectors, respectively (Wolfson, 2012).

### **The Goals of the Study**

Two major goals were defined for this study. The first was to learn about differences between the perceptions of parental involvement among Israeli teachers in the Jewish and Arab education sectors, given that teachers' perceptions are based on their attitudes to the cultural background in which they were raised (Eilam, 2003). While more than a few studies have examined perceptions of parental involvement in the context of the Jewish education sector in Israel, very little is known about the teachers' perceptions regarding the same issue in the Arab sector.

The second goal of the study was to try and validate a comprehensive conceptualization of the perceptions of parental involvement. It is extremely important to create a broad conceptualization that is suitable to all, regardless of one's sectorial affiliation, because educational discourse that is based on common definitions is capable of developing processes for improving the education system.

The assumption of the current study was that differences would be found between the sectors in regard to teachers' perceptions of the components of parental involvement, because – as mentioned earlier – Arab teachers who trained in teacher education colleges that cater to both sectors indeed underwent a process of democratization and Western training; however, upon their return to teach in Arab schools, they also returned to the behaviors characteristic of the culture in which they grew up (Eilam, 2002, 2003). Nonetheless, given the absence of prior studies comparing the two sectors in Israel, the assumption regarding expected differences should be considered exploratory --for the most part. Given that the composition of the Arab population in Israel differs from that of Arab societies in other parts of the world, findings from studies that focused on other Arab populations could not serve as a basis for the assumptions of the current study.

## METHOD

### The Sample

Participants included 639 teachers from both sectors: the distribution of participants' background variables is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Research Population**

Demographic Variable	Characteristic	Arab Sector	Jewish Sector	The Entire Sample
Gender	Male	(121) 37.8%	(23) 7.2%	(144) 23.2%
	Female	(199) 62.2%	(296) 7.2%	(495) 77.4%
Age	20-30	(99) 30.9%	(50) 15.7%	(149) 23.5%
	31-40	(129) 40.3%	(118) 37%	(247) 39%
	41-55	(79) 24.7%	(129) 40.4%	(208) 33%
	56 or older	(7) 2.1%	(19) 6%	(26) 4.1%
	no data	(6) 1.9%	(3) 0.9%	(9) 0.4%
	Education	Undergraduate	(222) 69%	(235) 73%
	Master's	(74) 23.3%	(71) 22.3%	(145) 22.7%
	PhD	(3) 0.9%	(2) 1.3%	(5) 0.8%
	Other <sup>2</sup>	(21) 6.8%	(5) 1.6%	(26) 4.1%
	No data		(6) 1.8%	(6) 0.9%
Number of Students Attending	400-700	(165) 51.6%	(314) 98.4%	(479) 75%
	701-1000	(77) 24%		(77) 12%
	1001 or more	(30) 9.4%		(30) 4.7%
	No data	(48) 15%	(5) 1.6%	(53) 8.3%
Years of Teaching Experience	First year	(9) 2.8%	(17) 5.37%	(26) 4.1%
	2-5	(59) 18.4%	(56) 17.6%	(115) 18.2%
	6-10	(89) 27.8%	(46) 14.4%	(135) 21.3%
	11 or more	(157) 51%	(199) 62.4%	(356) 56.2%
	No data		(1) 0.3%	(1) 0.2%
Role at School	Discipline teacher	(152) 47.5%	(119) 37.3%	(271) 42.8%
	Homeroom teacher	(65) 20.3%	(111) 34.8%	(176) 27.8%
	Homeroom teacher + principal	(62) 19.4%	(86) 27%	(148) 23.4%
		(3) 0.9%	(1) 0.3%	(4) 0.6%
		(38) 11.9%	(2) 0.6%	(40) 5.4%
Management Team Members	Yes	(60) 18.7%	(88) 27.6%	(148) 23.2%
	No	(233) 72.8%	(231) 72.4%	(464) 73.6%
	No data	(21) 6.5%		(27) 3.2%
Sector		(n = 320) 49.6%	(n = 319) 50.4%	

<sup>2</sup> Senior teacher; teaching license without an academic degree

### Research Tool

The research tool used was a questionnaire titled "Questionnaire for Measuring Teachers' Attitudes regarding Parents' Relationship with the School". Participants received the following explanation:

*In the questionnaire, you will find statements describing the relationship between school and the parents. You are requested to indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the statements. Read each statement carefully and circle the number that best reflects the degree to which you agree with the statement, where number five indicates a very strong agreement and the number one indicates complete disagreement with the statement. We wish to emphasize that these statements do not refer to the actual situation as it exists, but rather to the degree to which you feel that the statement coincides with your understanding of the concept of parental involvement.*



There were 44 items on the questionnaire, which had been formulated and conceptualized in an earlier study (Fisher, 2011) that used facet theory (Guttman, 1959). Facet theory is the approach in social sciences that combines study design and data analysis (Levy, 1994; Shye & Elizur, 1994). In the earlier study, facet theory was selected as the methodological approach due to its advantages for the conceptualization of phenomena. An additional study (Kostelitz, 2013) tested the tool with a sample of 319 elementary-school Israeli teachers and found a high reliability rate of .91 Cronbach's alpha, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was also conducted. Thus, this questionnaire served as the major research tool in the current study. Following statistical processes and the elimination of items according to accepted norms, 43 items remained, which together explained 44.23% of the variance (see Table 2).

**The Structure of the Components as Found in the Study by Kostelitz (2013)**

**Table 2. Structure of Components of Parental Involvement Scale**

Item #	Item Content	1 <sup>st</sup> Factor Loading	2nd Factor Loading	3 <sup>rd</sup> Factor Loading
<b>Factor 1: Pedagogy (14 items; Eigenvalue = 10.612; Explained Variance: 24.12%; <math>\alpha = .88</math>)</b>				
31	Aware of violence-related problems	.32	.62	.18
39	Helps child prepare for exams	.07	.81	-.01
36	Helps with homework assignments	.11	.80	-.03
37	Reviews child's notebooks	.02	.75	.01
42	Reviews exams that have been graded by teacher	.08	.72	.11
38	Involved in handling disciplinary problems	.12	.69	.11
41	Involved when child contests a grade	.04	.64	.36
29	Familiar with the curricula	.21	.53	.30
27	Acquainted with teaching staff and homeroom teacher	.34	.52	.22
40	supports the child in a disagreement with the teacher	.01	.56	.35
28	familiar with child's social activities at school and at home	.47	.54	.19
30	Familiar with the population components in the child's class	.16	.48	.35
26	Understands classroom social dynamics	-.16	.23	.13
33	Familiar with decisions made by the members of the school staff	.26	.35	.35

To enable basic sectorial comparison, the questionnaire was adjusted to match the Arab sector, by eliminating the question that refers to the acceptance of new immigrants, a topic that is not relevant to this sector, and by changing two items related to personal background demographics. Optional answers to the question regarding the school in which the participants teach included state-funded Jewish religious or secular elementary schools, as well as state-funded Jewish religious or secular schools spanning grades one through eight. In the Arab sector, all participants were recruited from public elementary or middle schools, and the sample did not include teachers from private schools. Given that responses to this item were different a priori, it was decided that this information would be excluded from the analysis. The questionnaire intended for teachers in the Arab sector contained an additional question pertaining to the school's geographic location (northern, central, or southern part of the

country). This item seemed relevant to this sector; in contrast, previous studies conducted in the Jewish educational sector, which found no relationship between the geographic area of residence and the perceptions of parental involvement (Fisher, 2011; Friedman & Fisher, 2003; Fisher & Friedman, 2002), indicated that this questionnaire item would not be relevant to the Jewish sector. Hence, data pertaining to this item were not included in the analyses. The background variables examined in this study are presented in Table 1. The final version of the questionnaire included 42 items related to perceptions of parental involvement and seven additional items related to participants' background variables.

### **Research Procedure**

The study was conducted in two stages, both of which took place during the school year of 2012. In the first stage, the questionnaire was distributed among elementary-school teachers in the Israeli Jewish sector, and in the second stage it was distributed among teachers in the Israeli Arab sector. The distribution of questionnaires in the Jewish sector was part of a study that examined the relationship between teachers' perceptions of parental involvement and their sense of self-efficacy (Kostelitz, 2013). For the purpose of the current study, only the data relevant to teachers' perceptions of parental involvement were used. Given that findings of the previous study indicated a high rate of reliability for the parental involvement scale ( $\alpha = .91$ ), it was decided that the questionnaire would be distributed also to elementary-school teachers in the Arab education sector. To this end, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic by one of the researchers participating in the current study.

The research assistant contacted in both sectors each of the school's principals and coordinated the date and time for questionnaire distribution. The questionnaires were handed out during teachers' meetings and were collected immediately thereafter. The purposes of the research were explained, and confidentiality was ensured.

In the Jewish sector, 319 questionnaires were distributed and returned; in the Arab sector, 400 questionnaires were distributed and 320 (80% response rate) were returned. A total of 639 completed questionnaires were obtained.

### **Statistical Analyses**

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted structural equation modeling (SEM), with the AMOS 18 software program. These methods are powerful statistical tools for examining the relationships between latent constructs, and test a priori hypotheses regarding relationships between observed and latent variables. This methodology takes a confirmatory approach to the analysis of data (Byrne, 2001; Jackson, Gillaspay & Purc-Stephenson, 2009). Given that CFA is part of the larger family of SEM, it usually plays an essential role in evaluating the measurement model before a structural analysis is conducted. Structural analysis is then used for specifying and estimating models of linear relationships between both observed and latent variables (Jackson et al., 2009; MacCallum & Austin, 2000). When conducting SEM, the analysis produces an estimated population covariance matrix based on the model specified. A key function of SEM is to assess whether the model produces an estimated matrix consistent with the sample matrix (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). This consistency is investigated through various measurement indices of Goodness of Fit. If the Goodness of Fit is adequate, it supports the plausibility of the model specified. Different measures of fit are available and are assessed through different indices such as Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), as well as chi square test-statistics. For the CFI, IFI, and TLI indices, values greater than .90 are typically considered acceptable, whereas values greater than .95 indicate a good fit to the data (Byrne 2001; Hu & Bentler, 1999). For well-specified models, an RMSEA of .06 or less indicates a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The data were initially screened for univariate and multivariate normality and outliers, using SPSS 18 and AMOS 18. The data set contained missing data that were assumed to be missing completely at random. As some of the features in AMOS would not be available with missing data, analyses initially used an imputed data set. The imputation of missing data was conducted using AMOS's integrated function, which creates a new dataset with complete data. This regression imputation uses linear regression to predict the unobserved values for each case, as a linear combination of the observed values for that same case. Predicted values are then plugged in for the missing values (Arbuckle, 2009). The results in the present study are based on the original dataset with missing data, which showed more or less identical results compared to the imputed set. When AMOS 18 is confronted with missing data, the software performs a state-of-the-art estimation using full information maximum likelihood, instead of relying on ad hoc methods, such as list- or pair-wise deletion (Arbuckle, 2009).

## RESULTS

The following results are based on a previous study (Kostelitz, 2013), which conducted an EFA in the context of Israeli Jewish teachers. That study provided the basis for the analysis of the current study's findings. The findings are presented in two stages. The first stage presents the findings that indicate differences between the perceptions of teacher's in the Jewish and the Arab sectors regarding parental involvement; the second stage presents the findings obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis of the entire sample and of each sector separately.

### **Sectorial Differences in Teachers' Perception of Parental Involvement**

The differences between the perceptions of teachers from the Jewish sector ( $N = 319$ ) and those of teachers from the Arab sector ( $N = 320$ ) regarding parental involvement were analyzed according to the following components identified by means of CFA: involvement in pedagogy, resources, and control. For the purpose of comparison, a one-way MANOVA test was conducted. Analysis indicated a simultaneous and significant sectorial difference [ $F(3,629) = 114.79, P < .001; \eta^2 = .35$ ]. In other words, teachers from the Arab sector demonstrated a stronger perception of these components ( $M = 3.26, SD = .59$ ) than did the teachers from the Jewish sector ( $M = 2.98, SD = .57$ ). A one-way ANOVA, which was intended to examine the source of the differences, found significant differences in pedagogy [ $F(1,631) = 11.56, P < .001; \eta^2 = .03$ ], resources [ $F(1,631) = 5.87, P < .001; \eta^2 = .02$ ], and control [ $F(1,631) = 110.40, P < .001; \eta^2 = .28$ ]. In other words, teachers from the Arab sector ranked items related pedagogy higher ( $M = 3.42, SD = .77$ ) than did teachers from the Jewish sector ( $M = 3.15, SD = .87$ ). In addition, teachers from the Arab sector ranked the components related to monitoring higher ( $M = 2.72, SD = .68$ ) than did teachers from the Jewish sector ( $M = 1.89, SD = .65$ ). However, teachers from the Jewish sector ranked items related to resources higher ( $M = 3.75, SD = .69$ ) than did teachers from the Arab sector ( $M = 3.56, SD = .70$ ).

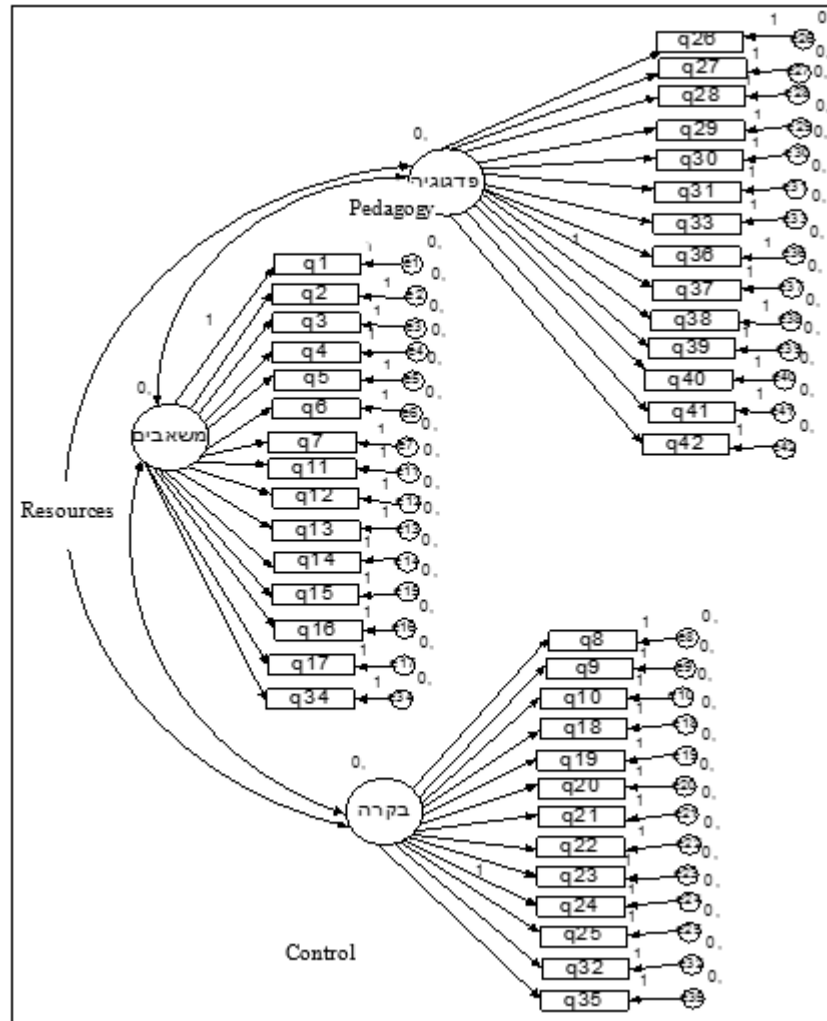
### **Results from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Following the findings from the analysis of variance which indicated significant differences between the sectors' perceptions of the components of parental involvement, it was decided to examine the internal reliability of the structure of the questionnaire, by conducting CFA regarding teachers from the Jewish sector, teachers from the Arab sector, and for the entire sample. This examination was conducted using SEM<sup>1</sup>. Typically, the AMOS model contains two parts: a measurement model and a structural model. In the current study, only the measurement model was examined, as it enables an assessment of CFA. This model categorizes the component factors of the latent variables in terms of the measured manifest variables. The

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed description of SEM is presented in the methodology section under Statistical Analyses.

three latent variables examined in this study were pedagogy, resources, and control, each of which consisted of 13 – 15 statements, which were the manifest variables. The model is based on a calculation of correlation matrices among the manifest variables, thus providing an expression of convergent validity of the manifest variables. If correlation between items that represent a single latent variable are higher than the correlations with items representing other variables in the model, then the measurement model is said to have construct validity. In other words, the factor analysis is confirmed. Figure 1 presents the confirmatory factor analysis of the entire sample.



**Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis “Perception of Parental Involvement”**

As mentioned, a major issue in the analysis and assessment of the SEM is the size of the sample on which the analysis of choice is to be conducted. The importance of this feature is due to the fact that the likelihood ratio test of  $\chi^2$ , which examines the model's fit with the data, is sensitive to sample size and requires an acceptable size sample in order to be considered a valid statistical test. If the size of the sample is too small,  $\chi^2$  could indicate a good fit between the model and the data even if the model is devoid of any theoretical significance. Likewise, if the size of the sample is very large, also a "good" model will be rejected; hence, the efficacy of using this test also with a very large sample is questionable (Hoyle & Panter, 1995; Kline, 2005). A more reliable measure is  $\chi^2 / df^2$  (Normed  $\chi^2$ ), for which a value smaller than three ( $< 3$ ) is considered a good fit. In addition to this measure, there are three other measures (see section on Statistical Analyses) that assess the fit between the model and the data: RMSEA , NFI, and

CFI (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). A RMSEA value  $\leq .05$  indicates a close fit; a value  $\geq .08$  indicates a structural error, and a value  $> 1$  indicates the model should be rejected. The closer the NFI and the CFI values are to one, the better the fit (Bentler, 1992; Byrne, 1989; Hoyle & Panter, 1995). Table 3 presents the measures of fit (per sector) obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis of the "parental involvement" questionnaire.

**Table 3. Measures of Fit for the CFA of the Perceptions of Parental Involvement Scale**

Measures of Fit	Teachers from the Arab Sector (N=314)	Teachers from the Jewish Sector (N=319)	The Entire Sample (N=633)
/df2 $\chi^2$	1.980	1.652	2.347
CFI	.899	.942	.936
NFI	.822	.871	.896
RMSEA	.055	.045	.045

Findings presented in Table 3 suggest that in the Jewish sector, all three measures of fit RMSEA,  $\chi^2/df^2$  and CFI, indicated that the model was a good fit, yet the absolute measure of NFI was much smaller than one ( $< 1$ ), indicating that the model does not fit the data. A similar picture emerged regarding the Arab sector, with lower values for the CFI and NFI and higher values for the RMSEA and  $\chi^2/df^2$  measures, indicating a greater lack of fit of the model with the data. However, examining the model for the entire sample presented a different picture, whereby all the measures of fit indicated that the model for parental involvement provided a good fit for the research data. Therefore, we may conclude that the parental involvement questionnaire has structural validity. Table 4 presents the standard coefficient loadings ( $\lambda$ ) for the parental involvement model according to sector.

**Table 4. Standardized Loading Coefficients ( $\lambda$ ) of the Model for Validation of the Perceptions of Parental Involvement Scale**

The Latent Variable	Item #	The Manifest Variable	Standardized Coefficient Loadings( $\lambda$ )		
			The Entire Sample (N=639)	Teachers from the Arab Sector (N=320)	Teachers from the Jewish Sector (N=319)
Pedagogy	26	Understanding classroom social dynamics	0.74***	0.67***	0.74***
	27	Acquainted with the teaching staff	0.50***	0.46***	0.54***
	28	Informed regarding social activities	0.56***	0.55***	0.61***
	29	knowledge of the school curricula	0.56***	0.53***	0.58***
	30	Recognizing child's classmates	0.63***	0.60***	0.59***
	31	Awareness of violence-related problems	0.56***	0.44***	0.57***
	33	Being informed of decisions made by the school faculty	0.52***	0.19***	0.42***
	36	Providing assistance in homework assignments	0.46***	0.42***	0.49***
	37	Checking child's notebooks	0.43***	0.43***	0.45***

	38	Involvement in addressing discipline issues	0.58***	0.58***	0.57***
	39	Assistance in studying for exams	0.41***	0.45***	0.46***
	40	Supporting the child when confronting a teacher	0.56***	0.48***	0.56***
	41	Involved when child contests a grade	0.58***	0.53***	0.61***
	42	Review f graded tests	0.42***	0.55***	0.41***
Resources	1	Participating in class PTA	0.46***	0.40***	0.59***
	2	Participating in school PTA	0.56***	0.53***	0.61***
	3	Selecting the school	0.35***	0.23***	0.45***
	4	Accompanying class excursions	0.45***	0.38***	0.54***
	5	Organizing school fairs	0.48***	0.38***	0.62***
	6	Providing assistance at class parties	0.57***	0.55***	0.63***
	7	Attending parent-teacher meetings	0.46***	0.52***	0.39***
	11	Volunteer teaching	0.55***	0.58***	0.51***
	12	Conducting class activities	0.64***	0.65***	0.63***
	13	Class treasurer	0.72***	0.69***	0.74***
	14	Funding enrichment programs and special projects	0.56***	0.67***	0.50***
	15	Responsible for collecting school dues	0.60***	0.71***	0.55***
	16	Providing hands-on assistance in class or at school	0.65***	0.65***	0.64***
	17	Initiating informal activities	0.66***	0.61***	0.68***
	34	Meeting with the principal regarding school issues	0.47***	0.49***	0.49***
Control	8	Visiting the class during the school day	0.28***	0.10*	0.30***
	9	Visiting the school	0.26***	0.00	0.26***
	10	Expressing an opinion regarding the amount of homework assigned	0.33***	0.20***	0.39***
	18	Participating in pedagogical committees	0.51***	0.35***	0.55***
	19	Involvement in developing curricula	0.68***	0.54***	0.81***
	20	Criticizing the curricula in front of the management team	0.79***	0.71***	0.86***
	21	Hiring and firing of teachers	0.79***	0.80***	0.73***
	22	Hiring and firing of principals	0.99***	1.02***	0.88***
	23	Assigning teachers to their classes	0.65***	0.58***	0.66***
	24	Intervening in case of teacher's inappropriate behavior	1.03***	1.12***	0.99***
	25	Criticizing teachers' performance	0.86***	0.84***	0.85***
	32	Awareness of the class's scholastic achievements	0.40***	0.19***	0.42***
	35	Participating in decision-making processes	0.34***	0.36***	0.41***

An examination of Table 4 reveals that in the Jewish sector and in the entire sample, all of the items reflect the three theoretical concepts of the parental involvement model well, with the exception of the items "class visits" (item 8) and "school visits" (item 9) in the Arab sector. The coefficient loadings for these items indicate a lesser fit with the concept of control: however, it may be considered sufficient given that the analyzed model appears stable and representative of reality. As noted, information regarding these measures in the Arab education sector are far from frequent— for a variety of reasons (which are addressed in the discussion section), hence, the theoretical contribution of this research cannot be ignored, despite the low levels of coefficient loadings. In contrast, the standard coefficient loadings for the two items "hiring and firing of principals" (item 22) and "interferes in case of teacher's inappropriate behavior" (item 24) were the highest in each of the groupings (.88 and .99, respectively, in the Jewish sector, 1.02 and 1.12, respectively, in the Arab sector, and .99 and 1.03, respectively for the entire sample). The standardized coefficient loadings of the items for *parental involvement in pedagogy* in the Jewish sector ranged from .49 to .74, in the Arab sector from .19 to .67, and in the entire sample from .41 to .74, while item 26, "understanding social dynamics in the classroom" had the greatest validity. The standardized coefficient loadings of the items for *parental involvement related to resources* ranged from .59 to .74; in the Arab sector, from .23 to .71; and for the entire sample, from .35 to .72: while item 13 "responsibility for class funds" was the most valid. The standardized coefficient loadings of the items for *parental involvement in control* in the Jewish sector ranged from .26 to .99; in the Arab sector, from .00 to 1.12; and for the entire sample from .26 to 1.03; while item 24 "parental involvement regarding inappropriate behavior of teachers" was the most valid.

As regards the differential validity, correlations between latent variables for each sector and for the entire sample indicated sufficient differential validity. Table 5 presents correlations between the three factors of the questionnaire.

**Table 5. Correlations between the Three Dimensions of the Perceptions of Parental Involvement Scale**

	The Entire Sample		The Arab Sector		The Jewish Sector	
	Resources	Pedagogy	Resources	Pedagogy	Resources	Pedagogy
Pedagogy	0.38***		0.49***		0.39***	
Control	0.09**	0.50***	0.17***	0.37***	0.11*	0.55***

\* $P < .05$ , \*\* $P < .01$ , \*\*\* $P < .001$

In summary, standardized loading coefficients for the entire sample were at an appropriate standard level, more so than for each sector separately. In general, findings regarding the fit of the measurement model and the assessment of coefficient loadings of the manifest variables indicated that the confirmatory factor analysis substantiates the validity of the research questionnaire, and thus substantiates also the theoretical bases that guided the selection of variables in both sectors, suggesting that it is a good fit for the entire population.

## DISCUSSION

The main goals of the current study were to understand the differences between perceptions of parental involvement among teachers from the Jewish sector and from the Arab sector, and to validate a shared conceptualization of perceptions of parental involvement.

The findings of the study indicated an agreement across the Jewish and Arab sectors regarding the components of parental involvement. It appears that teachers from both sectors believe that parental involvement is comprised of 42 items, some of which indicate active roles while others indicate passive roles. These 42 items pertain to one of the following three major

dimensions of parental involvement: pedagogy, resources, and control. The agreement between the sectors suggests that Arab society in general and the Arab education system in particular are undergoing processes that bring the two sectors' traditional concepts regarding education closer together. Nevertheless, significant differences were found between the sectors regarding the internal structure of these dimensions.

Agreement on the components of parental involvement may enable a common discourse intended to examine ways to improve the connection between parents and schools, by referring to a common concept of parental involvement, which is clear to all parties (Fisher, 2011). Indeed, findings of the study suggests that regardless of the sector, teachers would act to increase cooperation with parents in areas which they consider to be of major importance.

Notwithstanding the overall agreement regarding the definition of parental involvement, it is important to emphasize sectorial differences related to the components of the dimensions and their importance. Understanding this difference may lead to a broad-based public discourse on education that could include both sectors. Findings indicate that the component of *control* had the most significant effect ( $\eta^2 = .28$ ), although more so in the Arab sector ( $M = 2.72$ ) than in the Jewish sector ( $M = 1.89$ ). This means that Arab teachers are beginning to see that parental involvement includes components such as expressing an opinion about the amount of homework assigned, criticizing the curriculum, and criticizing teachers' performance (see Table 2, which describes the structure of the components in the parental involvement scale). These findings suggest that Arab teachers are becoming more open towards parents and believe that parents can be involved in realms that these teachers would have found intolerable a mere decade ago (Bishara & Shachar, 2008). It is possible that this change pertains not only to the teachers, but also to the sphere of policy makers, who are appropriating perceptions from the Jewish society regarding parental involvement. However, it is important to remember that this study examines the perceptions of teachers and does not include the perceptions of parents.

The findings obtained from analysis of data related to Arab sector teachers may be explained as constituting a stage in a process of adjusting to the Jewish society's democratization processes. Jewish society in Israel expects Arab teachers to become agents of change within their traditional society (Toren, & Iliyan, 2013). There is indeed evidence that Arab society is transitioning from a traditional to a modern society (Ghanem, 2001). These processes allow opinions to be expressed freely and openly, even when they express disagreement and criticism, as they are based on reciprocity (Smrekar, Cohen-Vogel, & Lee, 2010). In seeking an explanation for this phenomenon, it may be assumed that Arab teachers, who are aware of the fact that parental involvement in the Jewish sector is much greater than in the Arab sector, seek to reduce this gap, by demonstrating greater openness and allowing parental involvement to encompass more spheres of activity. It is also possible that the interaction between Jewish and Arab teachers in the context of professional development or in institutes of higher education similarly contributes to a shift in perception. In addition, there is a trend towards privatization of education in the Arab sector. These private schools, which aim to provide a solution to the failures of the Arab public education system, are receptive to parental involvement and enable parents to act as partners. The result is that public schools feel the need to take similar steps to those initiated in the private schools, one of these steps being embracing parental involvement (Keidar, 2010).

It is interesting to note that also in pedagogical areas, such as involvement in contesting a grade, checking children's notebooks, and knowledge of the school curricula, there are signs of a change in the Arab sector, and indeed Arab teachers reported a higher degree of pedagogical parental involvement ( $M = 3.42$ ) than did the Jewish teachers ( $M = 3.15$ ). Although



the effect of this variable was small ( $\eta^2 = .03$ ), it merits attention and should be explained. These findings can be related to various factors, among them an increase in the level of education in Arab society over recent years (Mustafa & Arar, 2009), which has led to stringent criticism of the Arab education system. The criticism focuses mainly on the poor academic achievements of students, which are noticeably lower than those of students in the Jewish education sector (Abu-Asbah, 2007). We are witnessing a new emphasis on achievement in Arab society, as education is perceived as a means for socioeconomic mobility (Abu-Asbah, 2007; Mustafa & Arar, 2009), which also explains the increased criticism of the poor academic achievements. There is still a large gap between the poor academic achievements of students in the Arab sector and the higher level of achievements among students in the Jewish sector (Ministry of Education, 2013). If teachers in the Arab sector are prepared to open the school gates to parents (or at least they report such willingness), this should be considered a propitious point in time for empowering parents in the Arab sector, particularly since -- according to the teachers-- parents are demonstrating greater abilities than they did a decade ago. Policy makers in the education system should take this opportunity to develop tailored intervention programs, which can be implemented in the framework of routine parent-teacher conferences, to encourage parental involvement in pedagogy. Similar recommendations were made by studies that were conducted in other parts of the world and which focused on an Arab populations (Moosa, Karabenick, & Adams, 2001).

In contrast to the dimensions of *pedagogy* and *control*, in which all teachers reported high levels of parental involvement, in the dimension of *resources*, Jewish teachers reported higher levels of parental involvement ( $M = 3.75$ ) than did teachers from the Arab sector ( $M = 3.56$ ). Here too, it is important to note that the effect of this dimension was relatively small ( $\eta^2=.02$ ), yet it definitely merits attention. This finding may be explained on two levels, an overt level and a covert level. On the overt level, the Jewish population possesses more resources and therefore it is likely that teachers think that this population has a greater potential for contributing in this realm, either in fiscal terms, or by foregoing a day's work. Research conducted in Israel over the years (Fisher & Friedman, 2002, 2009; Friedman & Fisher 2003) demonstrates that in fact there is no relationship between parents' level of income and their level of involvement in school matters. However, given that the participants in this study were the teachers rather than the parents, their opinions are pertinent to the findings, but not necessarily to reality. On the covert level, there are two aspects to be considered. The first aspect is related to Jewish teachers' preferences regarding parental involvement. Teachers from the Jewish sector apparently still prefer parents to be involved in a role of "service providers", a position from which they pose no threat to the teachers' professional status in the school. Thus, teachers prefer that parents be involved in raising funds, organizing fairs, and assisting in class festivities. Of course, they would not state this publicly, since it is not politically correct in an era that favors parental involvement; yet, covertly, this is the picture that emerges. In contrast, among teachers in the Arab sector, feelings of discrimination and inequality take center stage when relating to resources for the school (Jabareen, 2006). Hence, despite changes in the level of education of teachers and parents in the Arab sector, the most prominent reaction harks back to the feelings associated with the suffering of discrimination. Arab teachers, who share these feelings, a priori expect little from parents in terms of contribution to school resources, due to the assumption that they do not have the means. Likewise, they assume that even if parents were able to contribute to school resources, their contribution would be negligible, given the conditions in the schools.

Findings from the CFA indicate clearly that according to the teachers' perceptions, the construct of the components that make up the concept of parental involvement includes the three dimensions of *pedagogy*, *resources*, and *control*. These findings demonstrate that Jewish

and Arab teachers agree on the concept and its components. When examining the broad array of 42 activities that comprise the concept of parental involvement, it appears that parents are likely to be involved in almost any area pertaining to school activities. The novelty of this finding is not only in delineating the construct of these activities, but also in presenting a perception that is multicultural, as demonstrated in the findings. In other words, regardless of any particular sector, parents are viewed as having an important role in the school's functioning. This does not mean that all parents need to or want to be involved; however, it does mean that if the parents and the school are interested in such involvement, they have plenty of room to do so and they can choose among many activities and dimensions in which they can establish involvement and partnership.

Despite the essential agreement about the components of parental involvement, there were some differences in the perceptions of teachers from the Arab and Jewish sectors. These differences can be perceived through the results of the correlation tests between the various components of each dimension, specifically, when a particular item correlates poorly with the rest of the items in the dimension (see Table 4). Although these differences are minor, they should be addressed. Thus, it was found that in the Arab sector, correlation of the item "being informed of decisions made by the school faculty" (item 33) was lower than in either the Jewish sector or in the entire sample ( $\lambda = 0.19$ ). This finding can be explained by the fact that management teams in Arab schools have not yet reached the stage in which they cooperate with parents on decision making. In schools in the Jewish sector, the online systems that teachers use to convey information have become pivotal to the schools' functioning. Through these programs and school website, the schools provide constant reports and information regarding student attendance, behaviors, and achievements, and offer constant updates regarding school-wide decisions. Taking advantage of such programs requires not only having access to the Internet, but also having the knowledge to utilize the programs and make the most of the advantages they offer. In Israel, 85% of mid-income residents have Internet connection, while among low income families only 55% have Internet connection. By contrast, less than 60% of the entire Arab sector in Israel has access to the Internet, compared to 70% or more among the veteran Jewish population (Dror & Gershon, 2012).

Another item that in the Arab sector was found to have lower correlation levels than in either the Jewish sector or in the entire sample was "selecting the school" (item 3) ( $\lambda = 0.23$ ). In the Jewish educational sector, several school districts are open to students from other districts, whereas in the Arab sector, there is almost no option to choose among schools. Therefore, it is not surprising that teachers from the Arab sector, who are not well-versed on the issue of parents selecting the school for their child, do not consider this to be an important aspect of parental involvement.

Also "conducting weekly visits to school" (item 9) ( $\lambda = 0.10$ ) exhibited a low level of correlation with the other items. It is possible that, despite parents' disappointment due to the gaps in academic achievements between the Jewish and Arab nation, Arab parents nevertheless respect teachers' professional status. Teachers sense this and consequently believe that parents' visits to the school and to the classroom are not necessarily directly related to parental involvement (Bishara, & Shachar, 2008). The item "awareness of peers' academic achievements" (item 32) also exhibited a low level of correlation with the remaining items ( $\lambda = 0.10$ ). Here too, a higher level of correlation would have been expected, particularly in light of the fact that parents in the Arab sector have demonstrated a growing awareness in recent years to the importance of academic achievements. Moreover, these parents also associate academic achievements with the completion of homework assignments (Kashti, 2011). Nevertheless, it is possible that although they are aware and make this connection, they

attribute this importance to their own child rather than to the population of Arab students in general.

In all other items, correlations were at a medium or high level among the populations of Jewish as well as Arab teachers. This finding indicates that Jewish and Arab teachers agree in general on the components of parental involvement. It is important to note in this context that there are aspects that both sectors consider to be of great importance. In the dimension of pedagogy, a high correlation was found on the topic of "understanding social dynamics in the classroom" (item 26) among the Jewish and the Arab teachers ( $r = .74$ ,  $r = .67$ , respectively). Teachers in both the Jewish and in the Arab sector indicated that they wanted parents involved in this aspect. It is possible that teachers believe that parents who are involved and understand social dynamics and relationships in an era noted for the increase in verbal and physical violence among students would be involved in helping to reduce and even eradicate violence. Teachers from both sectors also indicated that they consider "responsibility for class funds" (item 13) to be related to parental involvement ( $\lambda = 0.74$   $\cap$   $0.67 = \lambda$ , respectively). This can be easily explained, given that Director General Code of Bylaws clearly attributes this responsibility to the parents and indeed the Ministry of Education welcomes this type of parental involvement (Ministry of Education, 2005). The general policy indicated in the code of bylaws related to this issue evidently seeps down to the level of the school.

A relatively new realm of parental involvement that was highly correlated with the other items was "hiring and firing of teachers" (item 21). Arab teachers and Jewish teachers consider this to be one of the aspects of parental involvement ( $\lambda = 0.74$ ,  $\lambda = 0.67$ , respectively). This response seems to reflect a perspective that combines the teacher's role with the role of the parents. Is it possible that teachers would want parents to be involved in hiring and firing them? If so, what could be the reason? In the case of the current study, teachers are unionized (through a national teachers' association) and if the issue of their hiring and firing were to be dictated by parents, they would likely lose the advantage that the union affords them, namely, their job security. Hence, this finding is not easily interpreted. This statement may be an indication of social conformity, or it might reflect teachers' disappointment in the effectiveness of the teachers' associations, or their dissatisfaction with the incessant educational reforms introduced every other day; consequently, they may believe that placing the responsibility of their own hiring and firing in the hands of the parents, whose main interest is ensuring the success and contentment of the students, would only improve the situation.

The findings of this study enabled a cross-sectorial conceptualization of parental involvement, which makes it possible to use common terminology in a shared discourse, by creating a common language that is multicultural, and overcomes sectorial differences. It is important to remember that having a common language does not necessarily mean that gaps will be reduced; nevertheless, it is undoubtedly an important step towards this goal.

### **Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Studies**

This study had four major limitations:

- This sample included only elementary-school teachers. It is recommended that future studies broaden the sample to include also high-school teachers.
- The current study treated the Arab sector as a single homogenous population and did not separate between the various Arab communities in Israel, which include Christians, Muslims, Bedouins, Druze, and Circassians. Future studies should examine the question in regard to each of these communities within the Arab sector.
- The 42 activities that are included in the concept of parental involvement explained only 42% of the variance. An attempt should be made to identify additional activities, in

order to have broader terms with which to address this issue, which is a major concern among education systems in Israel and worldwide.

- The sample included only teachers. Future studies should broaden the sample to include also parents, as was done in the earlier studies that served as the basis for the current research. A broader sample would provide the basis for a broad enough conceptualization, viable for use by policymakers, parents, teachers, and even students.

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# Creationism and Evolutionism: A Theological, Scientific and Philosophical Discourse.

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## ABSTRACT

The issue of creation and evolution has been a major source of conflict between the Theologians who believe that the universe is the creative ability of God and that this creation is ex-nihilo. The ex-nihilism of the creation has also engendered series of argument among various interests, particularly among the scientists and Philosophers alike. This came as a result of the apparent contradictions observable in creation which calls for attention. It is in this regard that these various groups have arisen to either debunk or refute the creationist principle on the ground of its incoherent and illogical trends which do not ascertain the basic requirements for explaining the rationale behind observable difference in the universe which is believed to have been created by God. Consequently, the scientific and philosophical traditions seem to be disillusioned by the claim of the theologians with regard to creation. Hence, this paper attempts to explore the scientific, the philosophical and theological perspectives of the issue of creation and evolution with the view to ascertaining the veracity of their claims.

**Keywords:** Creationism, Evolutionism, Theological, Philosophical, Discourse

## INTRODUCTION

The creation–evolution controversy (also termed the creation vs. evolution debate or the origins debate) is a recurring theological and cultural-political dispute about the origins of the Earth, humanity, life, and the universe between those who espouse the validity and/or superiority of literal interpretations of creation story, and the proponents of evolution, backed by scientific consensus (Isaac, 2000). The dispute particularly involves the field of evolutionary biology, but also the fields of geology, palaeontology, thermodynamics, nuclear physics and cosmology. Though also present in Europe and elsewhere, and often portrayed as part of the culture wars, this debate is most prevalent in the United States (Andrew, 2009). The debate also focuses on issues such as the definition of science (and of what constitutes scientific research and evidence), science education (and whether the teaching of the scientific consensus view should be 'balanced' by also teaching fringe theories), free speech, separation of Church and State, and theology.

How did human life begin? How did the human race originate? These questions form the bedrock of the debate, which is as ancient as the pyramids or as recent as today's Punch Newspaper. According to Thieme, (1994) many scientists have promoted the hypothesis that life most likely started from molecules that formed DNA – like material which evolved into mankind. Our universe is thought to have begun as an infinitesimally small, infinitely hot, infinitely dense, something – a singularity. Where did it come from? We don't know. Why did it appear? We don't know. After its initial appearance, it apparently inflated (the Big Bang),

expanded and cooled, going from very, very small and very, very hot, to the size and the temperature of our current universe. It continues to expand and cool to this day and we are inside of it (Herzig and Simcox, 2005). They believed chemical elements spontaneously combined to produce a spark. Could life occur from a set of random circumstances where the mathematical probability is nil? Thieme, (1994) however maintained that the complexity and harmony of nature, the incredible precision and sophistication of the human mind and body demand a creator and Designer. Design and order reveal a first cause of life, an intelligence and Will behind the phenomenal process of the creation of all forms of biological life.

No scientist witnessed the creation of the universe or the origin of life. These beginnings lie outside the province of scientific observation and verification. Today's theories can be revised or destroyed by tomorrow's discoveries. Whenever hypothesis and conclusions cannot be verified, science degenerates into the realm of speculation. Scientific conclusions are no more valid than their premises (Isaac, 2000). If we exclude God, then the existence of the universe becomes an unsolvable mystery and our lives become meaningless. The very grandeur of creation displays the majestic glory and attributes of God, (Ps.91:1, Rom. 1:20). God is the creator; only He can accurately answer questions about the beginnings of the universe.

### HISTORY OF THE CONTROVERSY

The creation-evolution controversy originated from Europe and North America in the late eighteenth century when discoveries in geology led to various theories of an ancient earth, and fossils showing past extinctions prompted early ideas of evolution, notably *Lamarckism*. In England these ideas of continuing change were seen as a threat to the fixed social order, and were harshly repressed. Conditions eased, and in 1844 the controversial *Vestiges* popularised transmutation of species. The scientific establishment dismissed it scornfully and the Church of England reacted with fury, but many Unitarians, Quakers and Baptists opposed to the privileges of the Established church favoured its ideas of God acting through laws. The publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859 brought scientific credibility to evolution, and made it more respectable.

There was intense interest on the religious implications of Darwin's book, but the Church of England's attention was largely diverted by theological controversy over higher criticism set out in *Essays and Reviews* by liberal Christian authors, some of whom expressed support for Darwin, as did many nonconformists. The Reverend Charles Kingsley openly supported the idea of God working through evolution. However, many Christians were opposed to the idea and even some of Darwin's close friends and supporters including Charles Lyell and Asa Gray could not accept some of his ideas. Thomas Huxley, who strongly promoted Darwin's ideas while campaigning to end the dominance of science by the clergy, coined the term *agnostic* to describe his position that God's existence is unknowable, and Darwin also took this position, but evolution was also taken up by prominent atheists including Edward Aveling and Ludwig Büchner and criticised, in the words of one reviewer, as "tantamount to atheism" (Isaac, 2000). By the end of the 19th century, Roman Catholics guided by Pope Leo XIII accepted human evolution from animal ancestors while affirming that the human soul was directly created by God.

Creationists during this period were largely premillennialists, whose belief in Christ's return depended on a quasi-literal reading of the Bible. However, they were not as concerned about geology, freely granting scientists any time they needed before the Garden of Eden to account for scientific observations, such as fossils and geological findings. In the immediate post-Darwinian era, few scientists or clerics rejected the antiquity of the earth or the progressive nature of the fossil record. Likewise, few attached geological significance to the Biblical flood, unlike subsequent creationists. Evolutionary sceptics, creationist leaders and sceptical



scientists were usually willing either to adopt a figurative reading of the first chapter of Genesis, or to allow that the six days of creation were not necessarily 24-hour days.

### CREATIONISM: IN THE BEGINNING

*In the beginning {bereshith , בראשית} God {Elohim, אלהים} created {bara, ברא} the heavens and the earth {hashamayim we'et ha' eretz הארץ השמים ואת}. Gen.1:1.*

God the Holy Spirit succinctly announces the magnificent creation of the universe. Such a brief summary of the origin of the universe demands attention to every word for accurate interpretation. It was not God's intention in Gen.1:1 to provide a detailed account of how the universe came into existence, but merely to reveal sufficient information for man's understanding of God's power in creation. Exegetically, the Hebrew prepositional phrase *bereshith*, a combination of the Hebrew preposition *be*, meaning 'in,' and *reshith*, meaning 'beginning.' This term literally indicates, 'in the beginning which was not *the* beginning.' This was the beginning of the universe, but not the beginning of eternal God. [Ps.90:2].

The first phrase in the Gospel of John recalls the creation recorded in Gen.1:1.

*In the beginning {En ἀρχή, en arche} was {εἶ μί, eimi} the Word, and the Word was [eimi] with God, and the Word was [eimi] God. John 1:1.*

'Was' is a translation of the imperfect active indicative of the verb for existence, *eimi*, 'to be.' The imperfect tense describes continuous action in past time. The Holy Spirit used this tense in this verse to communicate that the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, pre-existed the creation of the universe. This thrice – repeated verb emphasizes the undiminished deity of Jesus Christ. *Bereshith* divides eternity past from the beginning of the universe. Prior to Gen.1:1, no universe existed; there was no matter, no energy, no time, nothing but the triune God and His angels. Verse one breach the barrier of eternity to proclaim the sudden origin of the universe. Six or seven days were not required for God to create the universe. God spoke and the universe instantly came into being (Thieme, 1994).

### THE ACTIVITY OF CREATION

Genesis chapters 1 and 2 contain four Hebrew verbs that depict God's activity of creating the original human life.

1. *{bara, ברא}* means 'to create,' to make something 'from nothing,' *ex nihilo* in Latin. *Bara* is found in three verses of Gen.1. Each usage reflects an essential creative act by God: He generated inorganic matter from no previously existing material when He created the heavens and earth (Gen.1:1). And He provided life to animals (Gen.1:21) and humans (Gen.1:27) where no life formerly existed.
2. Although Adam's human life was created from nothing, his body was *{yatsar, יצר}* 'formed' from dust, an already existing material. This refers to the divine formation of the male body as a biologically living organism. "Then the LORD God formed [*yatsar*] man [biological life] from the ground". (Gen.2:7a).

Biological life exists in all cells of the body and provides the functions necessary to sustain living material. Biological life is material and does not include a human soul, which is immaterial. Therefore biological life by itself is not human life. By comparison *bara* describes the life of humanity as a complete and unique creation which never before existed, 'created ... in the image of God.'

3. {*asah*, צָשָׂה}, used in Gen. 1:26, means 'to make' or manufacture something after a pattern. The pattern God followed in making man was Himself, 'in our image,' *betselem* {בְּצִלְמֵנוּ}, and 'likeness.'

### DARWIN AND THE EVOLUTION DEBACLE

Charles Darwin was born February 12, 1809, in Shrewsbury, England. His grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, was an evolutionist/naturalist, poet, and philosopher. His father, Robert, was a successful and wealthy physician. His mother died when he was eight. At one time Darwin considered entering the clergy of the Church of England. That path changed radically after he spent five years (1831–1836) sailing and exploring the variety of living creatures on the Galapagos Island off the coast of Ecuador (Krewson, 2005). In his autobiography, Darwin explained that at that time, he wrestled with the presence of evil in a world created by God:

*There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice (Herzig, 2005, p. 17)*

It is instructive to note that Darwin was introduced to Charles Lyell's work, *Principles of Geology*, at a critical time when his religious beliefs came into direct conflict with his expanding knowledge of science; he began to doubt the inerrancy of the Scripture:

*I had gradually come by this time, [i.e.1836 – 1839] to see that the Old Testament was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindoos or the beliefs of any Barbarian (Herzig, 2005, p. 18)*

During this Beagle expedition, Darwin began to write his theory of evolutionary change and the origin of species by a process of natural selection. It was then he wrote to his friend Joseph Hooker, arguably the most important British botanist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, "I am almost convinced... that species are not (it is like confessing a murder) immutable." Many say the "murder" was the murder of God (Herzig, 2005, p. 19). Herzig, while quoting Russell Grigg, said Darwin's son, Francis, 'recalled him saying, 'I never gave up Christianity until I was forty years of age.' Grigg continued, "and the death of his eldest daughter Annie from fever at this period of his life hammered the final nail in the coffin of his Christianity (Brentnall and Grigg, 2002). In a letter written in 1880 Darwin stated, "I am sorry to have to inform you that I do not believe in the Bible as a divine revelation, and therefore not in Jesus Christ as the son of God" (Herzig, 2005, p. 19). In 1871, his book, *Descent of Man* was published. There he argued that humans are no different from other forms of life and that we, too, evolved through natural selection.

### EVOLUTION THEOLOGY

Evolution teaches that the physical universe evolved from nothing at all by a kind of quantum leap from nothing into an infinitesimal particle of space – time. This primeval particle rapidly inflated and then exploded into the so – called Big Bang. From this the universe has been rapidly expanding ever since, somehow enabling stars and galaxies to form, then planets. On this earth planet, and perhaps others, non-living chemicals in the primeval seas somehow came to life as primitive reproducing cells. These developed into multicelled marine invertebrates, then into fish. Some of this fish became amphibian, and then turned into reptiles. One or more of the latter evolved into bird, while other reptiles were evolving into mammals. Finally, one mammalian line developed into primates, and some ape – like creature in this line became man. Thus, Darwin disclosed his god. In a letter to a friend he even named it and

capitalized it: "my deity [is] 'Natural Selection". As an old man in ill health, he wrote: ...I do not believe that there ever has been any revelation. As for a future life, every man must judge for himself between conflicting vague probabilities (Morris, 2002).The path that Darwin travelled is described in Romans 1:21 -23:

*Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four – footed animals and creeping things.*

### **CREATION SCIENCE**

As biologists grew more and more confident in evolution as the central defining principle of biology, American membership in churches favouring increasingly literal interpretations of scripture rose, with the Southern Baptist Convention and Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod outpacing all other denominations. With growth, these churches became better equipped to promulgate a creationist message, with their own colleges, schools, publishing houses, and broadcast media.

In 1961, the first major modern creationist book was published: Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb's *The Genesis Flood*. Morris and Whitcomb argued that creation was literally 6 days long, that humans lived concurrently with dinosaurs, and that God created each 'kind' of life individually. On the strength of this, Morris became a popular speaker, spreading anti-evolutionary ideas at fundamentalist churches, colleges, and conferences. Morris' Creation Science Research Centre (CSRC) rushed publication of biology text books that promoted creationism, and also published other books such as Kelly Segrave's sensational *Sons of God Return* that dealt with UFOlogy, flood geology, and demonology against Morris' objections. Ultimately, the CSRC broke up over a divide between sensationalism and a more intellectual approach, and Morris founded the Institute for Creation Research, which was promised to be controlled and operated by scientists. During this time, Morris and others who supported flood geology adopted the terms *scientific creationism* and *creation science*. The flood geologists effectively co-opted "the generic creationist label for their hyper literalist views"(Brentnall and Grigg, 2002).

### **CONTROVERSY IN RECENT TIMES**

The controversy continues to this day, with the mainstream scientific consensus on the origins and evolution of life challenged by creationist organizations and religious groups who desire to uphold some form of creationism --usually young earth creationism, creation science, old earth creationism or intelligent design--as an alternative (some of these group shall be discussed later). Most of these groups are explicitly Christians, and more than one sees the debate as part of the Christian mandate to evangelize. Some see science and religion as being diametrically opposed views which cannot be reconciled. More accommodating viewpoints, held by many mainstream churches and many scientists, consider science and religion to be separate categories of thought, which ask fundamentally different questions about reality and posit different avenues for investigating it. Public opinion in regards to the concepts of evolution, creationism, and intelligent design is fluctuating.

### **THE CREATION/EVOLUTION CONTINUUM IN CHRISTIAN CREATIONISM**

As mentioned earlier, Creationism is not without its own hiccups, several groups have arisen to champion the cause of evolution. This of course is not without individual colourations and sometimes outright ridiculousness. They are as follows:

### **Flat Earthers**

Flat Earthers believe that the earth is flat and is covered by a solid dome or firmament. Waters above the firmament were the source of Noah's flood. This belief is based on a literal reading of the Bible, such as references to the "four corners of the earth" and the "circle of the earth." Few people hold this extreme view, but some do.

### **Geocentrism**

Geocentrists accept a spherical earth but deny that the sun is the center of the solar system or that the earth moves. As with flat-earth views; the water of Noah's flood came from above a solid firmament. The basis for their belief is a literal reading of the Bible. "It is not an interpretation at all; it is what the words say."

### **Young-Earth Creationism**

Young Earth Creationists (YEC) claims a literal interpretation of the Bible as a basis for their beliefs. They believe that the earth is 6000 to 10,000 years old, that all life was created in six literal days, that death and decay came as a result of Adam & Eve's fall, and that geology must be interpreted in terms of Noah's Flood. However, they accept a spherical earth and heliocentric solar system. Young-Earth Creationists popularized the modern movement of scientific creationism by taking the ideas of George McCready Price, a Seventh Day Adventist, and publishing them in *The Genesis Flood* (Whitcomb & Morris, 1961). Young Earth Creationists (YEC) is probably the most influential brand of creationism today.

### **Omphalos**

The Omphalos argument, first expounded in a book of that name by Philip Henry Gosse (1857), argues that the universe was created young but with the appearance of age, indeed that an appearance of age is necessary. This position appears in some contemporary young earth creationist writing. For example, Whitcomb & Morris (1961: 232) argue that earth's original soils were created appearing old. The position is sometimes satirized by suggesting that the universe was created last week with only an appearance of older history.

### **Old Earth Creationism**

Old-Earth Creationists accept the evidence for an ancient earth but still believe that life was specially created by God, and they still base their beliefs on the Bible. There are a few different ways of accommodating their religion with science.

### **Gap Creationism (also known as Restitution Creationism)**

This view says that there was a long temporal gap between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2, with God recreating the world in 6 days after the gap. This allows both an ancient earth and a Biblical special creation.

### **Day-Age Creationism**

Day-age creationists interpret each day of creation as a long period of time, even thousands or millions of years. They see a parallel between the order of events presented in Genesis 1 and the order accepted by mainstream science. Day-Age Creationism was more popular than Gap Creationism in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

### **Progressive Creationism**

Progressive Creationism is the most common Old-Earth Creationism view today. It accepts most of modern physical science, even viewing the Big Bang as evidence of the creative power of God, but rejects much of modern biology. Progressive Creationists generally believe that God

created "kinds" of organisms sequentially, in the order seen in the fossil record, but say that the newer kinds are specially created, not genetically related to older kinds.

### **Intelligent Design Creationism**

Intelligent Design Creationism descended from Paley's argument that God's design could be seen in life (Paley, 1803). Modern IDC still makes appeals to the complexity of life and so varies little from the substance of Paley's argument, but the arguments have become far more technical, delving into microbiology and mathematical logic. In large part, Intelligent Design Creationism is used today as an umbrella anti-evolution position under which creationists of all flavours may unite in an attack on scientific methodology in general. A common tenet of IDC is that all beliefs about evolution equate to philosophical materialism.

### **Evolutionary Creationism**

Evolutionary Creationism differs from Theistic Evolution only in its theology, not in its science. It says that God operates not in the gaps, but that nature has no existence independent of His will. It allows interpretations consistent with both a literal Genesis and objective science, allowing, for example, that the events of creation occurred, but not in time as we know it, and that Adam was not the first biological human but the first spiritually aware one.

### **Theistic Evolution**

Theistic Evolution says that God creates through evolution. Theistic Evolutionists vary in beliefs about how much God intervenes in the process. It accepts most or all of modern science, but it invokes God for some things outside the realm of science, such as the creation of the human soul. This position is promoted by the Pope and taught at mainline Protestant seminaries.

### **Methodological/ Materialistic Evolution**

Materialistic Evolution differs from Theistic Evolution in saying that God does not actively interfere with evolution. It is not necessarily atheistic, though; many Materialistic Evolutionists believe that God created evolution, for example. Materialistic evolution may be divided into methodological and philosophical materialism. Methodological materialism limits itself to describing the natural world with natural causes; it says nothing at all about the supernatural, neither affirming nor denying its existence or its role in life.

### **Philosophical Materialistic Evolution**

Philosophical materialism says that the supernatural does not exist. It says that not only is evolution a natural process, but so is everything else.

### **Non-Christian Creationism**

There are some positions on origins which don't fit cleanly in the continuum given above. Nor are they based on religion (although the Raelian position is the basis for a religion). They have little influence, but they are worth noting as illustrations of the variety of beliefs which people hold.

- The Raelians believe that life was created by scientists from another planet. The scientists continue to visit earth and were mistaken for gods.
- Panspermia is the position that primitive life, in the form of bacteria or other microbes, was carried to earth from other star systems. Other life evolved from there.
- Catastrophic Evolution: This position says that evolution occurred suddenly, driven by extreme, planet-wide catastrophes.

## Arguments against Evolution

- Methods of dating the earth are inaccurate.
- Radioactive dating can't be calibrated.
- Receding moon would have been touching earth.
- All comets would have disintegrated after 10,000 years.
- 3000 years was time enough for all languages, religions to develop.
- The animals couldn't have distributed themselves all over the globe.

## Chaos and Complexity

- Life is too complex to have happened by chance.
- Complexity from simplicity
- Evolution violates the 2nd law of thermodynamics.
- The creation of matter or energy is not now taking place
- Various conceivable patterns fail to emerge
- The fundamental principle of evolution contradictory to established laws
- We have never seen any natural processes which result in a complexity increase.
- The great complexity of nature shows it was designed.
- There is no evidence of biological life anywhere else in the universe
- Odds too great

### WHAT DARWIN DID NOT KNOW

If Darwin could have foreseen coming scientific developments, he would have had good reason to be concerned that his theory might one day be proved wrong. In particular, Gregory Mendel had not yet established and published his work on the laws of heredity and genetics, which said that the characteristics of offspring are passed on from parents according to precise mathematical ratios and do not derive from chance random processes in what Darwin called "blending inheritance."

James Joules, R.J.E. Clausius and Lord Kelvin were only just developing the concepts of thermodynamics, the first law of which states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed (so the present universe could not have created itself), and the second law of which says that the universe is proceeding in a downward degenerating direction of increasing disorganisation (so things overall do not of themselves become more organized with time).

Louis Pasteur was just beginning his famous experiments, which showed that life (even microbial life) comes from life, not from non – life. The mathematical laws of probability, which show that the odds of life's occurring by chance are effectively zero, had not yet been applied to the theory of evolution. The fossil record had not yet been investigated sufficiently for palaeontologists to be able to say, as they now do, that chains of intermediate 'links' do not exist (Grigg, 2003).

### THE FOSSIL RECORD: NO SIGN OF INTERMEDIATE FORMS

The clearest evidence that the scenario suggested by the theory of evolution did not take place is the fossil record. According to the theory every living species has sprung from a predecessor, a previously existing species turned into something else in time and all species have come into being in this way. Had this been the case, then numerous intermediary species should have existed and lived within this long transformation period (Yahya, 1976).

For instance, some half – fish / half – reptiles should have lived in the past which had acquired some reptilian traits in addition to the fish traits they already had. Or there should have existed some reptile birds, which acquired some bird traits in addition to the reptilian traits they

already had. Since these would be in a transitional phase, they should be disabled, defective, crippled living beings. Evolutionists refer to these imaginary creatures, which they believe to have lived in the past, as “transitional forms”

If such animals had really existed, there should be millions and even billions of them in number and variety. More importantly the remains of these strange creatures should be present in the fossil record. In *The Origin of Species*, as quoted by Herzig & Simcox, (2005) Darwin explained:

*If my theory be true, numberless immediate varieties, linking most closely all of the species of the same group together must assuredly have existed ... Consequently, evidence of their former existence would be found only amongst fossil remains*

However, although evolutionists have been making strenuous efforts to find fossils since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century all over the world, no transitional forms have yet been uncovered. All the fossils unearthed in excavations showed that, contrary to the expectations of evolutionists, life appeared on earth all of a sudden and fully – formed. A famous British palaeontologist, Derek V. Ager, admits this fact, even though he is an evolutionist:

*The point emerges that if we examine the fossil record in details, whether at the level of order or species, we find – over and over again – not gradual evolution, but the sudden explosion of one group at the expense of another.(Yahya, 1976).*

This means that in the fossil record, all living species suddenly emerge as fully formed, without any intermediate forms in between. This is just the opposite of Darwin’s assumptions. Also, it is very strong evidence that living beings are created. The only explanation of a living species emerging suddenly and complete in every detail without any evolutionary ancestor can be that this species was created. This fact is admitted also by the widely known evolutionist biologist, Douglas Futuymas:

*Creation and evolution, between them, exhaust the possible explanations for the origin of living things. Organisms either appeared on the earth fully developed or they did not. If they did not, they must have developed from pre – existing species by some process of modification. If they did appear in a fully developed state, they must indeed have been created by some omnipotent intelligence (Yahya, 1976, p. 133).*

Fossils show that living beings emerged fully developed and in a perfect state on the earth. That means that ‘the origin of species’ is, contrary to Darwin’s supposition, not evolution but creation.

## CONCLUSION

The information we have presented so far shows us that the theory of evolution is a claim evidently at variance with scientific findings. There is no better way to conclude than to look at the Holy Scripture, and Job 38:4 – 40:2 succinctly concludes it all:

*38:4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. 5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? 6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof; 7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? 8 Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? 40:2 Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God let him answer it.*

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# Gender Differences in Digital Literacy Among Undergraduate Students of Faculty of Education, Kogi State University: Implications for E- Resources & Library Use

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates gender differences in the computer literacy levels among undergraduate students of Faculty of Education, Kogi State University, Anyigba. The study aimed at gender differences in digital literacy among undergraduates' students of a state university in North Central Zone of Nigeria considering digital literacy, years of computer experience, difference in number of hours of in use per week, gender difference in use of various software, relationship between computer use and experience, deviations among gender on application and problems encountered. The study employed descriptive survey to collect data. A total of 1300 students were enrolled in 1st and 2nd year, spread across the 12 programmes run in the 5 departments of the faculty. While, the demographic characteristics of the population revealed 720 (55.05%) male for both levels and 580 (44.05%) female undergraduate students for both levels. The sample size for male was 248 and 226 was for the female students using random and purposive techniques to select. Self-constructed, and structure questionnaires was used divided into 3 sections for data collection. Findings revealed that students with computer literacy were inclined to access and use of e-resources and e-library facilities better. Moreover, differences exist in digital/computer usage and software applications. Implications of these results on students' use of the e-resources and e-library were discussed. The study argues that although there is increased access to computers by way of the attainment of western education by more girls, there is still a noticeable gender difference in the use of computer among female students in the university. Recommendation was made to improve information literacy especially in computer literacy skills for undergraduate students.

**Keywords:** Digital literacy, gender difference, undergraduate students, faculty of education, Kogi State University, anyigba.

## INTRODUCTION

Kogi State University, Anyigba came into being when the Bill establishing the institution was signed into Law by His Excellency, Prince Abubakar Audu, in 1999. The University commenced academic activities in April 2000 with pioneer students that spread across the six faculties: Agriculture, Arts & Humanities, Law, Management Science, Natural Science and Social Sciences. Faculty of Education came on board with faculty of Medicine bringing the total number of faculties in Kogi State University to eight. Kogi State is one of the states in the North Central Geo-Political zone of Nigeria.

The issue of gender equity as far as access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) continues to be a topical subject not only at the universities all over the world but also in universities in Africa and in Nigeria in particular. This has been given impetus by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that espouse gender equality by the year 2015. The MDG Goal 3 emphasizes promoting gender equality and empowerment of women with specific targets to improve the education of women and girls (Development Gateway 2004). This declaration is made against the backdrop that access to and use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) remains extremely uneven between female and male in tertiary institutions especially in developing countries. Association of Africa Universities (AAU) Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya from 5th–12th February 2001 noted among others poor quality of students, paucity of contemporary programmes and gender inequality as some of the problems that were preoccupying the minds of educators and policy makers. It has been a concern that universities were producing graduates who are ill equipped for labour and productivity and consequently employers often re-trained staff, which is time-consuming and expensive exercise (Aduda 2001).

One of the recurring themes in the under-utilization of ICTs is the lack of relevant competencies for the females which is often cited as more affected than males. Aduda (2001) noted that the myriad problems afflicting university education in sub Saharan - Africa, were among others, lack of competencies, knowledge and skills on the part of students and that if these keys to working in a rapidly changing technological environment were not being addressed a good working and productivity future cannot be guarantee. Similarly, Daly (2003) pointed out that university education in most developing countries especially those in Africa have the following problems: technophobia, lack of prerequisite skills to manipulate new technology, and reluctance to switch from traditional methods of teaching to technology oriented approaches. Anuobi (2004) pointed out that man has scientifically placed himself in an environment that is global and digital, which predisposes him to constant use of information, its location notwithstanding.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Computer literacy has been a subject of educational research presently and this concept is defined as the knowledge and ability to use computers and related technologies efficiently, with a range of skills covering all levels from primary use of word processing to programming and trouble shooting for problem solving Lynch (1998). Computer or digital literacy can also be refer to the comfort level that someone has with using computers. It deals with the understanding of what computer is and how it can be used as a resource. Digital literacy may be utilized as a measure of quality of users 'work in technological environments and it provide scholars with a more effective means of communication in designing better user- oriented environments. Digitally literate people are those who can communicate and work more efficiently, especially with those who possess the same knowledge and skills and a digital citizen is any person who has the digital skills to interact with society meaningfully. Idowu, Adagunodo, and Idowu (2004) define computer literacy as the ability to make use of computer system from word processing documents, data analyses, and development of small computer programmes, browse the internet and installing of software programmes to the use of all kinds of packages and devices. The Department for Education in the United State of America (1996) citing Hall (2005) observes that information literate individuals in addition to knowing how to use the computer for word processing, spreadsheets and internet access make use of increased learning opportunities provided by such technology. Mitra (1998) on the other hand perceives computer literacy as the amount of computer knowledge acquired in the past and the length of computer usage. Similarly, Loyd and Gessard (1984) conceive computer literacy based on the

amount of the time spent on the computer, ownership of computer and number of computer related courses taken, while

Idowu, Adagunodo, and Idowu (2004) revealed that knowledge, skills and confidence with computer technology are now an asset for those entering the competitive employment market. They pointed out that every aspect of life from education, leisure, and work environment to social interactions is being influenced by digital or computer technology. Moreover, with the increasing use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education world over which is new demanding acquisition of new skills and competencies among students effective learning, studying and research. There are vast array of services that one can be currently find online. These services are constantly growing, some of which are of general nature, while others are specialized and are helpful to students such as reference information services on the Web, this include: blogging, social network, hobbies sites, shopping sites, current events and sites, e-books, e-mails, travels, databases (EBSCO, AJOL, SSRN, ERIC), and search engines news, weather, sports, movies, encyclopedias, cartoons and games among others. As an educational and entertainment tool, ICT can enable students learn virtually about any topic, visit sites that can help them in learning. Moreover, for students to exploit ICT resources, effectively, there is need to be equipped with the requisite digital literacy competencies.

Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (2002) in the United States noted that students who did not have access to computers and the internet (among other technologies) were likely to get further behind their peers who did have such access. Such deprived students would miss the instant links to information, entertainment, and communication. In addition, they would potentially miss out on the 70 percent of job opportunities that require moderate or high amounts of computer knowledge and literacy, all of which pay well and probably would end up in the 10 percent of low-paying jobs that do not require technical expertise (Linn 1999). With the increased use of ICT in society in general and schools in particular, it becomes imperative that students should be equipped with digital literacy competencies in order to exploit the web world of information resources that the electronic age engenders. The importance of computer literacy especially in higher education does not need to be over emphasized. The New York Times Company (2006) observed that in most places of business, a computer is a standard tool. Similarly, in the bank over the world today, computers are used to trace up account information. Furthermore in the increasingly automated library environments, users cannot find books by looking in a card catalog any longer in most of the developed world but must use a computerized database.

The point today is that no matter where one finds employment, there is a good chance that a computer will be a basic tool one will have to use and to be computer literate has added value to individuals in the society. it is of paramount importance now for students in institutions of learning to acquire and possess digital or computer skills and literacy in this new age. It is therefore in the best interests of students in the Education Faculty of Kogi State University to be computer literate both for job employment, entrepreneurships and in enriching their studies in their departments within the university campuses and at work place. Within higher education, computer literacy is being recognized as an important component of the curriculum, even in Kogi State University which has in the last seven years strived to put in place mechanisms that would enhance information literacy in general and digital literacy in particular aimed at enhancing the quality of learning processes, research and teaching.

The issue of equipping students with adequate digital literacy skills to prepare them for the increasingly digital environment has long been a concerned at Kogi State University. The introduction computer based examinations, digital center, computer center, electronic library and partly automated university library were ways to address such cross-cutting issues as

employers' expectations, competence in communication skills, computer and information literacy. All these provide opportunities for the university to enhance flexible learning anytime anywhere and at student's own pace and provide customized individual learning preferences. Furthermore, this is to enable students explore learning materials with more ease (multiple modes and multi-media); provide an easy means of finding, handling, and publishing electronic materials. It was also expected that through e-learning, access to relevant national and international resources would be facilitated. It is on record that efforts are being made to enhance digital literacy especially in higher institutions of learning all over the world but no deliberate efforts have been made to address the imbalance that exist between females and males, in spite of increasing documented research on gender imbalances.

In a study conducted by Enochsson (2005?) with an aim to investigate gender difference in computer literacy among undergraduate students of university of Botswana and the implications for using the increased computerized library resources. The study show that females react somewhat differently to computers and also have to deal with different conditions in society regarding these issues compared to their male counterparts. This study is related to the present study on investigating gender differences in computer literacy of University undergraduate students and the implications for using the increasing e- resources and computerized resources in a digital environment.

The progressive users are those who are ready for whatever it takes them to have more knowledge of computer. They spend their time and money to learn more about the technology. The high users are those who are well verse in computer technology. They know how it works and how it can be manipulated. The dependent users on the other hand, are those who don't know anything about computer and not making an attempt to learn it. They depend on those who know much about computer to help them out in case they have something to do on computer. Kay (1993) developed a practical multicomponent computer ability measure (CAS) comprising all four areas of computer use or sub-scale involving software ability, awareness, perceived control and programming skills. By and large, the vast majority of undergraduate students in universities in general world recognize the importance of computer literacy as the key for success in their personal and professional lives (Sanders and Morrisson-Shetlar 2001).

Fisher (2000) in an investigation of computer skills of teacher education students found that 86% of them classified themselves as experienced computer users or as having some knowledge of computer software applications. These figures were likely to increase in line with computer usage in schools and at home. Similarly, Kay (1993) in a study of computer literacy level of pre-service teachers reported that respondents rated themselves as having low knowledge and very low programming skills. Hignite and Echternacht (1992) also in similar study found that subjects tended to have a low literacy level, even though their attitudes towards computers were positive. Furst-Bowe et al. (1995) in related studies noted that computer literacy among academics in higher education showed considerable variation, yet it is assumed that all students will have a similar level of related skills on entering university. Furthermore, Furst-Bowe's study of computer literacy of students entering university reported that levels of computer literacy varied greatly amongst the respondents. Sweaney et al. (2001) recognized the need to be cautious in assuming that all students have had similar exposure to computers prior to entry into university education. Geissler and Horridge (1993) observe that variables such as computer experience, computer familiarity, computer use and computer ownership influenced self-reported levels of computer literacy.

Adekunimise, Ajala and Iyoro (2013) carried out a study with an aim to determine the internet access and usage by students: a case study of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria. The study reviewed literature on ICT and its importance in education and research. A description of

internet and its actual use by lecturers as well as the students were also reviewed. Data was obtained from two hundred students of the institution with the use of the questionnaire. Results showed that majority of the cybercafé around the university environment were privately owned and 32% of the respondents had skills in browsing the internet. Also the use of the internet has great benefits to the respondents in academic activities and research, doing assignments and preparing for examination. The study revealed problems and suggestions were made.

Bhatti and Hanif (2013) carried out a study to explore the growing effect of ICT on information usage pattern of the faculty members of social science at Bahauddin University Zakariya Multan. The findings revealed that internet has become a significant source for the faculty members and researchers as they use internet for education- purposes, research work and updating of knowledge. Google, Yahoo and MSN are widely used search engine and majority of the respondents do not use the Excite, Snake, Kapok and Alta Vista. Faculty members frequently use Science Direct to seek relevant information for their research. The problems include lack of internet facility, digitized materials and audio – visual materials are not provided in most departmental libraries of faculty of social sciences. The study suggests that information literacy programmes should be provided in every departmental library of faculty of social science. Professional staff should be recruited in the departmental libraries of social science. Internet service, information service, abstract and indexing service should be provided by the departmental libraries for maximum users' satisfaction.

Hazrati, H; Gavvani; and Ghornanian (2013) studied to determine information literacy competency of faculty members and postgraduate medical and para-medical students using medical information resources with an aim to recognize to what extent the medical and para medical postgraduate students and faculty members were able to use the variety of information resources. Descriptive analytical method was used with 80 faculty members and 80 para professional medical postgraduate students. Data collected using SPSS 116 and One Way ANOVA and independent t-test were applied. The result revealed that information literacy was classified into low, moderate and high. Majority of the faculty members had moderate literacy skills with 51% level, the para-professional medical students has a high level of 57% of literacy skills. The conclusion of the study was that literacy skills of faculty staff were low compared to that of the students.

### **GENDER AND COMPUTER LITERACY**

The term gender refers to the difference roles men and women play in society or community. These roles are determined by cultural, social and economic factors and difference within and between cultures and countries. Gender roles are different from sex difference in that sex differences are biological and for the most part unchangeable. Gender issue has become a widely discussed phenomena in higher education sector, how gender affect the use of electronic resources among researchers and students it is amazing how technology has offered opportunities for innovation for all, however it has been observed that not all e- learners have same approach to the use of ICT or digital resources. The level of ICT knowledge and use varies from one learner to other.

Vygotsky (1986) noted from a socio-cultural perspective that knowledge is constructed and developed through communication with the environment. Similarly, James and Prout (1997) citing Enochsson (2005) noted that gender together with childhood are seen as cultural constructions and participating children are treated as participating subjects and co-constructors of data Consequently, the word gender does not necessarily mean that there are inherent differences between female and male in terms of preferences for technology. If there are any differences, they are based on hierarchical structures within the culture of what is

suitable for boys and girls respectively (Johansson 2000; Walkerdine 1997). Kembler (1996) notes that Science and Technology is in no way separated from the cultural structures that treat women and girls unfairly compared to male counterparts. Evans (1994) observes that gender is a fundamental category for ordering and classifying social relations in the world.

Research has over the years shown that males dominate in the use of computer compared to women, Geissler and Horidge (1993). Similarly, even in situations where male and female are given equal access, men are more likely to be main computer user than women (Becker and Sterling 1987; Idowu, Adagunodo, and Idowu 2004). Traditionally, girls tend to be interested in computers, use them less often in their spare time and have more negative attitude towards computers (Barnert and Arbinger 1996; Brosnan 1998; Metz-Goeckel et al. 1991; Okebukola 1993; Shashaani 1994).

Consequently, the girls are often less computer literate than boys (Schaumburg 2001). Similarly, computer inexperience for female users has been cited as an important factor in determining their attitude and anxieties towards computers (Jenson 1999). As a result of the fact that men have a greater tendency to dominate available computer resources which is not being corrected, female have significantly lower experience levels than their male counterparts (Comber,1997). The literature on the imbalance of computer literacy of female compared to male (in favour of male) advance some ways of addressing the problem based on how each of the genders view the computer. Research indicates that male students are very interested in how technology works while female students tend to focus on how the technology is used (Silver 2001).

Teachers are reported to notice that boys seem happy to sit for hours with computers but end up playing computer games or messing around with the computer just to see what it can do. Girls, on the other hand, tend to want the computer to do something useful for them. This finding may suggest that girls will find the computer more attractive if it is presented as providing an easier or better way to do something they want or need to do (Silver 2001). To stimulate the interest of all students, Silver, suggested that, the context in which the computer is used should be relevant to their needs and interests. Its long-term usefulness in a variety of areas should be emphasized and connections to real world application made. Research has revealed the dominance of males in computer use and ownership (Miura 1997 cited in Idowu, Adagunodo, and Idowu 2004). Furthermore, studies that have examined the relationship between gender and computer attitude have reported that males tend to have more positive attitudes towards computers (Comber, 1997). Similarly, results of a computer competency test which included both theoretical and practical knowledge (Bain et al. 1991) showed that girls were slightly less competent than boys.

Jackson et al. (2001) in a comparison of female and male computer literacy competencies found that females reported more computer anxiety, less computer self-efficacy, and less favourable and less stereotypical computer attitude. A similar study by Francis and Katz (1998) further revealed that gender stereotyping of computer use as a domain did not affect female students' attitude towards computer. This finding seemed to be corroborated by Smith and Necessary (1996) who in a related study found that males had a higher level of computer literacy than females. The present study is set out to find out the situation in Kogi state University, Faculty of Education, Nigeria, the gender difference among undergraduate students on digital literacy and its implications for e- resources and library use.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to:

- Establish gender differences in digital literacy and years of experience.

- Determine gender difference in digital literacy and hours of computer use per week.
- Find out if there are gender differences in computer literacy in the use of various software application use of computer system.
- Relationship between digital literacy and experience
- Investigate the level of computer literacy affects use of library

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The study employed a descriptive survey method which affords the researcher an opportunity to describe the differences in computer literacy of the undergraduate students based on gender. The population of the study comprised of all 1<sup>st</sup> year and 2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate students spread across the 12 programmes run in the 5 departments in education faculty, Kogi State University, anyigba. A total of 1300 respondents and the demographic characteristics of the population revealed 720(55.05%) male in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year and 580(44.05%) female undergraduate students in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year levels. The sample size for the study was 248 male and 226 female students from the target levels. Data were collected using a self-constructed, structure questionnaires that was divided into 3 sections. Section 1 was to gather the bio-data of students, section 2 obtained data on digital literacy skills of the students while, section 3 focused on the software application use. A total of 248 copies for male and 226 for female were returned. Descriptive statistics using frequency, percentages mean, and standard deviation were used in analyzing data.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Table 1: Gender difference in computer literacy and computer experience**

Computer Experience/Year	Male	Female
0—1 year	100 (40.00%)	90 (39.08%)
2—3 years	53 (21.03%)	49 (22.0%)
4—5 years	47 (19.0%)	45 (20.0%)
6 years & above	48 (19.04%)	42 (18.06%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>226</b>

The study surveyed respondents generally between the ages of 18-24 years with a mean age of 21 years. Respondents were asked to state the lengths of their computer/digital experience. Table 1 reveal that male students in education faculty at Kogi State University are more computer literate and had more computer experience than their female counterpart and this suggest that gender difference exists in the computer literacy of Kogi State University undergraduates students in faculty of education as confirmed by the result of the mean and standard deviation analysis (eg X for male = 62; SD for male = 22.1 compared with female mean X= 56.5 and SD =19.5. This result corroborates with the findings by Idowu, Adagunodo, and Idowu (2004) in a study of Nigerian students at Obafemi Awolowo University Ile Ife, where male and female were given equal access, the study revealed that male students are more computer literate and were main computer users than the female. Jenson (1999) similarly pointed out that the computer inexperience of female is an important factor in determining their attitude and anxiety towards computer use.

**Table 2: Numbers of hours of computer use per week**

Computer Use/No of Hrs/Wk	Male	Female
1—4 hours	10 (04.0%)	110 (49.00%)
5—9 hours	45 (18.01%)	59 (26.01%)
10—14 hours	81 (32.07%)	40 (17.07%)
15 hours & above	112 (45.02%)	17 (7.05%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>226</b>

Respondents were asked to state the number of hours that they used computers in a week. The results generally show there are differences in the male and female number of hours spent using computer per week with male spending more hours than the female. While a considerable number of male students are spending more hours using the computer per week from 4 -15 and above hours as detailed in table 2, more female students are spending lesser hour between 1-2 hours per week.

The findings on the number of hours both male and female students spent using computers per week suggest a significant gender differences exist in the computer literacy among the respondents. The results indicate that male respondents spent more hours per week on computer compared to their female counterparts. The fact that results from similar studies have shown that male students tend to be very interested in how technology works, while female students focus is on how the technology is used perhaps can explain the reason for this finding. Additionally, it has been found that boys seem happy to sit for hours using computers though they largely end up playing computer games or messing around with a computer just to see what it can do. Comber (1997) noted that male students have more positive attitudes towards computers while Jackson et al. (2001) found that female reported more computer anxiety, less computer self-efficacy, less favorable and less stereotypical computer attitude. All these may prevent them from spending hours with the computers as men do.

**Table 3: Gender difference in computer applications usage**

Computer usage/ software application.	Male	Female
Word Processing	28 (11.03%)	40 (7.07%)
Internet Browsing	55 (22.02%)	46 (20.04%)
E-Mail	68 (27.04%)	49 (21.07%)
Games	29 (11.07%)	34 (15.04%)
Chat	22 (8.09%)	45 (20.00%)
Data Analysis	19 (7.07%)	2 (0.09%)
Programming	17 (6.09%)	2 (0.09%)
CorelDraw	11 (4.04%)	8 (3.05%)

Tables 3 indicate that there is marked significant gender difference in application use of computer by male and female subjects. Respondents were asked to indicate what computer applications they used and the overall results on the types of applications reveal that male student engage in applications like e-mail 68(27.04%) internet browsing 55( 22.2%), computer games 29(11.07%), word processing 28(11.01%) more than the female while data analysis, programming, and CorelDraw had low indications. The female do engage in chat and games more than their male counterparts. This result as well can be linked to the issue of fear and anxiety attributed with computer by the female subjects, and may be responsible for their lower engagement in using computer software and applications.

**Table 4: Descriptive statistics and correlation on computer use/experience**

Computer Experience	Male	Female
Mean	62	56.5
Standard Deviation	22.1	19.5
Computer usage/Hours spent	Male	Female
Mean	62	56.5
Standard Deviation	38.03	34.08

The results from the study were further analyzed using mean and standard deviation on computer experience, the mean for male revealed 62 while the female was 56.5. On the other hand, on computer experience, the standard deviation for male was 22.1 while the female was 19.5. As far as computer usage and hours spent per week were concerned, mean for male was



62 and for female 56.5. Similarly on computer usage and hours spent per week, the standard deviation for male was 38.03 while for female it was 34.08. The overall results depicted in table 4 shows generally a correlation and that gender difference exists in the computer literacy of the subjects based on their computer experience with the mean of male (X= 62; SD=22.1) compared to the female with (X=62; SD 19.5) and computer usage/ number of hours spent with males having (X= 62; SD= .38-03) compared with the female (X= 56-5 and SD = 34.08).

**Table 5: Mean/Standard Deviation for Application Use (Male/Female)**

Software & Applications Use	Male		Female	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
<b>Word Processing</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>5.00</b>	<b>5.08</b>
<b>Internet Browsing</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>6.00*</b>	3.07
<b>E-Mail</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>6.01*</b>	<b>2.07</b>
<b>Games</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>8.06</b>
<b>Chat</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>5.06</b>	<b>4.07</b>
<b>Data Analysis</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>-19.27</b>
<b>Programming</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>0.04</b>	-19.27
<b>Corel Draw</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>1.00</b>	-17.01

\*significant

The means and standard deviations on software and applications between male and female were also computed. The results in Table 5 generally show that male significantly use applications like Internet browsing, data analysis, programming and CorelDraw than the female while the female on the other hand use game and chat than the male. However, no gender difference exists in the use of word processing and e-mail.

The findings in Table 4 and 5 further confirmed the difference in computer experience and computer usage of the respondents as earlier revealed in Table 1 and 2. The confirmation reflects in the mean and the standard deviation computed. Table 4 shows that the mean and standard deviation of male is greater than that of the female on both computer experience and computer usage. This lends a good credence to the report by Bain et al. (1999) that girls were slightly less competent than boys in computer competency test. The lesser software or application use of computer as revealed in this study therefore can be attributed to the female subjects' lesser competency level.

**Table 6: Gender comparison on computer experience and hours use on computer**

Variables	No	Mean	SD
<b>Male Computer experience</b>	248	62	22.01
<b>Female Computer Experience</b>	226	56.5	19.05
<b>Male's hour spent on Computer</b>	248	62	38.03
<b>Female's hour spent on computer</b>	226	56.5	34.08

Having derived the mean and the standard deviation the results reveal that significant difference exists between students computer experience based on gender with the male students having more experience than the female (Male: Mean = 62, SD =22.01; Female: Mean 56.5, SD = 19.5). Furthermore, Table 6 indicates that significant difference exists in the hours spent on computer with the male again spending a considerable numbers of hours than their female counterpart (Male: Mean =62, SD =38.03; Female: Mean= 56.5, SD = 34.08).

**Table 7: Digital literacy and e-library use**

Item	Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Does your computer literacy enhance use of digital resources <b>and e-Library?</b>	<b>180 (72.05%)</b>	<b>68(27.04%)</b>	<b>95(42.03%)</b>	<b>131 (58.00%)</b>
With your present computer literacy level, were you able to use for example the e- library <b>digital center &amp; the Internet facilities</b>	<b>169(68.01%)</b>	<b>79 (31.09%)</b>	<b>88 (39.0%)</b>	<b>138 (61.06%)</b>

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether their level of computer literacy enhanced their digital resources and e-library use. Similarly, they were asked whether their computer literacy was sufficient for them to use the e- resources and Internet. The results show that 180 (72.05%) males felt that their literacy level affected their use of the library as compared 95 (42.03%) females who felt their computer literacy enhanced their library use. Similarly, 169 (68.01%) males as opposed to 88 (35.05%) females were able to use the Internet and the digital resources with their current level of computer literacy (Table 7). The result revealed clearly that the gender difference in the computer literacy level of the subjects really affect the female subjects as they find it difficult to use or access some- library facilities like the online databases and e-journal etc. This is because a considerable number of female subjects indicated that they were unable to use the e-library in recent time due to their deficiency in the use of computer. It should be noted at this point that e-library and digital resources nowadays has gone beyond the level of mere depository of books. It has been pointed out in the literature review that information technology has revolutionaries all library activities and operations. This means that any user who wants to make effective use of the e-library need to be equipped with the knowledge of computer and ICT skills.

### IMPLICATIONS

Technologies including ICTs are gender –neutral, rather the use of ICTs and other technologies by female and males reflects to a large wider socio-cultural and economic context within which the technologies are produced and used. Gender and technology should be viewed as evolving and changeable.

The findings indicated that there were gender differences in computer literacy among undergraduate students of faculty of education in Kogi State University, anyigba. Data found that 40% of the male students had computer experience than their female counterpart and this suggest a gender difference. On the hours spent per week on the use of computers by male and female students the study reveal that the male students spend more hours per week while on software applications male students had 27% for e-mail, 22% for internet and wording as against the female students whose use is low. It can be described from the study on faculty of education, undergraduate students use of computers that male students are better users of ICT than the female students and this findings is supported by Shaw (1999) who revealed that male students felt more at ease with the new technology than the females and the implication is that if nothing is done to encourage female use of computers in areas of more experience, hour of use per week and increase in software application for female students in institutions of learning, more responsibilities in nation and economic development that will need more hands will be gender bias. Students are expected to be proficiency in their computer literacy in order to make effective use of these digital facilities and e- resources provided. The outcome of this study should provide a framework for designing computer literacy interventions that the resources are exploited to the full.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to determine the gender differences among undergraduate students in Faculty of Education, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria with regard to their computer literacy. The major finding in the study is a wakeup call on the need to acknowledge the fact that male and females learn in different ways and the need to match computer training to females cognitive structures. The findings demonstrate the need for all students in Kogi State University, Anyigba to be adequately equipped with computer literacy competencies for their effective use of the largely computerized facilities on campus. Moreover, the introduction of information literacy courses (GST & CSC) as they are called in 2012/2013 academic year is an effort considered to improve the information literacy of the Kogi State University, Anyigba. This is an effort in the right direction. It is hereby suggested that this should be more focused and enhanced and the university management and all the ICT centers and authorities in charge in training should ensure that all the necessary support is given to further enhance the teaching of the GST & CSC courses and others to enhance and drive home the digital culture slogan among students.

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# Consequences of Violent Conflicts on the Health Sector in Nigeria: A Critical Appraisal

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## ABSTRACT

Because the consequences of violent conflicts are usually enormous, no nation can encourage them. They range from loss of human lives, destruction of properties, to population displacement. Any time a society experiences violent conflicts, it faces a great challenge, which would in turn create multiple challenges to key institutions and/or sectors within it such as health, security, economy etc. In Nigeria, a country where conflicts are endemic, year in year out, it witnesses one form of violent conflict or the other with serious consequences on human lives. This has increasingly brought more serious emergencies to the health sector, which is indeed, one of the first and/or immediate bearers of the burdens of conflicts in any society. This paper therefore, examines the role of the health sector in managing the consequences of conflicts in Nigeria. It appraises the sector in view of the increasing challenges facing it. It is recommended that the health sector in Nigeria should be practically overhauled with a view to making it ever ready for emergencies of any magnitude.

**Keywords:** Enormous, health care, violence, consequences, the government

## INTRODUCTION

Since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has witnessed many violent conflicts which have impacted negatively not only on the country's unity but also its development. It may be said that there was hardly a year in which the government did not have one conflict or the other to grapple with. The conflicts are mostly violent in nature.

Though conflicts are inevitable in Nigeria because of its plural or heterogeneous nature, but it should not be allowed to consume the nation. The country, which is made up of diversities of cultures and ethnic nationalities have suffered serious setbacks emanating from violent conflicts, which arisen from misunderstandings among its peoples or among its constituent parts. The situation has often been such that as the government tries to deal with the consequences of a conflict in one part of the country another one has already began in some other parts.

Nigeria has recorded quite a large number of violent conflicts ranging from communal, political, to religious conflicts consequences of which have been seriously devastating to the country. In every conflict, people are either wounded or killed, properties are destroyed and people are displaced. Furthermore, each time conflict occurs it affects the stability not only of the people or communities concerned but also that of the entire country. Worst still, it slows down development and makes governance a difficult task.

However, in recent times, conflicts have not only increased in Nigeria but have also become increasingly violent. This is because increasingly, live ammunitions, explosives and/or bombs are now used. This has made death tolls and number of persons wounded in every incidence of violence to be very high. Obviously, the immediate consequences of violent conflicts are becoming too cumbersome to manage. This state of affairs has indeed, created serious

challenges to the health care sector which manages the wounded victims of violent conflicts as well as the corpses of those killed. This paper therefore, examines the role played by the health sector in managing the consequences of conflicts in Nigeria in view of the additional challenges that incessant emergencies from violent conflicts have posed to it.

### **RECORD OF CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA**

Within the fifty four (54) years of her independence, Nigeria has experienced many violent conflicts. It is necessary at this juncture to identify some of them. This shall be done by dividing them into two: distant past and recent past. Some of the major conflicts that occurred in Nigeria in some distant past include ethnic and religious conflicts in Kano, the Tiv-Jukun communal conflict, the Zango Kataf conflict, the Ife-Modakeke conflict, the Niger Delta conflict etc.

In Kano, a major city in northern Nigeria, both inter and intra-religious conflicts have been recorded. Intra-religious conflicts include the 'Maitatsine's riot of 1980, the Shite attacks of 1996 and 1997 [1]. The inter-religious conflicts on the other hand, include the 1982 Faggo violence, Reihard Bonke riot of 1991, the Akaluka incident of 1994, the Osama Bin Ladin riots in protest of U.S. attack on Afghanistan of 2001 [2,3,4]. The Tiv and Jukun communities in Taraba state (northern Nigeria) were involved in a prolonged dispute over land, traditional rulership, political authority and fear of domination and marginalization [5]. The conflict which began in 1990 persisted for more than two years.

The Zango Kataf conflict was a riot, which occurred in Zango Kataf area of Kaduna state in (northern Nigeria) 1992. The riot broke out as a result of an order given by the Local Government Council to relocate a market [6]. It was an attempt to carry out out order that sparked off the riots. On its part, the Ife-Modakeke conflict was an intra-ethnic (Yoruba of southern Nigeria) conflict. The conflict persisted for more than one century [1]. While the Ifes sought to drive the Modakekes away from what they (Ifes) claimed as their land, the Modakekes regarded where they are as their ancestral home.

Furthermore, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria witnessed several conflicts which were perpetuated by the youths or youth vigilante groups in the area [7,8]. The conflict emanated from the injustices of succeeding governments in Nigeria to the people of the oil rich Niger Delta region. Youths, women, children and elders from the region frequently protested against government's injustices against them. Youth agitations later transformed into armed groups [9]. Armed militia groups which according to Ejibunu, [9] became prominent after 2003 transformed the Niger Delta agitation to a very violent one with the use of live ammunitions, explosives and/or bombs.

It is pertinent to note that all the above mentioned conflicts were very violent and the consequences of each of them were very enormous as a large number of people died. Nevertheless, despite the devastating effect of these conflicts, successive governments were able to manage them and their consequences on the nation.

The recent past conflicts on the other hand, are those ones that are still fresh in the memories of Nigerians because they are very recent. They are much more devastating and involved the regular use of live ammunitions, explosives and bombs. The terror and carnage of the Jos crises is very high. In the city of Jos (northern Nigeria), thousands of people have been killed in repeated incidents of violence in 2001, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2011 even up to date. For example in December, 2010, dozens of people were killed in gun and machete attacks in and around Jos during an outbreak of communal violence. The violence was a follow-up to the detonation of at least three bombs in Jos on 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2010 which killed more than 80 people [10]. Prior to this incidence there had been many sectarian violence in the city which took the lives of

hundreds of people [11]. The killings in Jos is still re-occurring; some incidences have been reported in the dailies in 2014 [12, 13]. The causes of this conflict are not quite clear. However, they are believed to range from ethnic, religious to political factors [11].

There are other recent conflicts. The Wukari sectarian violence of July, 2010 and years following it [14, 15]. Though this violence cannot be compared to the terribly devastating and prolonged Jos violence, it was a recent occurrence. However, there are still other terrifying (violent) conflicts in recent times in Nigeria. This is also the incidence of a feud between the Tiv community and Fulani cattle rearers in Yelvata Guma Local Government Area of Benue State [16]. Another recent violent conflict was the post-election violence of April 2011. The violence which cuts across a number of states in Northern Nigeria was devastating. The impact of the violence was very enormous. Still, another recent conflict is the conflict between cattle rearers and farmers in two communities in Nasarawa State [17].

However, the most worrisome dimension of violent conflicts in Nigeria is the incessant bombing in various communities especially in the northern part of the country. Virtually all the incidences of bombing in Nigeria are associated with the Islamic sect, Boko Haram. Since 2009 to till more than one thousand people have been killed by members of the sect [10, 18, 19,20,21].

### **THE CONSEQUENCES**

The consequences of virtually all the violent conflicts discussed above have been very enormous. In all the conflicts, very large number of lives were lost. Put together, hundreds of thousands of lives were lost. However, it should be noted that while some died instantly during each violence, others died later in hospitals/clinics.

Another consequence of the conflicts is the destruction of properties. Properties worth several billions of Naira have been destroyed in multiples of violent conflicts that have occurred in Nigeria. In most of the conflicts, houses were burnt, public utilities and/or social amenities were destroyed.

Furthermore, the conflicts have brought about population displacement. Usually, to avoid being killed during violence many people left their homes and sought for refuge elsewhere [21]. Some sought for refuge in neighbouring communities within the same state or other states within the country. Many Nigerians have abandoned their ancestral homes as a result of communal conflicts.

### **MANAGING THE CONSEQUENCES: THE ROLE OF THE HEALTH SECTOR**

The most urgent and significant response to violent conflicts and their consequences are quelling the violence, preventing the wounded or critically injured victims from dying and providing pressing relief materials for persons displaced. All these involve the activities of the security agencies, the health sector and relief agencies respectively. However, in this paper, the focus is on the health sector. Therefore, the role of the health sector in managing the consequences of violent conflicts in Nigeria shall be discussed in this section.

In virtually all the violent conflicts discussed in the preceding sections, the health sector of the country played a very significant role. In each of the violence, human beings were either injured or killed. The Security agents drafted to the location of each violence to quell it, usually collaborated with relief agents to, as a matter of urgency took all wounded persons to the nearest safe hospital or clinic for immediate attention. Also, corpses of those killed were deposited in mortuaries which are part of health facilities in hospitals.

For example, injured victims of all incidents of bomb blasts in different parts of Nigeria were urgently taken to nearby hospitals. Thus, with respect to the bomb blasts at the Headquarters of the Nigeria Police Force on June 16, 2011, Daily Trust [18] reports as follows:



*Doctors battled to save the lives of eleven people who were rushed to three hospitals following the explosions which wreaked havoc at the headquarters of the Nigeria Police Force in Nigeria yesterday. ... At the National Hospital, Asokoro General Hospital and Garki General Hospital, victims who sustained various degrees of injuries were in stable condition, according to doctors. p<sup>6</sup>.*

From the Newspaper report quoted above, the important role of the health sector in managing the immediate consequences of violence in Nigeria is quite obvious. The phrase “doctors battle to save the live of” is an indicator that health care providers are often engaged in serious emergency tasks when injured victims of violent conflicts are brought to the hospitals. Both health care providers and health facilities are utilized in such situations. This implies that the health sector plays a very significant role through its personnel and facilities close to scenes of violence.

In most of the communal conflicts which occurred in the rural areas available health care providers and facilities are always overstretched. These are areas where facilities are already not adequate for the people. In most cases, health care personnel in rural clinics tried the little they could with the limited facilities at their disposal and while sometimes they succeeded at other times they did not.

It should be noted that health personnel sometimes endanger their own lives when they attend to victims of violence. Perpetrators of the violence could come to the hospitals or clinics where victims are being cared for to attack them. Despite such risks, health personnel still go ahead to save the lives of victims of violent conflicts. This also shows how critical the role of the health sector is, in managing the immediate consequences of violent conflicts.

### **CHALLENGES FACING THE HEALTH SECTOR**

Despite the vital role of the health sector in managing the consequences of violent conflicts in Nigeria, it faces some challenges. While some of the challenges are age-long, some have emerged only recently as a result of incessant cases of violence and bombings in the country. The latter is regarded here as recent because it has created extra burdens for the health care sector in Nigeria other than its traditional one. What then are the challenges facing the health sector in Nigeria?

Firstly, lack of funds. In Nigeria, the burden of health care financing is carried by the government alone. Though at times the government is assisted by some international organizations and donor countries in financing specified health care programmes, still the funds available to the sector are grossly inadequate. Government bears the burden of constructing hospitals, recruiting staff and the providing the necessary infrastructures.

Secondly, inadequate human resources. It has been observed that people are the most important resources of any country. That notwithstanding, in Nigeria, health care personnel are still inadequate. Though over the years the government has increased the number of institutions where health workers are being trained still health personnel are inadequate considering the very high rate of population increase in the country. In addition, Nigeria still loses a number of health professionals to brain drain. That is, quite a number of doctors and nurses have left the shores of the country to search for greener pasture in other countries. This trend has not stopped.

Thirdly, in Nigeria health facilities are inadequate. Hospitals and clinics are very few compared to the population of the country. Worst still, the distribution of health facilities is lopsided. Most of the available health facilities are located in the urban centers rather than the rural areas where more than 60% of the population live [22, 23].

Fourthly, in Nigeria, the cost of healthcare is still high. Drugs, laboratory tests and medical procedures are generally out of reach of the majority of the population, whether rural or urban. Most of the rural people are poor, hence, they cannot afford the charges of the available ill-equipped health centres around them. Most of the persons injured during violent conflicts cannot afford health care charges. Thus, newspapers have reported that victims of bomb blast cried for help [24].

Fifthly, the menace of corruption. Though the health sector needs more funds, the money allocated to it are sometimes diverted into personal pockets. Thus, Oluwabamide and Akpan (25) have observed as follows:

*Among all the factors inhibiting the success of Nigeria's health care system, corruption is the most critical. Frankly speaking, the nation's successive health care policies are no doubt, good but poor implementation has been the problem. - - - large scale corruption occurs mostly at the implementation level. P. 35*

Every year, huge sums of money are allocated by the government for the provision of health facilities throughout the country. Nevertheless health facilities are still quite inadequate especially in the rural areas. Primary Health Care centres which are expected to be within the reach of the rural people are absent in a good number of rural communities. Meanwhile, funds are said to have been released at various times, for the provision of these minimal health facilities in all rural communities, but there are no such facilities in most of the communities to show that the funds are used. Even in those rural communities where primary health care centres are provided, other basic health care facilities such as drugs are absent.

### CONCLUSION

It is no gainsaying that ordinarily health issues take the pride of place in the agenda of virtually all the nations of the world. This is because health is an important precondition for development. In fact, health is one of the indices for measuring a society's level of development. Furthermore, the health sector sustains human life, a function which lays credence to its significance in every human society.

It is pertinent to note that for some time Nigeria's health sector has not been performing well. Despite a wide range of efforts being geared towards health care delivery, the sector still performs below expectation. Hospitals and clinics are inadequate. Worst still, the available ones are in poor conditions, especially the few ones in the rural areas where majority of the people live. Drugs are not available in most hospitals and clinics except the few elitist ones in the urban areas. A number of patients who would have been saved, died in hospitals due to lack of drugs and other relevant facilities or their inability to afford the cost of treatment. Thus, the question arises; should this situation continue? The answer is no. The health sector cannot continue to be in shambles considering additional challenges it needs to face in this modern times. The challenges of increasing number of incurable diseases such as HIV/AIDS and most recently, Ebola and the increasing rate of emergencies such as very high number of victims of violent conflicts and bomb blasts, calls for serious concern.

The government should seriously overhaul the health sector for better performance. Funds meant for specific health care delivery projects should be strictly monitored to ensure that they are properly spent. Like other segments of the society, the war against corruption should be pursued vigorously in the health sector. Furthermore, the government should practically partner with the private sector in health care delivery. Lastly, the government should make it mandatory for owners of big business enterprises in the country to pay specific amount of money into an account that would be meant for managing emergencies in hospitals.

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# Chronotype and Cortisol Awakening Response (CAR) The Influence of the Chronotype on the Awakening Response of Cortisol in the Morning

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The chronotype describes the behavioral daytime preference. According to an inherent but interindividually strongly varying biological clock, humans try to best adapt to their environment by tuning their internal clock and therefore their sleep-wake cycle to the social clock, which is reflected by work schedules etc. The chronotype seems to be basically associated with the timing and controlling of the circadian rhythms of biological and psychological parameters. In general, morning types show earlier acrophases and maximum values of biological factors compared to evening types. Like most physiological parameters cortisol follows a strong circadian rhythm, with a peak immediately after awakening, the so-called cortisol awakening response (CAR). Since glucocorticoids in general are assumed to play a key role in the timing and synchronization of the internal clock and the regulation of the transcription in the DNA, a well-tuned CAR might be crucial for the synchronization of one's own organism to the environment. **Purpose:** Since a stable circadian rhythm in general seems to be health-protective, we aimed to determine the association between the chronotype and the CAR in 25 healthy men. **Results:** Our results suggest that evening types show a lower total amount of cortisol, but a significantly prolonged phase of cortisol increase within the first hour after awakening. **Conclusion:** Our data might suggest that an inadequate synchronization between inert chronotype and environment results in an extenuated CAR.

**Key words:** chronotype, cortisol, awakening response, circadian rhythm, morningness/eveningness

## INTRODUCTION

Humans show large interindividual differences in the organization of their behavior within the course of a 24h-day. This can be specifically stated in terms of the structure of the sleep-wake cycle and can be explained by the interindividually varying adjustment of the internal biological clock to the external daytime and nighttime. Accordingly, morning types show earlier bedtimes and waking-up times compared to evening types [1]. The chronotypical preference depends on several factors, such as the intensity of light irradiation and entrainment [2] or polymorphisms of the so-called clock genes [3]. Evening types in particular often experience the problem of a deficient fit between their inherent biological clock and the social clock (e.g. work schedules etc.). The discrepancy between working days and free days

might therefore result in a sleep deficit during the week, which is compensated at weekends. The health-related aftermaths of such “social jetlags” are not yet sufficiently clear [4].

Like most biological and psychological parameters, cortisol too is subject to a robust circadian rhythm, peaking in the morning immediately after an individual’s awakening and decreasing as the day progresses [5]. The synthesis of cortisol is induced by the activation of the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. The corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH) is released from the paraventricular nucleus (PVN) of the hypothalamus, inducing the synthesis of adrenocorticotropin (ACTH). The circadian rhythm of cortisol is most probably controlled by the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN) via a neuroendocrine pathway, since the absence of the SCN results in a rhythmic deficiency of cortisol [6]. Furthermore, data from human studies implicate an additional autonomous pathway between the SCN and the adrenal glands, which might be crucial for the synchronization of the body’s peripheral cells [7,8]. It is known that glucocorticoids can bind to specific sites called glucocorticoid-sensitive elements on the DNA and induce or repress the transcription of genes, which implies an important role of glucocorticoids in the regulation of gene expression. This is also the case for some so-called clock genes – especially for *Per1* [9] – which among other things are responsible for the tuning of the internal clock and therefore for the control of the circadian rhythm [10-12].

About 77% of healthy subjects show a relatively stable “cortisol awakening response” (CAR) over a series of assessed days. According to the definition of Wust and colleagues, an increase of at least 2.5 nmol/l above the individual level of cortisol might identify “responders” to the naturally occurring process of awakening [13]. Generally, the CAR can be understood as a characteristic unit that can be interpreted as an index for adrenocortical activity [14]. The chronotype, in turn, seems to be closely associated with the controlling and timing of the pulsatile and rhythmic secretion of cortisol [15-17]. So far, data support that morning types display higher cortisol concentrations after awakening compared to evening types [18,19].

A well-functioning circadian rhythm seems to be essential for physiological as well as mental health. In our study, we therefore aspired to investigate the association between chronotype and CAR. Based on previous research [18,19], we assumed specific associations between the CAR and the chronotypes. Our aim was to further elucidate the course of the CAR according to different chronotypes.

## METHOD

### Study Population, Recruitment Criteria and Prestudy Conditions

Subjects were recruited at the University of Zurich. Exclusion criteria were jetlag, medication intake, sleep disorders, intake of psychotropic substances, psychological or physical illness, hospitalization, smoking and shift work within four months prior to the data acquisition. Data were collected from 31 mentally and physiologically healthy men aged 20 to 30. Due to the fact that sleep habits might change with age [20,21], this range was chosen in order to better control for this effect. The study participants were asked to adhere to a strict routine for one week before participating in the investigation, including regular eating and sleeping times, which they had to record in a diary and fill in a chronotype questionnaire.

The study participants were instructed to collect their morning cortisol on two consecutive days in the form of three saliva samples and bring them to the laboratory. The samples were collected immediately after, 30 minutes after and 60 minutes after awakening. At 0800h they arrived in our laboratory and handed in their saliva samples. This early time was chosen in order to simulate a regular work day after a week during which the students lived after their own inherent circadian rhythm. In order to increase the reliability of the data, the mean of the two CARs was used for statistical analyses.

However, six subjects showed a flattened CAR and did not reach an increase of 2.5nmol/l on at least one of the study days. It could not be determined whether these flat cycles indicated non-responders or whether they resulted from a lack of compliance. A flattened CAR might suggest an abnormal HPA-axis activity [13, 22-24]. As a precaution, we therefore decided to exclude these subjects from the calculations, which led to a sample size of n=25.

### **Ethics**

This study was conducted according to the declaration of Helsinki. The study protocol was approved by the ethics committee of the canton of Zurich (Department of Internal Medicine, University Hospital of Zurich) and all participants provided written informed consent regarding participation in the study.

### **Data Collection and Analysis for Biological as well as Psychometric Parameters**

Cortisol samples were collected using Salivettes (Sarstedt, Sevelen, Switzerland) and subsequently frozen at -20°C. Saliva samples were assayed in the Laboratory of Biopsychology of the Technical University of Dresden, Germany (Luminescence Immunoassay, IBL).

The assessment of the chronotype was conducted using the "Munich Chronotype Questionnaire" [1] consisting of 12 questions concerning preferences of sleep habits. One of the advantages of the MCTQ is the calculation of the midsleep of working as well as free days, which considers the correction of a possible social jetlag in subjects [25]. As a consequence of the small sample size, the original seven categories of chronotypes were summarized into three main categories: morning type, normal type and evening type according to the scale of the MCTQ.

### **Statistics**

Statistics were calculated using SPSS 19.0 for Mac. To compare the total amount of cortisol in the morning, areas under the curve were calculated using the formula:  $AUC_g = ((m_1+m_2)/2 \times t_{1-2}) + ((m_2+m_3)/2 \times t_{2-3}) + ((m_3+m_4)/2 \times t_{3-4}) + \dots + ((m_x+m_y)/2 \times t_{x-y})$ . The total amount of increase of cortisol was determined using the formula:  $AUC_i = AUC_g - m_1 \times t_{total}$  [26]. Percentage change was calculated using the formula: change in % from m1 to m2 =  $((m_2 - m_1)/m_1) \times 100$ .

According to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the calculated dependent variables were normally distributed, with the exception of the percentage change between measurement time points one and two. Therefore, in this case, a possible difference between chronotypes was calculated using the Kruskal-Wallis test for non-parametric data. The other examinations considering possible differences between the chronotypes were calculated using the general linear model for univariate analysis of variance and for repeated measures, respectively, in order to control for the influence of time (ANOVA). Post-hoc tests between the groups were calculated with t-tests for independent samples and corrected according to Bonferroni (for parametric data). Where sphericity could not be assumed, the calculation was corrected according to Greenhouse-Geisser.

## **RESULTS**

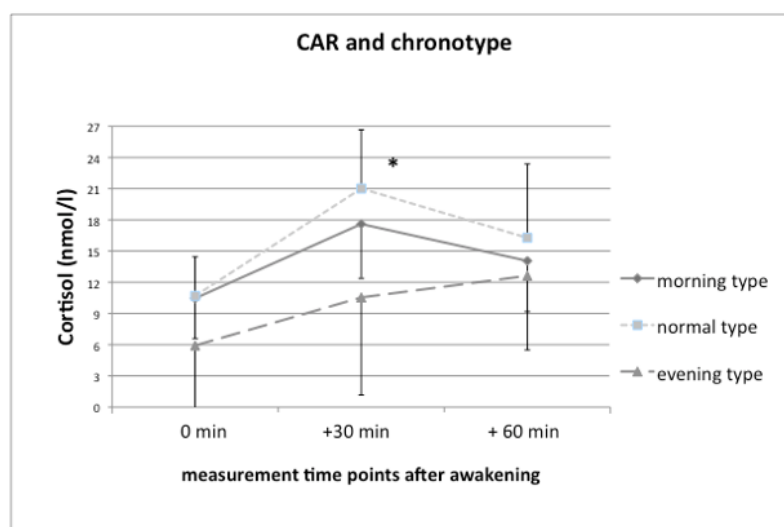
As described above, the subjects were classified into three groups according to their score on the MCTQ, resulting in nine subjects of the morningness type (36%), 12 subjects of the normal type (48%) and four subjects of the eveningness type (16%). According to their sleep diaries, the three types differed in their waking-up time ( $F=14.102$ ;  $p<0.000$ ) and bedtime ( $F=19.808$ ;  $p<0.000$ ), but not in their sleep duration ( $F=0.641$ ;  $p=0.537$ ; see table 1).

**Table 1: waking up, sleeping time and sleep duration according to chronotypes**  
**Waking up and sleeping times differ significantly between the chronotypes (post hoc tests adjusted to Bonferroni for waking up time show at least  $p < 0.002$  for all comparisons; for sleeping time all comparisons  $p < 0.000$ ). Sleep duration did not differ significantly between the chronotypes.**

chronotype	n	waking up time	sleeping time	sleep duration
morning type	9	0715h	2320h	7h 58 min
normal type	12	0759h	2341h	8h 17 min
evening type	4	0942h	0136h	8h 15 min

*n*=number of subjects; waking up and sleeping time (free running) as well as sleep duration are data from the sleep diary; times averaged over 7 days and 6 nights.

Univariate analysis of variance for repeated measures showed that the factor time had a significant influence on the three measurement time points ( $F=16.720$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ), indicating the morning peak of cortisol. The mean increase from the first to the second time point amounted to 123%, while the mean decrease between time points two and three was -9%. As can be seen from figure 1, the cortisol concentration immediately after awakening is the lowest in evening types, while the morning as well as the normal types display higher cortisol levels ( $F=1.944$ ;  $p=0.167$ ). The courses of the cortisol concentration within the first hour of awakening depict that evening types also show the lowest concentrations 30 minutes after awakening, followed by morning types, while the normal types show the highest peak ( $F=4.387$ ;  $p=0.025$ ; post hoc: normal type > evening type,  $p=0.022$ ). Normal types also show the highest concentrations 60 minutes after awakening, while evening types show the lowest concentrations and morning types are in between ( $F=0.608$ ;  $p=0.553$ ). However, the area under the curve of the total amount of cortisol within the first hour after awakening narrowly misses a significant difference between the chronotypes ( $F=3.346$ ;  $p=0.054$ ), but does indicate a lower total amount of cortisol of the CAR in evening types compared to normal types (post hoc: normal type > evening type:  $p=0.052$ ).



**Figure 1: The cortisol awakening response according to chronotypes**

The cortisol awakening response is shown according to the chronotypes. Values are given in means and with standard deviations. Evening types show a smaller area under the curve with respect to the ground and therefore a smaller total amount of cortisol within the first hour after awakening. Furthermore, they show a prolonged increase phase compared to normal and morning types, resulting in a less accentuated cortisol peak.

This effect could not be seen when the area under the curve was measured with respect to the first assessment (AUCi:  $F=0.888$ ;  $p=0.426$ ), suggesting a comparable increase of cortisol, which is independent of the initial cortisol level.

When comparing the chronotypes concerning the increase (between minute 0 and 30) and the decrease (between minute 30 and 60), a difference can be discerned regarding the percentage change in cortisol: Within the half hour immediately after awakening, all chronotypes show an increase of cortisol levels and no significant difference between the chronotypes (Chi-square= $0.486$ ;  $p=0.784$ ). While in normal and morning types, there is a percentage decrease and consequently also a decrease of the cortisol concentration between minutes 30 and 60 after awakening, the evening types still show an increase of cortisol, indicating a prolonged increase of the cortisol concentration ( $F=9.228$ ;  $p=0.001$ ; post hoc: morning type - evening type:  $p=0.004$ ; normal type - evening type:  $p=0.001$ ).

### DISCUSSION

The data show the hypothesized differences in the cortisol awakening response between the different chronotypes, indicating a lower total CAR in evening types compared to normal and morning types after forced waking-up times. This result is in line with previous [18,19]. Moreover, a significant difference can be discerned in the time course of the CAR: Within the second half hour after awakening (between minute 30 and 60), there is a decrease of the percentage change in cortisol and therefore a decrease of the cortisol concentration in the morning types and normal types. The contrary is the case for evening types, who still show an increase of cortisol levels, pointing to a delayed and less accentuated cortisol peak in the morning after they had lived according to their inherent circadian rhythm for a week prior to the measurement.

Since our sample included subjects who were able to choose to some extent their waking up and sleeping times as well as the center of their day, this is perfectly reflected in their sleep diaries: The subjective recording of waking-up time and sleeping times as well as the sleep duration over one week prior to the data collection of the biological parameters depicts approximate sleep habits under free-running conditions in the morning and therefore reflects the differences of the chronotypes in waking-up times and sleeping times, but no differences concerning the sleep duration [17,27]. In contrast, all the subjects had to come to the laboratory on the two mornings of the measurements, which therefore was a non-free-running condition and simulated a regular condition on workdays for many people. Particularly the subjects describing themselves as evening chronotype had to get up relatively early considering their internal biological clock on the two consecutive days of the data collection, which might be equivalent to the timing of a regular working day in the larger part of the total population. The fact that they show lower CAR with a prolonged increase phase could indicate a crucial problem in society concerning the lack of tuning between the inherent biological clock and regular work schedules.

Shortcomings of our study can definitely be seen in the small sample size, which did not allow to differentiate in more detail the morning and evening types. And as the evening types showed a prolonged increase of cortisol in the morning, it would have been interesting to follow this course for at least another 30 minutes. These considerations should be addressed in future research.

Since the disruption of the circadian clock seems to be heavily associated with health problems, it might also be politically relevant to draw more attention to this problem. Considering the fact that – amongst other parameters - cortisol plays a key role in the communication pathways of the biological clock [28,12], the interaction of chronotypes and height as well as course of the CARs should be further and specifically explored.



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# Trauma Informed Care and Social Work Education: A Case Study

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## ABSTRACT

This paper provides a brief description and history of trauma in the social sciences alongside an introduction to trauma informed care in social work education. This paper promotes the understanding that trauma assessment and treatment are a key component to the future of social work education and practice. As a result of a recent teaching experience, a framework for conceptualizing, treating, and supervising trauma related disorders within an educational context was developed. This paper utilizes that unique teaching experience where a graduate course on trauma informed care proved challenging yet profound to the existing methods typically sanctioned for university and college settings. These challenges and the corresponding opportunities associated with trauma work are discussed. Practical and ethical implications of a social work model of trauma-focused are outlined. A case example, employing several students' experiences, is presented. Suggestions for additional study are outlined.

**Keywords:** trauma; trauma informed care; supervision; social work education.

## INTRODUCTION: A THEMATIC CASE EXAMPLE

Sandy, a 30 year old female, while learning about trauma and trauma informed care in her class, came to the awareness that she cannot stand her body and she thinks she is "disgusting." Sandy thinks that this "utter disgust" comes from a childhood history of sexual abuse and that, as an adult she copes by shopping, spending money compulsively, drinking too much alcohol, and using "pills" to help her sleep. After coming to this realization during class, she became very upset and had to leave early. Later in an email to her instructor, she apologized and reported that she called her mother after class for assistance. Her mother was of no help: she denied Sandy's memories of childhood abuse and stated that Sandy "did not have problems with money or alcohol" and could sleep "just fine." Feeling like she had "nowhere else to turn", Sandy went to her instructors' office hours "just to talk".

She sat, obviously uncomfortable as she twitched and fidgeted, and seemed reluctant to describe what she was feeling. She stated that she was "majorly messed up" and that she did not want to be "judged" or "thought of differently." Sandy, a masters of social work student, was aware of mandated reporting laws, and was worried that her "secrets would get out" and that she would be "forced to go to treatment if anyone found out."

Her instructor, trained within a trauma informed care paradigm, first explained that Sandy's mental health was primary and clarified that as long as she was not a danger to herself or others, no mandated reporting or "forced treatment" would occur. Her instructor then listened to Sandy as she tearfully explained her past experiences and current behaviors. Employing trauma informed care as a framework for teaching, her instructor was able to utilize empathy and reflexive feedback while Sandy's talked. Her instructor noticed that Sandy was reduced to a childlike state when she spoke of her childhood. Her emotions intensified yet with continued

empathy from her instructor, she was eventually able to calm herself. Her instructor sat with her for over an hour as they looked over her personal journal and discussed the chance that she had clinically significant trauma symptoms. Of her own accord, Sandy returned to talk with her instructor two more times as she re-told her trauma narrative each time becoming calmer and more stable. On the third visit, Sandy thanked her instructor stating that "getting professional help would be good." Sandy continued to state that she was grateful for this class, as she was unaware that these "issues" upset her to this degree. This case example, while brief, demonstrates the potential for students to have their own trauma memories triggered while in the process of social work coursework. Most importantly, this example showcases the utility of trauma informed care principles in social work education.

### **TRAUMA AS A MENTAL ILLNESS**

Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychiatry, initially posited that mental illness stemmed from discord in one's external environment, the stressors associated with that environment and the outcomes that the combination of the two had on an individual [5, 20, 24, 31]. Rather quickly however, he changed his views about external stressors and shifted to citing the internal environment of the individual as the cause for mental illness [24, 31]. It is suspected that this philosophical shift may have been due to pressure from Freud's contemporaries as well as the reluctance for culture, at that time, to accept that the external had an impact on the internal [15, 24]. Regardless, Freud's work had a large impact on the modern conceptualization of mental illness and his work is considered to be the basis for the diagnostic criteria found in the Diagnostic Services Manual [DSM] today [1, 17].

Psychiatry specifically places heavy emphasis on the individual's internal environment in mental diagnosis and treatment whereas [5] social work finds that examining only one facet of being is not enough to understand emotional or mental health [14]. Since social work finds that to understand a problem one must examine the internal as well as the external environments, a markedly different approach to mental health assessment, treatment, and supervision results [14]. Despite social work's expanded model of problem assessment and treatment, the impacts of early psychiatry still remain dominant; one area where this is still true is that of trauma and trauma informed care.

For social workers trained in mental health assessment, it is likely that becoming familiar with the etiology, assessment, and treatment of trauma will be an important part of best practice [18, 29- 30-31]: as it is estimated that trauma will become a pressing health concern in the near future [26]. It is important that universities and colleges understand how to best train and support their instructors who work with students who may have traumatic event histories in order to provide the most appropriate and most ethical treatment possible. Thus, this paper will outline trauma is, common coping mechanisms associated with traumatic exposure, and ways to instruct from a trauma informed lens. This exploration specifically utilizes the experiences from teaching a graduate social work class on trauma assessment and treatment. Through this experience, the instructor was placed into multiple roles as students learned course concepts, dealt with their own trauma as well as the trauma of their peers and clients. Necessary for the future of social work, it is hoped that this paper serves as a guide for instructors in the classroom who wish to operate with an enhanced understanding of trauma.

### **Trauma Defined**

Due to recent advances in neuroscience and brain chemistry, researchers have started documenting the connections between the biological and social environments along with epigenetic interactions between genes, DNA, and traumatic experiences [11, 23, 25, 29-30]. As

a result there has been an increased impetus towards integrating contrasting disciplines in assessment, diagnosis, and intervention of trauma symptomology [11, 15, 22-23]. It is likely that, social work will be a part of this multidisciplinary approach to trauma practice.

Traumatic events are those that result in intense bio-psychological reactions and often include experiences such as participating in, witnessing or being the victim of violence, child abuse or neglect, natural disasters, war, poverty, and famine [11; [15]]. Since social workers, by virtue, work in impoverished and depressed areas [14], it is common to interact with individuals who have histories of domestic violence, community violence, poverty, and childhood histories of abuse and neglect. By definition, events become traumatic when the individual's functioning and quality of life are compromised [11]. Prevalence rates of trauma vary based on the specific population yet it is estimated that anywhere from 20% to 80% of adults have experienced at least one type of trauma throughout their life [2, 7, 11]. Further, it has been found that those with the highest rates of trauma exposure include homeless individuals, individuals with histories of inpatient mental health treatment, military veterans, inner city youth, as well as those who live in extreme poverty [3, 11]. Experiences of trauma and the trauma symptomology that results are projected to increase rapidly in the coming decades, making the study of trauma in social work pedagogy crucial [11, 26].

Traumatic events can have differential impacts based on an individual's age, gender, and developmental capacity [11, 15]. Additionally, the intensity, chronicity, and frequency of the event itself will determine the impact to the individual [11, 15]. For example, the earlier that a traumatic event occurs, chances that neurological development are impacted increase [6, 13]. Traumatic events that occur at young ages are also associated with the disruption of important biochemical neurotransmitters responsible for communication within the brain [6, 12-13]. Additionally, due to hormonal differences among men and women, traumatic events have differential impacts based on gender [11]: men with trauma symptoms tend to become externally aggressive whereas females with trauma symptoms tend to become internally withdrawn [11]. Overall, the lifetime trauma exposure for women is twice that of men [16] and it is thought that trauma exposure is one of the largest health problems facing women worldwide today [26].

Traumatic events can have deleterious consequences to all systems: biological, social, psychological, and spiritual. In the days and weeks after a traumatic event, it is common to experience several side effects which fall into three main categories: arousal, intrusion, and avoidance [11, 15]. Common arousal related symptoms include hypervigilance, being easily startled, inability to sleep, inability to concentrate, irritability as well as anger [11, 15]. Those who experience intrusion related symptomology may have flashbacks and vivid dreams as the traumatic event is re-experienced in great detail [15]. This re-playing of the traumatic experience may leave the individual in a consistent state of upset, distress or anxiety that may impact ability to work, communicate, and care for children [9]. Avoidance symptoms occur when an individual loses interest in pleasurable activities and often leads to feeling emotionally numb and possibly depressed [9, 15]. In an attempt to get rid of trauma memories, individuals with avoidance symptoms may completely ignore the people, places, and things associated with said traumatic event [9, 15].

Realistically, those with trauma symptoms may shun family and friends, workplace/school performance may suffer, and mental/physical health may decline [9, 15]. As a result, the quality of life of those with untreated trauma symptoms is likely to decrease [9, 15]. Since the effects of trauma vary from person to person, those with traumatic exposure may be

misdiagnosed; it is not uncommon for those with trauma symptoms to have diagnoses of depressive, addictive, personality, behavior and/or schizoaffective disorders [9, 15, 22]. Individuals with misdiagnoses, despite seeking out treatment, are unlikely to receive long term relief from their trauma symptoms. Individuals may become distrustful, feeling completely alone, with a lack of hope for the future [9, 15]. Frequently, intimate relationships suffer as sex drive decreases and individuals may appear to their partners as cold, aggravated, and/or angry [15, 22]. Socially, it is not uncommon for individuals to completely withdraw from the external world as smells, sounds or places can act as trauma triggers [22].

As trauma memories are triggered, the body responds by releasing large amounts of stress related hormones into the bloodstream preparing the person to “fight, flight, or freeze” [11]. These “fight, flight, or freeze” chemicals are powerful and can affect the body in debilitating ways; past studies have documented that triggering trauma can cause individuals to black out, faint, or lose consciousness temporarily [11, 22]. All of this stress on the body has concrete physical outcomes like high blood pressure, digestive upset, headaches, and sexual dysfunction [8, 11]. Long-term chronic stress can also effect blood sugar regulation and immune function, making those with trauma histories more vulnerable to illness, diabetes, and premature death [8, 11].

### **Coping with Trauma**

Considering the effects that traumatic event exposure and traumatic symptomology can have on functioning and quality of life, it is natural for individuals to find ways to cope. Substance use, alcoholism, and smoking are common ways of coping with trauma symptoms [11, 22]. Such coping mechanisms are thought to increase the risk of engaging in additional harmful acts like criminal and unsafe sexual activity [11, 22]. Socially, traumatized individuals may associate with other people who also engage in risky behaviors and subsequently may form peer groups linked by traumatic events [8]. Specifically, individuals that experience extreme arousal may appear aggressive, angry or emotional while those experiencing extreme withdrawal may neglect their homes, jobs, and even children [8, 11, 22]. Some may avoid professional help and try to deal with the trauma alone as the fear of remembering the traumatic event is too great to confront [9]. As a result, cyclical patterns of repeated behavior related to trauma, namely domestic violence and drug/alcohol use, are replete within the academic literature [11, 22].

### **DEVELOPMENTS IN SYNTHESIZING TRAUMA AND SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

Trauma informed care has been slowly permeating the fields of mental health and substance use for the past decade, however it remains a fairly new subject in most fields [4]. Recently, schools of social work have begun to integrate coursework and trauma informed principles with the National Center for Social Work Trauma Education and Workforce Development [National Center] and the University of Buffalo as examples [21, 28]. The National Center, finding that there is a “shortage of social workers [that are] prepared to deliver culturally competent, evidence-based trauma treatment” has implemented trauma informed principles into the curricula of U.S. schools of social work since 2009 [21, para 1]. Similarly, the University of Buffalo (UB) publically adopted Trauma Informed Care as its “guiding principal” and founded an institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care (ITTIC) in 2012 [28]. Together, the UB and the National Center work with social work faculty, students, and community agencies to provide multidisciplinary training on trauma assessment and treatment [21, 28]. Collaborative work such as this demonstrates that the future of social work best practice is directly related to understanding trauma informed care.

## **Trauma Informed Care**

Trauma Informed Care [TIC] is an approach to understanding and examining client needs and problems that typically occur in the domains of social work, psychology, and counseling [9, 26-27]. TIC adopts a longitudinal and contextual approach to understanding an individual, with assessment ideally starting at childhood [9, 26]. By taking an early and detailed assessment approach, the social worker allows for the inclusion of multiple data points and past diagnoses to paint a picture of “why” specific behaviors and habits occur throughout the lifecourse [9, 22]. Additionally, when a deeper appreciation of the underlying problem is understood, it is thought that better suggestions on “how” to treat problems can result [22]. TIC, a person-centered approach, focuses ultimately on improving quality of life and functioning for the client and their family [9]. Since TIC does not view people as being “broken” or in need of fixing, this approach may naturally reveal unhealthy behaviors, relationships, and systems contributing to the clients’ problem [9, 22]. A main tenant of TIC is that individuals have the ability to heal from trauma if sufficient time and support are provided [15]. Traumatic events are cumulative and when events build up the impacts can be drastic [22].

Garnering an understanding of trauma requires the social worker to gain an appreciation and recognition that treatment is a very vulnerable time hallmarked by an increased sense of exposure as one tells their trauma narrative (personal recollection) of events [9, 15, 22]. A client will, over time, become more comfortable telling their “story” to others and it is theorized that in doing so the vivid emotion surrounding the traumatic events will lessen, leading to an increased tolerance for trauma triggers [11, 22]. This method of increasing vulnerability to promote strength may be seen as risky since clients telling their story may feel more exposed than ever before [15]. The telling of one’s story and the accompanying feelings of exposure can actually cause a latent trauma memory to be “triggered”; it is not uncommon for the client to feel worse before they feel better [9, 11]. This is also, in part, why TIC is a longitudinal technique: if treatment is cut short, trauma symptoms may be left open and raw [9, 11]. Practitioners and instructors alike must understand the vulnerability associated with the trauma narrative and be keenly aware of a client’s individual’s trauma triggers. The quality of the relationship between practitioner and the client or the instructor and the student are critical to successful trauma work.

## **Trauma Informed vs. Non- trauma informed**

Those that are new to the trauma informed paradigm may find that they align well with the tenants and values of the approach. This is not surprising given that trauma informed methods match social work values like, respect, dignity, self-worth, strengths based approaches, and adherence to strict professional boundaries and ethics. With that said, it may be beneficial to the reader to further discuss the differences between the two perspectives (trauma informed and non-trauma informed), as they are indeed quite different.

Trauma informed systems understand that trauma exposure is not a rarity and that in specific populations (inpatient mental health, prison, foster care, military, etc.) the estimated prevalence of traumatic exposure is high [15, 22]. Trauma informed systems recognize that coping mechanisms may be venues for dealing with traumatic history and instead of blaming a client for their situation, safety, connection, and stabilization are the main goals [10, 26-27]. Collaboration between the clinician and the client are stressed at all times and relationships are seen as the primary treatment method promoting long-term health and stability [15]. Knowledge and learning about one’s trauma are important ways to empower the client: when clients understand what is going on in their own body and mind, they may be more apt to trust the treatment process [22]. On a micro level, TIC notes of the language that is used in

assessment and treatment with neutral, culturally appropriate language, preferred at all times [15]. Compassion and empathy are stressed as well: instead of asking “What did you do?”, trauma informed clinicians ask “What happened to you?” [26]. In this manner, it is thought that the chances of re-traumatization from the treatment process are minimized as the client is integrated into the work and trusted at all times [10].

Non-trauma informed systems, on the other hand, do not provide the client with the knowledge or tools to understand their trauma and instead try to treat the presenting problem without addressing the underlying cause [15]. Clients may blindly trust their social worker without knowledge on the type of treatment used, its effectiveness or even its applicability to their life [22]. History of traumatic events may be ignored and may lead to misdiagnoses of Bipolar Disorder or Schizophrenia [11, 22]. Clients may be prescribed the wrong medications and may engage in treatments that are not relevant to the actual root problem [15, 22]. Additionally, non-trauma informed systems stress compliance with the case plan even if the client feels uncomfortable. Instead of exploring the source of resistance and tension, the social worker may impose strict time frames when the client must show progress and stability; completion of case plans is a priority and even if services are not working, clients are told to ‘trust in the process’ [11, 15]. Some scholars go so far as to say that systems that are not trauma informed may actually be “trauma inducing” [10]. Clients may be perceived as “weak”, “needy”, or “manipulative” and clinicians may appear inflexible and overly stern. One of the largest hallmarks of a non-trauma informed system appears to be the time with which clients are allowed to access services [15, 22]. Since TIC understands that both trauma and healing are cumulative, clients need time to unravel their past and move towards stability. Non-trauma informed systems may provide a set number of sessions and then simply refuse to pay for any more. Triaging mental health care, the opposite of trauma informed, may do more harm than good.

As an analogy of trauma informed care, consider an iceberg. The tip of the iceberg, which is the only thing visible from the surface, represents the client’s presenting problems (like drug use or criminal activity) that are often the target of traditional assessment and treatment. While the social worker may have good intentions, the real mass of the iceberg lies below the surface. This mass represents the trauma (childhood abuse for example) that is thought to be the true cause of the problems experienced. When operating out of a non-trauma informed system, clinicians are likely to only address the tip with the real root of the problems left untouched.

### **TRAUMA INFORMED SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

Much like trauma informed care, trauma informed education acknowledges the individual’s experience as truth; instruction and supervision must include the building of rapport, trust, and communication. In alignment with TIC, students are not seen as weak or broken but rather their humanity and self-care are made explicit. The supervision trauma narrative can effectively promote discussion with students by focusing on emotions and feelings related to painful events. As students navigate through their own trauma, alternative working styles (such as working from home) may result; if the student finds his/herself with extreme trauma symptoms, it may be necessary to seek additional mental health help.

One of the main challenges associated with instituting trauma informed practice is the potential for students to become traumatized themselves [15]. A main tenant in TIC is the ability for the practitioner to remain open, honest, and unbiased [9]. Since TIC asks that individuals explore the deeper reasons for their presenting problems, social workers need to learn a different (and possibly more refined) set of assessment and engagement techniques not



normally taught in social work [19]. While teaching a masters level social work class on trauma assessment and treatment, this author covered these refined skills and asked that students provide their viewpoint on the real-world utility of such methods. To emphasize this approach, students were provided with over 25 trauma assessments and were asked to conduct a role-play with a classmate while using these assessments as a guide. Students wrote weekly reflective essays regarding the effectiveness and appropriateness of the instruments in social work practice. While not necessarily intentional, these assignments allowed the students to explore deep-seated issues underlying their psyche from their pasts; although students were not required to role play as themselves, many of them chose to do so.

Child maltreatment, manipulative and coercive relationships, emotional abuse with intimate partners, domestic violence, drug and alcohol use, as well as mental health concerns like anxiety, depression, and eating disorders were some of the traumas that students reported experiencing. This proved difficult as students were placed in a dual role position: within one class period they would have played both a client as well as a social worker. The instructor was also placed into a role duality as deescalating students' trauma symptoms became more important than teaching the course concepts: the mental health of the students had to come first. This unique position required a new way of teaching and supervising that focused on empathy, the impact of trauma on social workers, and the development of trauma informed professional boundaries and ethics.

The traditional model of supervision where reflection and processing accompany case based problem solving [15, 19] was not appropriate in this situation. Students, instead of evaluating cases as objective outsiders, were actually peering into their own traumatic memories. Likewise, the instructor was not merely grading students on quality of completed work but was forced into a new trauma informed method of teaching and supervision. As such, the student's immediate concerns and emotions were central to their mental health; it was essential to target their responses to trauma before providing any instruction. As demonstrated by Sandy, this trauma can be debilitating and can impact functioning both in and out of work. Supervisory duties in this case are not to be taken lightly – the de-escalation and processing of one's own trauma must be done within a context of safety and learning. In this manner, professional relationships and the importance of student-teacher/worker-supervisor dynamic is worth considering [19].

A challenge for even veteran instructors, working with students with actively triggered trauma symptoms, can be an ethical challenge. Students must understand that they have the confidence of their instructors. Should a student disclose their past traumatic memories, the instructor must help in the creation of a self-care plan while also working to make sure that course grade or performance evaluation is not impacted disproportionately. It was learned that students in this class, who were trauma triggered, were fearful of judgment from others especially their superiors. It is important in this context that the instructors makes confidentiality and respect a top priority while letting their students know that their own trauma will not change the way they are treated. As well, students may benefit from trauma-related psychoeducational materials to learn more about their experiences. When using trauma informed instruction, educators have the opportunity to build upon existing supervision techniques as a foundation to help support, educate, and develop future workers in a manner that does not aggravate or re-trigger their trauma symptoms. The case narrative at the introduction of this paper, which is a conglomerate of multiple students, illustrates the typical situation that this instructor was in while teaching that course. Students shared similar trauma symptoms as well as similar concerns over getting professional help. Likewise, the

techniques that this instructor used (reflexivity, the trauma narrative, extra time, and empathy) were consistent among the multiple trauma-triggered students who sought help throughout the semester.

In reading this aforementioned narrative and understanding the etiology and effects of trauma, the instructor's actions may be a bit clearer. By staying calm and helping Sandy to process, the healing process that naturally comes from trauma work was able to occur on its own. Sandy was able to reach a new level of self-awareness and was able to tell her "story" without fear of triggering additional unwanted memories while also learning about trauma coping techniques at the same time. Sandy's trauma was not fully resolved before the course ended yet she felt stable enough to proceed in obtaining long-term psychotherapy apart from her instructor. While this may seem like typical instruction or supervision, it was in fact not. These actions were guided with the understanding that trauma work can actually be a trauma trigger: Sandy's instructor was abundantly available to students and chose to put their health and well-being before academic work. Working from a TIC perspective, while challenging, provides social work specific opportunities and challenges, which are discussed below.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF A TRAUMA INFORMED MODEL OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

One of the main barriers to operating from a TIC model is the apparent contradiction with some case management principles. Trauma work may actually cause the presenting problem to become worse before it gets better. The individual may attempt to cope and self-soothe with the habits that he/she knows best. When the individual realizes or is told by their social worker that their coping mechanisms (like drug use or social isolation) may be harmful, he/she may feel judged or stigmatized. Individuals may appear to be resistant, fearful, angry, or generally non-communicative. Appropriate trauma work allows the affected individual time to learn about their traumatic history and then to engage in services necessary for healing. Time limited therapeutic services may not afford the chance to attain that long-term stability and may possibly cause more trauma if services are prematurely stopped.

Similar situations can occur with social work students as their coursework changes each semester: they may not have the ability to process their trauma symptoms and triggers before the course ends. In this vein, there are strong advocacy and policy implications for the trauma informed instructor. Students may need more time for coursework, which may require an adaptation or change of policies all together. Instructors may need to refer students to services outside of the university in order to comply with mandated reporting, but more importantly to promote mental health stability. Agencies and colleges alike may need to be more flexible with the amount of time given to individuals who are trauma triggered. Likewise, instructors must pay attention to their own self-care since utilizing trauma informed principals carries a risk of secondary trauma itself. It is important for instructors to institute their own self-care plans to ensure that they remain healthy, balanced, and happy both in work and at home. In short, social work must return to its roots of individualized treatment, empathy, and concern for long-term wellbeing when operating out of a trauma informed model.

### **Suggestions and Opportunities**

Trauma informed social work may take more time, funding, and energy than non-trauma informed social work and people may feel as though it is not worth the investment. While that is understandable, the benefits and opportunities afforded by trauma informed social work and the corresponding trauma informed education certainly seem to outweigh the drawbacks. Trauma informed social work may lead to increased stability as well as increased motivation in completing case plan goals. Likewise, when providing instruction from a trauma informed

manner, students may be more aware and more likely to utilize their teachers for consultation and debriefing. Students and their teachers have the distinctive opportunity to communicate about self-care and can brainstorm strategies and techniques together. It is hoped that in doing so, teachers will be able to help their students avoid future “burn out” in the field.

It is proposed here that trauma informed education is sensible as the methods used to engage clients can also be used to engage students. The supervision trauma narrative is the first practice point to consider: it is important that teachers make a regularly scheduled habit of speaking with their students, who are trauma triggered, while paying attention to both verbal and non-verbal communications. Listening to students, more than talking to them, is vital in conveying messages of support, value, and respect. Secondly, when a student discloses trauma or pain, the trauma informed instructor must respond with empathy and compassion. The trauma informed instructor, one who is educated on trauma symptoms and coping mechanisms, is able to document mental health and productivity changes in their students over time. Trauma informed educators can, thirdly, work creatively and collaboratively with students to develop grounded self-care plans and work management techniques aimed at best practice, professional ethics and work-life balance. Creating a self-care plan involves crafting healthy coping mechanisms complete with socio-emotional supports apart from work/school. Trauma informed educators may choose to provide instruction to students on trauma, trauma triggers, and trauma symptoms as a precautionary measure. The trauma informed instructor does not want to enable their student or engage in a co-dependent relationship with them but rather seeks to support them in attaining health and balance. Likewise, the trauma informed instructor makes their self-care a priority attending to their own mental and physical health regularly. Fourth, if a student is experiencing extreme trauma symptoms, the instructor has the duty to uphold mandated reporting; if there is a concern over harm to self or others, the proper authorities should be contacted without delay. Fifth, if the student is unable to function, the instructor must realize this and respond with kindness rather than frustration. The student may be allowed to take medical leave in order to heal without poor grade reports. Formal trauma treatment or formal support groups can provide needed relief if a student is having extreme difficulty. Finally, teachers have a role that is important and should not be downplayed; appreciating this importance means never underestimating the power of caring. Sometimes merely showing compassion and concern may be enough to change someone’s life and is a practice point that all social workers can embody.

### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

When working from a TIC paradigm, instructors must realize that simply learning about trauma can actually constitute a trauma trigger. As a result, the health of the student must be a priority. While this may be frustrating for instructors, continuing to work without addressing said trauma may prove to be even more damaging. A student who has been triggered may unintentionally harm the clients he/she is working with. Teachers must display care and concern while also renegotiating the boundaries of their working relationship. What is an instructor to do if a student discloses that she/he is a threat to herself or others? How should an instructor treat their students while also evaluating their trauma at the same time? How does the instructor remain objective when such deep disclosure inevitably causes an empathic response? Personal experiences have dictated that these situations are best handled on a case-by-case basis however that common techniques discussed can be used.

In the future, it is foreseeable that, all schools of social work may be teaching about trauma, the effects of trauma as well as trauma informed models of care. Those learning about trauma as well as those already operating from a trauma informed paradigm are going to need

instructors who are knowledgeable and prepared. Trauma informed social work is certainly fodder for additional study as traditional best practice, self-care, and ethical norms are challenged in the process. Clinicians, supervisors, administrators and policy makers can all work together to help realize the future of social work that uncovers the whole iceberg, not just the tip

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# The School Environmental Factors That Affect the Academic Performance of Senior High Financial Accounting Students In Tamale Metropolis in The Northern Region of Ghana

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to examine the school environmental factors that affect the academic performance of Senior High financial accounting students in the Tamale Metropolis of Ghana. Twenty nine (29) teachers and two hundred and sixty (260) financial accounting students from the seven (7) senior high schools in the metropolis were selected for the study. It was a descriptive study where questionnaire was used to collect the data. The study revealed that availability of residential facilities in schools and instructional materials have a positive influence on the level of students' academic performance in financial accounting. Students who have access to relevant instructional materials such as recommended text books, ICT and library facilities use those materials to supplement their learning endeavours. The study also recommended that, government should put policy framework and structures in place in order to provide residential facilities to most day schools, if not all, and provide those schools with the necessary residential facilities.

**Keywords:** Environmental Factors, Academic Performance, Financial Accounting.

## INTRODUCTION

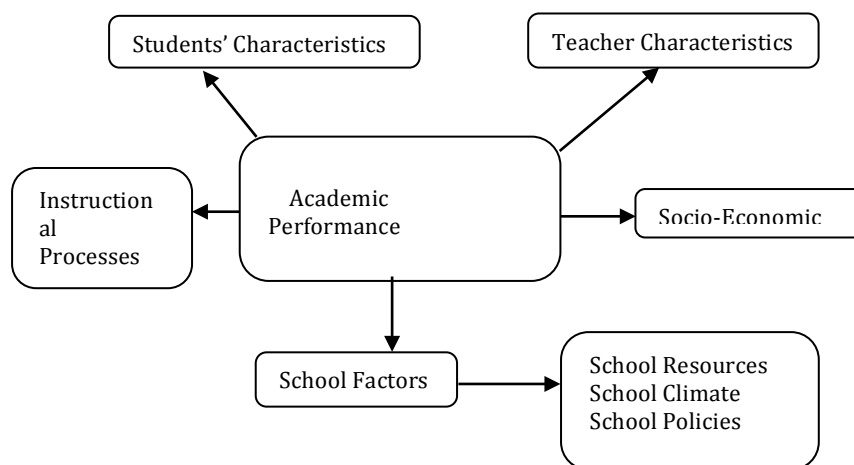
Education is the bedrock for all future development. This assertion means that education is an important tool for ensuring the continued growth of all nations. Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) concurs that "what the citizens of a country become is dependent upon the sort of education offered them" (p. 1). According to Lockheed and Vespoor (1991), the future development of the World and individual nations hinges more than ever on the capacity of individuals and countries to acquire, adapt and advance knowledge. This capacity depends on whether the population has attained the required skills and knowledge needed to expand and make desired improvement.

Education is the process of imparting to the younger generation, knowledge, values, skills and attitudes that will enable them to play various active roles in the society in which they find themselves (Taba, 1962). The knowledge, values, skills and attitudes required of the younger

generation are expressed in the philosophy of education or the goal of education of the country. These goals or philosophy of education are translated into practical use through a medium called curriculum (Abosi & Brookman-Amissah, 1992).

It should be noted that the educational goals of a country are normally linked with its problems, requirements, needs and aspirations. There was the need to keep proper records and ensure sound management of the use of economic resources, by way of ensuring efficiency in operations and effective use of resources. This called for the introduction of accounting as a programme of study into the educational system. In Ghana, Financial Accounting curriculum has been developed into teaching syllabus by the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of the Ministry of Education (MOE). In the teaching syllabus are the justifications for the introduction of Financial Accounting into the Senior High Schools curriculum of the Ghana education system. Among them are: the need to provide accurate information for improvement in the efficiency of the economic sector for the country's development. Again, the growth and expansion of business institutions in the country have necessitated the need to train more qualified people to meet the demand, by way of helping in the sound management of these institutions (both profit and not-profit orientated organisations); to increase the numeracy skills of students to help prepare them for further studies in business at the higher level.

Another justification is its requirement for the immediate employment and lifelong career enrichment such as Accountants, Bankers, Auditors, Financial Analysts, Tax Consultants and Management Consultants among others (Ministry of Education, 2008). However various educational research studies have shown that students' academic performance in a subject is a function of several interactive factors. These factors constantly interact in the school environment and therefore determine how good or bad a student may perform in his or her academic pursuit. Figure 1 clearly illustrates the determinants of students' academic performance.



**Figure 1: Determinants of Academic Performance of Students**

### **Theory of Correlates of Effective Schools**

The output of students, as reflected on their test scores from series of assessment is the measure of their academic achievement. Several factors influence the academic achievement of students, among which is the school environment which differs from one school to the other. Some schools perform better than others. However, research has identified certain factors that

make a school more effective in improving the academic performance of students. These factors are called the correlates of effective schools because; the unique characteristics of the majority of effective schools are correlated with student success (Lezotte, 1991).

The correlates of effective schools, which was formally referred to as “five factor theory” because of five elements identified to affect school effectiveness, now comprises seven elements. According to Kirk & Jones (2004) these correlates are the means to achieving high and equitable levels of student learning. The Correlates are: Clear School Mission; High Expectations for Success; Instructional Leadership; Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task; Safe and Orderly Environment; Positive Home-School Relations; and Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress.

A study of the trend of West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) performance by Financial Accounting students from the year 2006 to the year 2009 indicated an unstable trend in the students’ performance. The average pass rate for the years under review of just 53.6% (WAEC, 2007-2010) was very worrying and called for further probing as to why amid all efforts on improving the quality of education in the country, the performance of students, particularly Financial Accounting students was still very poor. If an insight is taken into the disparity, one would observe that some schools perform excellently while others perform very poorly. On investigating into what could account for this disparity, an observation one is likely to make is that school environments differ, and this difference is likely to affect students’ performance.

In Ghana, school environmental factors leave much to be desired. Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS) also noted the uneven sharing of resources to senior secondary schools, especially business, by the Ghana Education Trust Fund Secretariat (Essah-Hienno, 2005). Infrastructural development in schools is also unequally shared and this has affected the quality of education in the country. Mr. Paul Evans Aidoo, the then regional minister of Western Region noted that poor educational infrastructure and the attitude of some stakeholders in education negatively affected the quality of education (Dadzie, 2010). Whereas some schools are well resourced in terms of infrastructure, personnel and instructional materials inter alia, others have inadequate classrooms. The least said among personnel and teaching learning materials, the better.

It is in view of these and other reasons that this study was designed to investigate the school environment variables and their possible effects on the performance of the SHS Financial Accounting students in schools in the Tamale Metropolis in the Northern region of Ghana.

The study sought to examine the critical factors in the school environment that affect the performance of students in Financial Accounting in the Tamale Metropolis of the Northern region of Ghana and suggests ways of improving upon the conditions of learning at the Senior High School level. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the extent to which the availability of instructional materials affects Financial Accounting student’s academic performance.
2. Examine how the availability of residential facilities affects performance of the Financial Accounting students.
3. Investigate the effect of class size on the academic performance of Financial Accounting students.



## **Research Question**

The study sought answers to the following research question:

How does the availability of instructional materials affect students' performance in Financial Accounting?

## **Research Hypotheses**

The study was guided by the following hypotheses:

1. H0: There is no significant difference in academic performance in Financial Accounting between students with residential facilities and students without residential facilities.

H1: There is a significant difference in academic performance in Financial Accounting between students with residential facilities and students without residential facilities.

2. H0: There is no significant relationship between class size and academic performance of students in Financial Accounting.

H1: There is a significant relationship between class size and academic performance of students in Financial Accounting.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The design used for this study was the descriptive survey research design. According to Best & Kahn (1993), "descriptive research deals with the relationships among non-manipulative variables, since the events or conditions have already occurred" (p. 20). McMillan (1996) also contended that a descriptive survey research essentially describes existing phenomena without changing some conditions to affect subjects' responses. This design was selected because it enabled data to be collected in order to test the hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current status of the school environment variables of SHS in the Tamale Metropolis of Ghana and possible effects of these variables on students' performance in Financial Accounting.

The population of the study comprised Financial Accounting students and teachers of public senior high schools in the Tamale Metropolis of Ghana. The area of the study was the Tamale Metropolis within the Northern Region of Ghana. The target group for the study consisted of 800 Financial Accounting students and 29 Financial Accounting teachers. The 800 students were all final (fourth) year Financial Accounting students. The final year students have stayed in the school environment and studied the subject (Financial Accounting) in a number of years. As a consequence, this group of students were in a better position to provide valuable information concerning the topic under investigation. The population for the study is depicted by the Table 1.

The sample that was used for the study comprised 260 Financial Accounting students and 29 Financial Accounting teachers in the selected schools. The selection of the 260 students was done by using the table for determining a sample size from a given population. According to Krejcie and Morgan (as cited in Sarantakos, 1998), for a given population of 800, the appropriate sample size for research exercise should be 260 respondents.

**Table 1: Population for the Study**

Name of school	Students	Teachers
Northern Business SHS	185	7
Business SHS	173	6
Ghana SHS	120	5
Tamale SHS	117	4
Tamale Girls SHS	110	4
Kalpohine SHS	95	3
Total	800	29

*Source: Field work (2011)*

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. The simple random technique was used to select the 260 Financial Accounting students while the census survey was employed to collect the 29 Financial Accounting teachers. The lottery method of the simple random sampling technique was used. This gave every Financial Accounting student an equal and independent chance of being selected to participate in the study.

Two sets of researcher-developed questionnaire and Financial Accounting Achievement Test were the two instruments used to collect data from the Financial Accounting Teachers and Financial Accounting Students in the Tamale Metropolitan area. While the Financial Accounting achievement test was used to measure the dependent variable (students' performance in Financial Accounting), the questionnaire sought information on teachers' and students' background data (name of school, gender, teachers' level of qualification, teachers' experience) and the independent variables (class size, adequacy of instructional materials and residential facilities) that influence the level of students' performance.

Data collected for the study were analysed with the aid of Statistical Package for Service Solutions (SPSS) computer application software. The dependent variable was senior high schools students' performance in Financial Accounting and the independent variables were change of school environmental variables reflected in class size, instructional materials and residential facilities. Responses to the research questions and the hypotheses were analysed as follows: Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation) were used to analyse the data for research question one: To what extent does the availability of adequate instructional materials improve students' performance in Financial Accounting?

Independent samples t- test was used to analyse the data on research hypothesis one. This allowed for mean scores between the two groups of Financial Accounting students to be compared. The data concerning research hypothesis two were analyzed through the use of both simple linear regression and simple descriptive statistics.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*Research Question 1: How availability of instructional materials affect students' performance in Financial Accounting*

This question was posed to examine how the availability of teaching and learning materials affects the academic performance of students in Financial Accounting. Items 7-14 of the questionnaire for financial accounting students and items 24-31 of the questionnaire for the financial accounting teachers were developed to answer this research question. Descriptive

statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) were used to analyze the responses on how the use of instructional resources can affect students' learning and achievement in the subjects. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Students' Views Concerning the Influence of Instructional Materials on Learning Process**

Statement	V. True N %	True N %	N. True N %	M	SD
Availability of recommended textbooks enhances my performance	180(76.3)	54(22.9)	2 (0.8)	2.85	.56
Graphs books enables me to study effectively	185(78.4)	47(19.9)	4 (1.7)	2.7	.86
Chalkboard and its accessories facilitate my learning	56 (23.7)	73(30.9)	107(45.3)	1.4	.71
Availability of library facilities helps to improve my performance	205(86.9)	23(9.7)	8(3.4)	2.95	.54
Availability of ICT facilities enables me to perform well	184(78.0)	45(17.0)	7(3.0)	2.67	.84
Availability of instructional materials improves students' performance	209(88.6)	27(11.4)	0(0)	2.97	.47

Source: Field work (2011)

NB: V= Very; N= Not Very True = 2.5-3.0;

True = 1.5-2.4; Not True = 1.0-1.5

The results in Table 2 indicate that a majority of the students were of the view that the availability of recommended textbooks in Financial Accounting can help to improve the academic performance of students in the subject (M=2.85, SD=.56). The study also reveals that students were of the view that the existence of recommended text books enabled them to study effectively. This means that the availability of the recommended and reference Financial Accounting textbooks influences the level of students' performance. This is consistent with the earlier finding of researchers (Fuller, 1985; Eshiwani, 1986; Walstad & Rebeck, 2001; Atanda & Jaiyeoba, 1998) that the availability of textbooks enhances students' performance in their learning pursuit.

Moreover, the students were in support of the ideas that the availability of ICT and library facilities (as shown by M=2.67; SD=.84 and M=2.95; SD=.54 respectively) could help to improve upon their academic performance in the study of Financial Accounting. This suggests that ICT and library facilities serve as complement to the recommended textbooks and other reading materials that are necessary for the teaching and learning of Financial Accounting at the Senior High School level. With the presence of such facilities, the students can resort to them in order to make further research on the subject area. In support of this recent finding, Owoeye and Yara (2011) found that the availability of library facilities correlated with students' performance. The present result on the positive influence of ICT facilities contradicts the earlier finding of Becta (2002), who found no consistent relationship between the average

amount of ICT use reported for any subject at a given key stage and its apparent effectiveness in raising academic standards among students.

This suggests that the availability of instructional materials has a positive influence on the level of students' academic performance in the subject. This finding is consistent with the view that the greater quantity of instructional materials, the greater the level of students' performance in Financial Accounting. The present study confirms the previous findings of earlier researchers (Suydam & Higgins, 1977; Sowell, 1989; Grouws & Cebulla, 2000; Jekayinfa, n. d; Owoeye & Yara, 2011) that the presence and use of instructional materials can contribute to students' academic performance in various disciplines.

Research Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant difference in academic performance between students with residential facilities and students without residential facilities.*

This hypothesis was posed to help determine whether there is any significant difference in academic performance between students in schools with residential facilities and those without residential facilities. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics concerning the various residential facilities.

**Table 3: Teachers' and Students' Views Concerning the Adequacy of Various Residential Facilities**

Residential Facility	Teachers' Responses		Students' Responses			
	Adequate		Adequate		Inadequate	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Beddings</b>	9 (31.0)	20 (69.0)	32 (13.6)		204 (86.4)	
<b>Study areas</b>	7 (24.1)	22 (75.9)	33 (14.0)		203 (86.0)	
<b>Recreational areas</b>	8 (27.6)	21 (72.4)	14 (0.9)		222 (94.1)	
<b>Dormitories</b>	11 (37.9)	18 (62.1)	18 (7.6)		218 (92.4)	
<b>Dining Hall</b>	13 (44.8)	16 (55.2)	51 (21.6)		185 (78.4)	
<b>Lavatory Facilities</b>	5 (17.2)	24 (82.8)	4 (1.7)		232 (98.3)	

Source: Field work (2011)

The results as shown in Table 3 indicate that most of the second cycle institutions in the Tamale Metropolis do not have adequate supply of the necessary residential facilities that are needed to assist residential students to undertake their studies successfully. Both the Financial Accounting teachers and students who participated in the study were of the view that such residential facilities as beddings, study recreational areas, dormitories, dining halls and lavatories were inadequate in the selected senior high schools. This implies that students in the boarding house might face some difficulties in their studies and this will impact negatively on their overall academic standards in Financial Accounting. On their part, Bourner and Race (1990) found that students with inadequate residential facilities tend to juggle their academic work and other environmental responsibilities which can incapacitate their educational gains.

In furtherance to the above results, an independent samples t-test was used to find out the differences, if any, between the two groups of students. Levene's test for homogeneity of variance for the two samples was conducted. Outcome of the test was not significant ( $p < .05$ ) and hence, equal variance between the two independent groups was assumed. The results of independent samples t-test are presented in Table 4 for interpretation and discussion.

The results of the t-test in Table 9 reveal that there was significant statistical difference in the mean academic performance between the two groups of students ( $t = -.63$ ,  $df = 234$ ,  $p < .05$ , 2-tailed).

**Table 4: Independent Samples T-test Results on Difference between Students with Residential Facilities and Students without Residential Facilities**

Academic Performance		N	M	SD	t-cal	df	Sig. (2tailed)
Students with residential Facilities		84	23.5	73.7	-.63	234	.003
Students without residential Facilities		152	20.7	53.4			

Source: Field work (2011)

The study findings revealed that students with residential facilities had a higher mean score ( $M = 23.5$ ,  $SD = 73.7$ ) while students without residential facilities had a lower mean score ( $M = 20.7$ ,  $SD = 53.4$ ). Therefore, students who have access to residential facilities perform better than students who do not have such facilities.

This is because the availability of boarding facilities might provide favourable environment that supports the process of teaching and learning in schools. Thus, students depend on residential facilities to survive academically in school. This corroborates the findings of Afful-Broni and Hogrey (2010) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004) that academic performance significantly correlated with the availability of residential facilities. Thus, improvement in residential facilities may also lead to improvement in the academic performance since the students may depend on those facilities.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between class size and performance of students in Financial Accounting.

Studies have shown that the size of an instructional group has influence on the performance of students in that group. This research hypothesis was formulated to explore whether there is any significant relationship between class size and students' academic performance in Financial Accounting. An attempt was made to collect data on class size. Items 3-6 and 13-16 of the questionnaire for Financial Accounting students and Financial Accounting teachers were employed respectively. The descriptive results are summarised in Table 5.

**Table 5: Class Size of Financial Accounting Students**

Class Size	Frequency	Percentage
1-20	0	0
21-40	5	2.1
41-60	145	61.5
More than 60	86	36.4
Total	236	100.0

Source: Field work (2011)

From Table 5, 145 (61.5%) of the respondents reported that their Financial Accounting classes composed of 41-60 students while only five (2.1%) of the students indicated that their class sizes comprised 21-40 students. Also, 86 (36.4%) of the respondents consented that the number of students in their Financial Accounting classes were more than 60. The results of the study are indicative of the fact that senior high schools in the Tamale Metropolis that offer

Financial Accounting have large class sizes because some researchers (Brewer et al., 1999) set it at 17 students while others quote actual class size at 20 students. These large class sizes do not augur well for effective teaching and learning and this might have negative impact on the academic performance of students in Financial Accounting.

Furthermore, simple linear regression analysis was employed to help determine the effect of the independent variable (class size) on the dependent variable (academic performance). The summary statistics are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Module Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	-.116a	.013	.009		.51619

*Predictors: (Constant), Performance*  
*Source: Field work (2011)*

The results in Table 6 indicate that there is a moderate linear relationship between class size and students’ performance in Financial Accounting ( $r = -.116$ ). The summary model shows that class size, which is the predictor, accounted for only 1.7% of students’ academic performance in Financial Accounting (R Square = .013). This means that the 98.3% of the variance in students’ academic performance in Financial Accounting occurred due to other factors besides the size of the class. This implies school environmental factors; the teachers’ level of expertise and experience, availability of instructional materials, students level of motivation, the nature of the learning task among others are the most significant factors that explain for the level of students’ performance in Financial Accounting. The result of this current study supports that of Hanushek’s (cited in Masden, 2011) study which found no consistent relationship between class size and student achievements as 35 studies reported a weak positive effect of smaller classes.

**Table 7: Regression Coefficient of the Relationship between Large Class Size and Students’ Performance in Financial Accounting**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	Constant	3.595	.145		24.820	.000
	Performance	-.004	.003	-.116	-1.785	.075

*df = 234*  
*Source: Field work (2011)*

The information provided in Table 7 was used to obtain the regression equation which explains expected significant of the level of students’ performance with a given class size. The

regression equation is given as  $Y = 3.595 - .004X$  where  $Y$  = Academic performance and  $X$  = Class size.

The results in the Table 7 show that there is a weak negative relationship between class size and students' performance although the relationship is not significant ( $t = 24.82$ ,  $r = -.116$ ,  $p > .075$ , 2-tailed).

The results of the study indicate that although large class size can lead to a small reduction in students' performance, such weak and negative relationship is not significant. Thus, when Financial Accounting students in large classes are taught by competent Financial Accounting teachers, who are equipped with the relevant instructional materials, the students stand a better chance of making great gains in their academic pursuits. This contradicts the earlier finding of Glass and Smith (1979), who found that a significant increase in academic achievement require a dramatic reduction in class size. Hence, students of small class sizes will not necessarily perform better if the relevant educational resources (human, material and financial resources) are not secured and supplied to support the teaching-learning process in the classroom.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions can be made:

Availability of instructional materials has a positive influence on the level of students' academic performance in Financial Accounting. Students who have access to relevant instructional materials such as recommended text books, ICT and library facilities use those materials to supplement their learning endeavours. This will therefore assist them to learn effectively.

The existence of residential facilities can affect students' academic performance. Thus, students in senior high schools with residential facilities have the comfort to concentrate on their studies and this helps to improve upon their academic performance in Financial Accounting.

The number of students in Financial Accounting classes is not a significant determinant of their academic performance in that subject. Thus, with access to adequate and relevant academic and residential facilities, the academic performance of Financial Accounting students in both small and large classes will not differ significantly.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE**

The following recommendations have been made regarding the results of the study and their pedagogical implications on Financial Accounting at Senior High School Level. It is envisaged that these recommendations, when taken into consideration, would bring about efficiency and effectiveness in the teaching and learning process of Financial Accounting and other related business programmes that are offered at Senior High Schools in Ghana.

In the first place, since instructional materials can help improve students' performance in Financial Accounting, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service should adequately provide all senior high schools that offer Financial Accounting with the necessary instructional materials. Learning materials such as recommended textbooks and pamphlets on Financial Accounting, chalkboard and its equipment, among others, should be provided to schools and this will go a long way to aid the efforts of both students and teachers in the teaching and learning of Financial Accounting.

Secondly, the government should put policy framework and structures in place in order to provide residential facilities to most day schools, if not all, and provide those schools with the necessary residential facilities. To have a sustained improved academic performance among Financial Accounting students, the government, parents/teachers associations, school management committees and other philanthropists should pool resources together in order to provide senior high schools with ultra-modern residential facilities. These agencies should make conscious efforts to refurbish all boarding schools.

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## Post-Conflict Amnesty Policies of President Goodluck Jonathan in Nigeria: Role of History and Failure of Wrong Philosophies

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper has been titled, "Post-Conflict Amnesty Policies of President Goodluck Jonathan in Nigeria', The Role of History and the Failure of Wrong Philosophies". The Central argument of the research was that it is clearly unthinkable to grant another amnesty in Nigeria while an earlier grant of Post-Conflict amnesty to Niger Delta Militants, continues to indicate a likelihood of a possible return of hostility to the region since the Post-Conflict policy itself was never based on dialogue or any sound philosophy of conflict. The paper made this profound observation that the refusal by Nigerian leaders to engage separatist groups in genuine dialogue, is not the only factor', Greed, Corruption, and Maladministration, etc, are also responsible for the failure of amnesty policies in Nigeria. Yet, the research aimed to discuss the role played by history and the contributions of wrong philosophies to the failure of Post-Conflict amnesty policies in Nigeria. In this way, the paper was significant in raising these two (2) issues, first, that any post conflict amnesty policy in Nigeria, can only succeed by first overcoming tribal sentiment created by the country's history of civil war, military rule, amalgamation and colonial favours; and second, if this cannot be achieved, then, President Goodluck Jonathan can only succeed by replacing post conflict amnesty policies with genuine dialogue, being in the opinion of this research that dialogue still remains the best philosophy of conflict for any nation.

**KEY WORDS:** Post-Conflict Amnesty Policies of the Jonathan Administration, History of Nigeria from pre-colonial to present day, philosophies of conflict in Human Society.

### INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL OVERVIEW



The date was May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014, when President Goodluck Jonathan declared a second amnesty of the Post-Conflict nature in Nigeria. This time, it was not a Post-Conflict amnesty policy in favour of Ex-Niger-Delta Militants as it was the case in 2009. This year's May 29<sup>th</sup> 2014

Democracy-Day declaration of Post Conflict amnesty policy was an amnesty declaration in favour of Boko Haram in the North of the country. Following this declaration of amnesty in favour of Boko Haram, Nigerians have continued

to react both ways-for and against the President's decision. Unlike the Niger-Delta Militants, a cross section of Nigerians, and indeed, members of the Public, have for the most part,

conceived of Boko Haram, not as freedom fighters but a pure stock of separatist groups. Therefore, a major reason why members of the Public have continued to react to this second amnesty grant to Boko Haram by the Jonathan's administration, has been that in Nigeria, Post-Conflict amnesty policies have only served the Nigerian government as a brutal military philosophy unleashed against voices of dissent, yet, the said policy is disguised as a post-conflict healing process. Therefore, it has only been normal for Nigerians to continually react against amnesty policies in general as recent history in the country seems to indicate that amnesty policies in Nigeria merely serve the Nigerian oligarchy as a tool for silencing voices of decent and regional opposition(s) anytime their activities appear to run contrary to the political ambitions of Nigerian Oligarchy, and nothing more.

One of such retrospective but incisive reaction by Sabella Ogbobodo. (July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010), which seems to tell the whole story of the failure of post-conflict amnesty policies in the Post-Military democracies of the Jonathan's first and second administration(s), duly indicate that, perhaps, it is because of tribal, military, colonial, amalgamation and civil war, religious, ethnic, and political sentiments, etc, that Nigerian oligarchy does not only not know how to share power but is completely uncomfortable with (the philosophy and history of) dialogue as a means of resolving conflict in Nigeria and other national issues. According to Ogbobodo in another commentary (Oct 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009), it is to be noted that during the 2009 amnesty grant to Niger-Delta militants by the Joint team of Yar'Adua-Jonathan's first administration, the leading militia group in the Niger-Delta region, namely, MEND, continuously wanted dialogue as a means of restoring peace in the region. But instead of dialogue, the Yar'Adua-Jonathan's administration, having looked at themselves as successors of the colonial masters and admirers of pre-democracy military policies including the country's civil war history, preferred to impose on the Niger-Delta militants a compulsory post-conflict amnesty policy, and on refusal, declared the said first administration of Yar'Adua-Jonathan a total war against the region. This was strange to most Nigerians because there is hardly a Nigerian adult who lived to witness the Nigerian civil war who is happy to speak of another war in the country. Most surprisingly was the point that both President Musa Yar'Adua and, then, Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, both witnessed the abomination and the desolation that befell the country during the civil war. It is to this extent that people often wonder about the content of power that often makes Nigerian oligarchy to forget history so easily, especially, where such forgetfulness is tailored towards their political ambitions of ruling the country by whatever means, even where obvious problems in the various regions are merely swept under the carpet in the name of amnesty policies.

This art of taking for granted, the negative role played by the country's past and present history and the misapplication of misleading, military, colonial, ethnic, socio-religious and class philosophies, etc, to national issues in Nigeria, etc, has in the view of the "Sunday Punch" as related and couched differently by its reporter, Dapachez (April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014), explained that this forgetfulness of history and application of wrong philosophies been largely responsible for the failure of national policies (including the amnesty policies of the Goodluck Jonathan's administration(s) in Nigeria). According to this text by this reporter, facts emanating from the post-conflict 2009 Amnesty Camp at Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State South of Nigeria, tend to indicate that, unless proactive measures have been taken by the current administration by the Jonathan Government, there are indications that hostility may someday, and sometime in the future, return to the Niger-Delta Region out of which the 2009 amnesty policy was granted. To this extent, a connection was created in the sense that when on May 29<sup>th</sup> 2014, being Nigeria's Democracy Day of this year, the current administration by President Goodluck Jonathan, proceeded to declare a second (ever) amnesty policy in the country, this time in respect of Boko Haram sects in Northern Nigeria, the country's amalgamation history,

colonial favouritism, and tribal sentiments, etc, from the country's civil war history and military rule influences on the current democracy in the country, were obviously loud and clear as some political affiliates of '*certain generals*' in the North of the country *outrightly* debunked president Jonathan's efforts with the argument that Boko Haram is a "*faceless group*" in the country. The argument, if not for any reason, did more than anything else, amount to nothing less than what everyone was already familiar, namely, the "*Northern Agenda*".

As fortune would have it, this second amnesty policy by the Jonathan's administration was coming at a time when reports reaching the Nigerian media, began to indicate full and clear evidence of the failure of post-conflict amnesty policies in Nigeria, stressing the contributions made both by the country's past and present history and the delusiveness of wrong philosophies of conflict in the failure of post conflict amnesty policies, stressing also that amnesty policies in Nigeria will always fail to produce good results, unless something is done by the Jonathan administration. The analysis given by Depaches in the "Sunday Punch" (April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014) as an incisive analysis of the 2009 amnesty grant to Niger Delta militants, raised legitimate doubts whether any amnesty grant in the country could represent a government policy in the real sense outside what is obtainable in a military regime? This for Depachez is to the extent that each day that passes-by, Ex-militants in their Obubra camp, keep waiting with bathed breath for their passing out parade. (Possibly because of primordial sentiments arising from the country's history) *Political heavy weights in the country have hardly allowed the Jonathan's administration to adequately deal decisively with post conflict amnesty. The position as related by Depachez is that since president Yar'Adua sent the first badge of Ex-militants for different projects overseas, little or nothing has been heard or said about them. What more? In the midst of all this, related ministries such as; Youth Ministry, Niger-Delta Ministry, Culture and Tourism, Education and Sports, etc, which were founded for purposes of assisting to arrest Youth restiveness in the country, hardly saying or doing anything to expedite governments' post-conflict amnesty promises to conflict regions in Nigeria.* This research paper, "Post-Conflict Amnesty policies of president Goodluck Jonathan in Nigeria; The Role of History and the Failures of Wrong Philosophies"; has been written to contest the following positions without fear or favour;



That Post-Conflict amnesty policies of President Goodluck Jonathan, and indeed in Nigeria as a whole, are plagued with a variety of setbacks to includes; corruption, maladministration, and political manipulations.

But in all, their failures which have eventually led to their total non-performances as policies of President Jonathan's administration, etc, all have something to do with application of wrong philosophy of conflict and with sentiments arising from the country's past and present history.

Due to lack or the absence of dialogue, or the absence of any other sound philosophy of conflict in the process, the amnesty policies of president Jonathan, and indeed, all amnesty policies in the country, etc. would continue to fail unless president Jonathan or the Nigerian Nation does something proactive.

If President Goodluck Jonathan must successfully produce a workable amnesty policy in the country, then, he must work hard to overcome, first and most fundamentally, tribal, religious, colonial, military and civil war sentiments amongst Nigerian oligarchy.

If this cannot be achieved, then, President Jonathan can "*alternatively*" produce workable solutions by replacing amnesty policies with genuine dialogue as an effective philosophy of conflict in the country.

As for the already granted amnesty of 2009 to Niger-Delta militants in the south of the country, president Jonathan must be committed to the original version of an amnesty policy as it was conceived by its author, Namely, as a “rehabilitation” and a “reconciliatory” process meant to persuade separatist groups into cooperating with government policies, and nothing more, because contrary to these, the amnesty, though granted, shall from the point of view of classroom analysis, continue to fail as an amnesty policy

The over listed positions have been argued individually and collectively in the body of this research paper. But this was not done without, first, making a clarification of what the post conflict amnesty policies of president Goodluck Jonathan in Nigeria duly embodies and the said role played by history and wrong philosophies in rendering them unattractive as policies of the ruling regime.

### **POST-CONFLICT AMNESTY POLICIES OF THE JONATHANS ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA: HISTORICAL BASICS, PHILOSOPHICAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND THEORETICAL EXPOSITION.**

While for purposes of fairness, it amounts to one thing to indict related agencies such as; Niger Delta Ministry, Youth Ministry, Sports and Tourism, etc, which were all founded to facilitate solutions against chronic youth restiveness, etc, for failure to spur different presidential committees on Amnesty into effective results of post-conflict amnesty policies of the Jonathan’s administration as well as the amnesty policies ever granted by leaders in Nigeria; it is quite another thing entirely to point out at the very beginning of our discussion in this paper that the failures of all parties who are connected in anyway with the amnesty grants in Nigeria and at any time in the country’s history etc, have been due largely to what this research paper calls “the role of history” and the “wrong application of misleading philosophies” of conflict in Nigeria. One of such failed philosophies of conflict has been highlighted as the philosophy of amnesty currently being relied upon by Nigerian leaders as a philosophy of conflict in contemporary Nigeria committed to the leadership of President Goodluck Jonathan.

Ever when dialogue proves to be the best option in the circumstances, Nigerian oligarchy has been more interested in pronouncing a “compulsory amnesty” programme with threats of war and victimization of voices of dissent within the affected region of the country. The amnesty policies of the Jonathan’s administration(s) have been so called “post conflict amnesty policies” of his administration since their grants have been based on Post-conflict scenarios.

- **Conflict in the Niger Delta**

Highlighted Blocks in Nigeria numerically showing states typically considered as states of the Niger Delta region: 1. [Abia](#), 2. [Akwa Ibom](#), 3. [Bayelsa](#), 4. [Cross River](#), 5. [Delta](#), 6. [Edo](#), 7. [Imo](#), 8. [Ondo](#), 9. [Rivers](#)

- **Conflict in the Niger Delta**

Or otherwise stated, they have always been offered to separatist groups and militants, sometimes freedom fighters who have been labeled as militants, etc, as post-conflict rewards in compensation for total surrender of weapons by militants and as compensation for total surrender of the territories under their occupation as militants to the Nigerian government. Quite unfortunately, while this seems to be a clever and tactical enough ploy by the Nigerian government, most Nigerians would agree with the views in this research, namely, with the contention that their

grants have been based on the wrongful philosophy that at the time of granting of post-conflict amnesty bonuses to separatists and militants in the country, separatists and militants would have also accepted the views of government. Contrary to this philosophical tenet, history shows that the belief in such a philosophy of conflict is only plausible rather than true, because, often times, rebels have subsequently broken agreements, and taken up arms, and proceeded to reclaim regions of the country which were previously under their control. The Position here



is that we may have to X-ray the position of militants at some depths; In particular, when Nigerians take up arms to equal the refusal of Nigerian Oligarchy to dialogue with them over issues of interests do they think that taking of arms or public protests can ever serve as the last option? The recent-past public protests by the Occupy Nigeria Movement which took place between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2013 in Lagos and New York City tend to have proven the contrary. Below is the full story of what happened as reported in the Wikipedia;

### **First of All First Quarry!!**

#### ***Will Revolutions Provide the Requisite Solution to Conflict in Nigeria?***

#### **Popular Answer**

***The Answer Which Most Well-Meaning Nigerians are likely to give is a Resounding NO!***

### **Second Quarry!!**

***But Let us Not Blame Boko Haram Insurgency and Niger-Delta Militancy without Reason***

#### **What Reasons!**

***They Waited Too Long For Dialogue from Which Nigerian Oligarchy Have Up to This Day, Consistently to Apply as a Mean of Resolving National Issues***

#### **But Ultimately**

However, We Only Need To See From the Occupy Nigeria Example; Protests and Revolt Against Government Will Lead Nowhere, Hence

### **OCCUPY NIGERIA PROTESTS NOW IN FOCUS**

#### **From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia**

**Occupy Nigeria Protest** was a socio-political protest movement that began in Nigeria on Monday, 2 January 2012 in response to the fuel subsidy removal by the Federal Government of President Goodluck Jonathan on Sunday, 1 January 2012. Protests took place across the country, including in the cities of Kano, Ojota (-part of greater Lagos ), Abuja, and at the Nigerian High Commission in London. At least 16 people were killed in Nigeria, all shot dead by the Nigeria Police Force. The protests have been characterised by civil disobedience, civil resistance, strike actions, demonstrations and online activism. The use of social media services such as Twitter and Facebook has been a prominent feature. Through 2012, Occupy Nigeria continued to engage in organized meetings, events and actions.

### **Background to the Said Occupy Nigeria Protest**



Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer, but still imports refined petrol.[5] The country produces about 2.4 million barrels of crude oil daily which is exported to be refined abroad; however due to years of corruption-fuelled neglect the domestic refineries are inoperative.[6] As a consequence, Nigeria imports 70% of its gasoline (about 250,000bpd of petroleum products [citation needed]) into the country for sale to its citizens.[6] The price of petrol has increased from 65 naira (\$0.40; £0.26) per litre to at least 141 naira

in filling stations and from 100 naira to at least 200 naira on the black market, from which many Nigerians buy their fuel.

With the majority of Nigerians living on less than \$2 per day, cheap petrol is viewed by many Nigerians as the only tangible benefit they receive from the state, hence the widespread disapproval. In addition, the economy is heavily reliant on crude oil (amongst other reasons, due to absence of essential infrastructure and services such as constant electricity). A consequence of this is that other seemingly unrelated items are tied to the price of fuel as has occurred from previous price hikes. Due to the absence of stable electricity, gasoline generators are a common energy alternative for small businesses and residences.

The removal of the subsidy took effect from Sunday, 1 January 2012 as announced by the Executive Secretary of the Petroleum Product Pricing Regulatory Agency, PPPRA Reginald Stanley.

### **Protests by the Said Occupy Nigeria Group**

Protesters shut petrol stations and formed human barriers along motorways. Nigeria's main trade unions have also announced an indefinite strike and mass demonstrations from Monday, 9 January 2012 unless the removal of a fuel subsidy is reversed. "We have the total backing of all Nigerian workers on this strike and mass protest," the Nigeria Labour Congress's Chris Uyo told the BBC.

Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria Lamido Sanusi told the BBC the subsidy (which he said cost the government about \$8bn last year) was "unsustainable". Several previous governments have tried to remove the subsidy but have backed down in the face of widespread public protests and reduced it instead.

### **Casualties during the Save Nigeria Protest in Lagos**

Muyideen Mustapha, 23, was reportedly the first person to be killed during the nationwide protests over the lifting of petrol subsidies. He was reportedly shot by the Nigerian Police Force in Ilorin, Kwara State on 3 January 2012. The Police denied the report saying that he had been stabbed by other protestors for not joining in the protest. Muyideen was buried on Wednesday 4 January 2012, according to Islamic rites. There have been further reports of one to three people being killed by clashes between police and protestors on 9 January.

On 9 January, a Divisional Police Officer attached to the Lagos State Command, shot and killed a young man, Ademola Aderinde at Ogba during the protests in Lagos. The officer was arrested on the order of the Commissioner of Police and was expected to be charged with murder following an investigation.<sup>[13]</sup>

### **Abuja & London Protests; Protests and Solidarity Protests**

The **Occupy Nigeria** Movement plans another protest to hold at Eagle Square, Abuja for Friday, 6 January 2012 while another one hold simultaneous at the Nigerian Embassy in London. However, leaks from security agencies report of an order issued by the Government of Nigeria to the Mobile Police, advising them that the best way to stop the protests was to kill at least one of the protestors.

### **International protests Showcasing Both the New York and the Nigerian Dimension of Occupy Nigeria Protests**



Occupy Nigeria protesters in New York City.

The Occupy Nigeria protests have also occurred in other countries to show solidarity with what the plight of Nigerians back home. The first one was held at the Nigerian High Commission in London on 6 January 2012, followed by another at the World Bank complex in Washington D.C on 9 January. 2012. Other countries like Belgium (-in Brussels its capital), and South Africa joined the protests and occupied the Nigerian embassy in their countries in the second week of January 2012

### **NLC/TUC; Both Were Deep in a Nation-Wide Subsidy Strike during the Occupy Nigeria Protests**

On Thursday, 5 January 2012, the Nigeria Labour Congress issued an ultimatum to the Federal Government promising to halt the economy of the country by Monday, 9 January 2012.

"We are shutting down the Nigerian airspace to local and international flights from Sunday night" said Denja Yakub of NLC.

"If a revolution will solve our problems, why not, what is going on already shows that our people are prepared for a revolution. But we will not ask for a revolution that will bring back the military, they are a part of the problem." he added

### **Government reaction To Occupy Nigeria Protests**

Following the emergency meeting of the Federal Executive Council, in Abuja, the Minister of Information, Mr. Labaran Maku, told newsmen the government was not oblivious of the pains inflicted by Nigerians as a result of the new policy. In order to ameliorate those pains, he said the government had commenced a 'massive mass transit scheme' aimed at cushioning the effects of the subsidy removal on transportation. 1600 diesel-powered mass transit vehicles, he claimed, would be distributed.

Curiously missing at the pivotal meeting were two controversial senior officials and pillars of the new policy: Finance Minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and Petroleum Resources Minister, Diezani Alison-Madueke. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is quoted as having said that she'll resign if the presidency goes back on its decision to remove the subsidy.

### **Media; Confusion Over to Give their Backing in the Protests**

Channels Television and Galaxy Television, two local media houses in Lagos, covered the Lagos protests on 3 January 2012. There was also a report on the march in the Daily Times of Nigeria.

In addition, Facebook group pages were created to spur Nigerians globally against the fuel-subsidy removal regime. One of them (called "Nationwide Anti-Fuel Subsidy Removal: Strategies & Protests") was created on 2 January 2012 and had over 20,000 members by 9 January 2012. Student websites in universities and blogs are reporting the Occupy Nigeria Protests and student representatives are sending live pictures of ongoing protests.

Twitter was also used as a connecting platform for the protesters.

The 2012 documentary *Fuelling Poverty* by Ishaya Bako was based on some of the events that occurred during the fuel subsidy crisis. It was banned by the Federal government of Nigeria for being "highly provocative and likely to incite or encourage public disorder and undermine national security." It went on to win category Best Documentary at the 2013 Africa Movie Academy Awards and was praised by many Human Right activists and organisations.



## Jonathan administration; Clearly in Trouble Over Conflict With Industrial Unions and The Said Occupy Nigeria Group And his Predecessor Blames Weakness of Leadership Prowess



Goodluck Jonathan at the Nuclear Security Summit 2010



Former President Olusegun Obasanjo (Brasilia 6 September 2005)

It still is a mystery how the cost of subsidy shot up to 1.3 trillion naira in just one year of President Goodluck Jonathan's administration, especially since ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration spent 300 billion Naira per year. When the Obasanjo government left power in 29 May 2007, the country was no longer in debt and the 30 billion dollar foreign debt that Obasanjo met when he came to power in 1999 was fully paid off. Today, under the administration of Jonathan, the country owes debt to the tune of 30 billion dollars and is still borrowing. It was reported that when the Obasanjo administration left power in 2007, 23 billion dollars was left in the Excess Crude Account after he built it up from nothing in 1999; by January 2012 the account was empty because the money has been "squandered and the account scrapped".

Under the Goodluck Jonathan's administration, and indeed, throughout the history of Nigeria as a political state, Presidential Committees on Amnesty Policies, have not been able to deliver convincing results which prove the imposition and forceful application of amnesty policies in Nigeria as true and workable philosophies of conflict in any political state as a whole. On a careful analysis, the major setbacks would, for the most part, would have been traceable to ethnic philosophies and religious sentiments arising from past and present events which have shaped the history and development of the Nigerian state. The point which duly calls for emphasis is that the presidential committees on amnesty are expected to seek and receive the cooperation of the Nigerian public, non-governmental organizations, amnesty-related ministries and agencies as earlier listed in the study, Government itself and the international community to enable the successful working of post-amnesty policies of the Jonathan's administration in Nigeria, would also be expected to perform, under the current circumstances where the philosophy is rife that *"everybody's business is actually nobody's business"*. Thus, it is only natural to agree on all four-sides of the argument that the failure of post-conflict amnesty policies of President Goodluck Jonathan in Nigeria, a country which is the most populous nation in Africa, that as far as its amnesty policies are concerned, their failure to have a clear prospect as a government policy could be traced to the country's history and the misapplication of wrong philosophies by the ruling party in power. According to Sabella Ogbobodo (Pambazuka.org), Peace cannot be forced as the amnesty policy seems to imply, but that as a reality, if government wants peace in any part of the country, then, it should be ready to negotiate it through dialogue rather than an arbitrary imposition of a compulsory amnesty.

The word "amnesty" is according to the online dictionary (dictionary.com), 'a criminal pardon granted to convicts by the state'. Therefore, since both sets of persons in the Jonathan's Amnesty policies in Nigeria, namely, the Niger-Delta Militants South of the country and the Boko Haram insurgents in the North of the country, both see themselves, not as criminals but



freedom fighters and agitators of their socio-political rights; one could as well, proceed to described the Jonathan's amnesty policies and those of successive governments in Nigeria as "*forms of technical intimidation*" against voices of dissent rather than a post-conflict "*healing*" and "*reconciliatory*" process that the Nigerian oligarchy thinks it to be. It appears, for practical reasons, that the reason for seeking quick solutions in compulsory amnesty policies

rather than a thoroughly diplomatic process of dialogue, is that apart from being cheap and easy to come-by, as a solution, the true meaning of amnesty policy is one too many a form of regional intimidation by the government at the centre. We recall with interest that the first ever amnesty policy in Nigeria which came in 2009, was a verbatim reproduction of this characteristics of all amnesty policies in Nigeria.

During the, then, Yar'Adua-Jinathan's first administration as president and vice, the idea of "*dialogue*" was like confronting the Oracle of Delphi's; a violent sum that would dry-up the Nigerian oligarchy if dialogue be applied as a means of overcoming conflict in any affected region of the country. It was therefore to surprising when the Nigerian Federal Government produced as its amnesty slogan, "amnesty to Niger-Delta militants or total war in the region". But Nigerian wasted to time in drawing a connectivity between the president's actions and the insensitivity to local populations which colonial history was known for. At amalgamation, the colonial master gave power to the North, and for this reason (for which president Yar'Adua's forefathers felt that the Nigerian state was all about power and that it did not matter how bad the president's decisions may be) with his declaration of compulsory amnesty or total war were put forward for another civil war in the country the Ijaw youths were bent on blowing-up all the oil tunnels in the Niger Delta Region. Many have argued that Nigeria is not so much of a "robot" not to deviate from its historical antecedents', but who knows why the Nigerian oligarchy has not allowed the country's dirty past to transform itself into a sweeter contradiction than what is today called the Nigerian State. According to F N Ndubisi (2006:64).

When the colonial masters were leaving the shares of Africa they left behind 'lackeys' and 'stoogies' as their successors on the thrones power.

More than half a century now since the end of colonial reuse in Nigeria, the two amnesty policies of the Jonathan's administration(s) still proves to be failure of the Nigerian state to rise beyond its ethnic, religious, social and political history which have all the time painted the ugly picture of Nigeria's past and present realities. The same ethnic and political biases which presented Yar'Adua, a Muslim president from the North from accepting the option of dialogue from Southern militants from the Niger Delta in 2009; are now playing back only three (3) years later in 2014, as president Jonathan, a Christian President from the South is similarly blocked by historical sentiments from dialoging with Boko Haram militants from the north of the country. Even the Ministries of Youth and Sports as well as those of the Niger-Delta, which were created as external hands of different presidential committees on the presidents amnesty policies, have continually been polarized along lines of past and present history and by its military philosophies of 'amnesty' and 'eventual war' from delivering the gains of president Goodluck Jonathan's Amnesty policies in the country. The very application of the concepts "ex-militants' alone, writes Sebella Ogbodo (30<sup>th</sup> July 2009), is one challenge which the post-conflict amnesty polices of Dr Jonathan must sufficiently deal with since the has the connotation of aligning than with X-convicts, a concept which all parties under the presidents' amnesty programme object to. Commenting on the true states of post-conflict amnesty policies of President Jonathan. The *Vanguard Newspaper* in Nigeria (May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010: p. 1 and 3), made it explicit that; that Amnesty policies in Nigeria could contrast with like option A-4 which gave

Nigeria her best election under military rule but which Nigerians never lived to profit from. The offer of amnesty to militants and separatist groups in Nigeria may be likened to it. What is more? (it would only have been successful as a policy of the martial order) during military rule, not in a current democratic rule by president Jonathan.

Anything that is forced, only fits in as a round peg in a square hole. No matter what President Jonathan does, Post-Conflict amnesty cannot change its name to a democratic process. No matter what, amnesty is amnesty (it cannot take the place of dialogue or any sound philosophy of reconciliation or rehabilitation as the president thinks) History can be transformed. But the peculiarity of multi-ethnicity, cultural biases and religious bigotry etc, has made the Nigerian scenario an impossibility. Meanwhile the position taken by the Nigerian government is not one that is likely to transform in the present scenario. As Dr. Ferdinand Ikwang who spoke for Mr. Tim Aliagbe, Chairman Presidential Committee on the 2009 Amnesty, "*Sunday Trust*" (3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2011);



*"The days of fighting for the Niger Delta or the regions are over...it is now time for Ex-militants (and separatists) to fight to improve themselves (under the post-amnesty scheme made available by the government in authority).*

In other words, one would have expected that the post-conflict Amnesty policy is a government's own initiative meant to convince dissenting youths to accept, cooperate and work with government policies for a better Nigeria. But the current administration seems to view it on the opposite as a project which only offers youths an opportunities to improve themselves in Post-conflict amnesty camps current built at the former NYSC orientation camp in the Obubra local government area of Cross River State South of the country on its borders with Cameroon. The repercussion of governments view as a project offering militants opportunity for self-improvement is the consequential reality of abandonment, lack of funding, over-militarization of the process and a full indication of *malad ministraton* of amnesty policies in its possible return of hostility sometimes someday to an area of the country formally under occupation by militants and separatists groups. As the "*Punch Newspaper*" has it to explain (28<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2010 online), "it is most likely to be that post conflict amnesty is only meant to hold brief for a while as there are indications of future eruption of hostility in the Niger-Delta region which currently enjoys the pardon of the first ever official amnesty of the Nigerian nation granted to Niger Delta militants by the Yar'Adua Jonathan government in 2009.



According to (INRIN Africa.com), government in the 2009 amnesty Grant, predicted that 10,000 Youths and militants of the Niger-Delta region were going to surrender the Niger-Delta region which was under their occupation and embrace the Yar'Adua Jonathan Amnesty policy. But on the offer to the said amnesty policy, 17,000 Youths submitted into the programme and this has brought pressure upon the government in terms of management and in terms of resources budgeted for the program. But this is to be contrasted against a contrary report by Madiaga Alffe who in The "*Punch Newspaper*" ([www.ijawmnonitor.org/News](http://www.ijawmnonitor.org/News)) explains that for the most part, funds earmarked for post-

conflict amnesty policies of the Jonathan administration have been diverted to other projects', and that, at other times, the funds run into third parties that little or nothing is left to run the

post-conflict amnesty project in a way that can possibly produce positive results. The only natural conclusion that is likely to be reached from the foregoing is that the real test of post-conflict amnesty policies in Nigeria is a test of good governance and nothing more. In other words, anyone would conclude correctly from the foregoing that Nigeria's democracy is no way, mature enough to apply post-colonial amnesty policy as one of its philosophy of conflicts assuming that amnesty is capable of serving as a philosophy of conflict at all. Neither is the current study advocating an intervention by the US or the UN or any other external body or the international community for purposes of solving the Boko Haram insurgency in the north of the country. What president Jonathan requires in order to convince separatists and regional agitators into accepting the legitimacy of his government as a Christian President from a Minority Community South of the country, is not post conflict amnesty policies and is not to be found outside the pockets of his trousers. Since he (Mr. President) cannot possibly over turn age old sentiments arising from the country's past and present history; all that he requires to convince Muslim North to accept the legitimacy of his administration as Christian president from the South is something more than a "sovereign national conference" – He requires a one-on-one dialogue with separatist groups; Nigeria's history shows tendencies relating to or parallel, or comparable with, "sovereign national conference", all of which never produced an intended result disrupted by the same sentiments among members resulting from the country's past and present history as here stated in this research; The new position to be advanced henceforth, is bound to be something beyond the current re-enstatement of Nigerian oligarchy in the Name of the people's representatives at the "Sovereign National Conference". These oligarchy seems, in the view of this research, to be represented their families rather than the people of Nigeria.

### **PRE-COLONIAL HISTORY OF NIGERIA AND THE AMNESTY QUESTION OF THE JONATHAN'S ADMINISTRATION**

The question of post-conflict amnesty of President Goodluck Jonathan is one which has historical antecedents. It spans up to as far as the country's pre-1860 pre-colonial period. Prior to the 1860(s) the concept of amnesty was already known to different communities which occupied the territory which is now known as Nigeria. Sources have it that ([en-wikipedia.org/./history\\_of\\_Nigeria](http://en.wikipedia.org/./history_of_Nigeria)) that as far as 11000 BC, decentralized communities were already occupying the Nigerian soil. When warriors were captured in inter-tribal or inter-ethnic conflicts, the chiefs affected in the raid, sometimes, sent emissaries to the victorious King to plead for amnesty. In this way, amnesty was already known to pre-colonial history in Nigeria. The contention, however, is that, then, the mode of application was in its true meaning of the Yar'Adua's 2009 amnesty intent as a post-conflict reconciliation process, a tool for healing disaffectionate relationships between former disputants. Again, the true dictionary meaning of amnesty as "pardon for state criminal's", was magnanimously respected to the tone of the kindness of the state granting the amnesty. But all this changed with the changes in history. As soon as the British began the processes of colonization; the true meaning of amnesty also began to be directed.

This is not to say that pre-colonial states, which have today been amalgamated into the Nigerian state, could not have politicized the meaning and application of the concept of amnesty. The contention here is that the pre-1860 communities, could not have possibly entertained the same level of greed for power as Nigerian oligarchy in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria, having not have witnessed contemporary feelings of globalization and the fact that



more power means to the Nigerian oligarchy more access to the country's oil and other forms of national wealth, etc, been more interested in private interpretation of amnesty as it has become the case since Britain began the processes of colonization of Nigeria in 1860. It is something which could very easily be concluded on the basis of probability that since colonial Britain both discovered the country's oil wealth, they everything to ensure some kind of sit-tight in the country Nigerian oligarchy including late president Yar'Adua and President Goodluck Jonathan, who now represent colonial succession on the throne, as indicated since the beginning of colonial rule in 1861, seems to serve better at the beginning of a long history which the Jonathan's administration must address in his post conflict amnesty policies if they must succeed. An easier option is perhaps, to rise beyond the on-going discussions on the sovereign national conference and have a one-on-one dialogue with separatist groups in the country. To adequately account for how the contrary would continue to man his efforts towards building both the country's petroleum-based economy and peace in the midst of Boko Haram Amnesty policy, it remains expedient that we consider, in our second effort, colonial history and its impact on the current efforts by the Jonathan amnesty policies in the country towards stabilizing the country through successive amnesty policies.

### **COLONIAL HISTORY IN NIGERIA AND THE AMNESTY QUESTION OF THE JONATHAN'S ADMINISTRATION**

By the period of 1861 when Nigeria eventually came under the apron string of colonial Britain, the change of status to a people bow colonized by another, brought its own consequences as well. Britain was at the time, already advanced as a western nation, and its civilization which was largely influenced by tenets of globalization and the greed to control the resources of vassal states as a master would control the resources of its subjects, began to send new signals to those who were to succeed their colonial interests as Nigerian leaders at independence in 1960. Here is the game of life; human beings are in the main, not altruistic but self-centred. In this way, even the concept of amnesty began to be applied subject to fulfilment of certain conditions. The introduction of colonial courts in particular or as sources have it (Colonial Nigeria, *online*), the condition under which British rule pardoned local natives was on the promise that if found guilty of the same act is to be returned to custody as punishment for breach of promise. It is therefore not surprising that well over fifty years since the exit of colonial rule, the Yar'Adua-Jonathan's government proceeded in 2009 to impose and amnesty deal on Niger-Delta militants on condition that refusal would attract total war by government against the region.

### **POST-COLONIAL NIGERIA AND THE AMNESTY QUESTION OF THE JONATHAN'S ADMINISTRATION**

#### **Basic Highlight**

- The Civil War History With its Military Greed and Ethnic Sentiments
- Development of the Oil Sector with Kingship of the Sector in the NNPC
- A Long and Almost Endless History Of Military Rule, and
- The Sporadic Rise in Ethnic Militia and Regional Insurgency

#### **BBC NEWS, AFRICA NEWS TAKES OVER ON NIGERIA'S PROFILE AND ITS CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**

**Circa 800 BC** - Jos plateau settled by Nok - a neolithic and iron age civilisation.

**Circa 11th century onwards** - Formation of city states, kingdoms and empires, including Hausa kingdoms and Borno dynasty in north, Oyo and Benin kingdoms in south.

**1472** - Portuguese navigators reach Nigerian coast.



## BIAFRA WAR AND ITS MILITARY GREED AND ETHNIC SENTIMENTS

Biafra war: Attacks, blockade killed more than a million

- 1970: Nigeria marks end of Biafra war
- Secret papers reveal Biafra intrigue

**16-18th centuries** - Slave trade: Millions of Nigerians are forcibly sent to the Americas.

**1809** - Single Islamic state - Sokoto caliphate - is founded in north.

**1830s-1886** - Civil wars plague Yorubaland, in the south.

**1850s** - British establish presence around Lagos.

**1861-1914** - Britain consolidates its hold over what it calls the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, governs by "indirect rule" through local leaders.

**1922** - Part of former German colony Kamerun is added to Nigeria under League of Nations mandate.

**1960** - Independence, with Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa leading a coalition government.

**1962-63** - Controversial census fuels regional and ethnic tensions.

**1966 January** - Balewa killed in coup. Major-General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi heads up military administration.

**1966 July** - Ironsi killed in counter-coup, replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubu Gowon.

**1967** - Three eastern states secede as the Republic of Biafra, sparking bloody civil war.

**1970** - Biafran leaders surrender, former Biafran regions reintegrated into country.

**1975** - Gowon overthrown, flees to Britain, replaced by Brigadier Murtala Ramat Mohammed, who begins process of moving federal capital to Abuja.

Obasanjo - first time round

**1976** - Mohammed assassinated in failed coup attempt. Replaced by his deputy, Lieutenant-General Olusegun Obasanjo, who helps introduce American-style presidential constitution.

## LONG AND ALMOST ENDLESS HISTORY OF MILITARY RULE

### Sani Abacha



Gen Sani Abacha was accused of stealing some \$3bn from state during his five-year rule.

- Horrors of the Abacha regime
- Obituary: Abacha leader with an iron grip

**1979** - Elections bring Alhaji Shehu Shagari to power.

**1983 January** - The government expels more than one million foreigners, mostly Ghanaians, saying they had overstayed their visas and were taking jobs from Nigerians. The move is condemned abroad but proves popular in Nigeria.

**1983 August, September** - Shagari re-elected amid accusations of irregularities.

**1983 December** - Major-General Muhammad Buhari seizes power in bloodless coup.

**1985** - Ibrahim Babangida seizes power in bloodless coup, curtails political activity.

**1993 June** - Military annuls elections when preliminary results show victory by Chief Moshood Abiola.

**1993 August** - Power transferred to Interim National Government.

### Abacha years

**1993 November** - General Sani Abacha seizes power, suppresses opposition.

**1994** - Abiola arrested after proclaiming himself president.

**1995** - Ken Saro-Wiwa, writer and campaigner against oil industry damage to his Ogoni homeland, is executed following a hasty trial. In protest, European Union imposes sanctions until 1998, Commonwealth suspends Nigeria's membership until 1998.

**1998** - Abacha dies, succeeded by Major-General Abdulsalami Abubakar. Chief Abiola dies in custody a month later.

**1999** - Parliamentary and presidential elections. Olusegun Obasanjo sworn in as president.

**2000** - Adoption of Islamic, or Sharia, law by several northern states in the face of opposition from Christians. Tension over the issue results in hundreds of deaths in clashes between Christians and Muslims.

**2001** - Tribal war in Benue state, in eastern-central Nigeria, displaces thousands of people. In October, army soldiers sent to quash the fighting kill more than 200 unarmed civilians, apparently in retaliation for the abduction and murder of 19 soldiers.

**2001 October** - Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, South African President Mbeki and Algerian President Bouteflika launch New Partnership for African Development, or Nepad, which aims to foster development and open government and end wars in return for aid, foreign investment and the lifting of trade barriers to African exports.

#### ***Ethnic violence***

**2002 February** - Some 100 people are killed in Lagos in clashes between Hausas from mainly-Islamic north and ethnic Yorubas from predominantly-Christian southwest.

**2002 November** - More than 200 people die in four days of rioting stoked by Muslim fury over the planned Miss World beauty pageant in Kaduna in December. The event is relocated to Britain.

**2003 12 April** - First legislative elections since end of military rule in 1999. Polling marked by delays, allegations of ballot-rigging. President Obasanjo's People's Democratic Party wins parliamentary majority.

#### ***Obasanjo re-elected***

**2003 19 April** - First civilian-run presidential elections since end of military rule. Olusegun Obasanjo elected for second term with more than 60% of vote. Opposition parties reject result. EU poll observers cite "serious irregularities".

### **DISCOVERY OF OIL ERA IN POST-COLONIAL NIGERIA AND THE KINGSHIP OF THE NNPC**

Nigeria is a big oil exporter, but violence and oil spills dog the industry

- 'Decades' to clean up Nigeria oil
- 'Blood oil' dripping from Nigeria

**2003 July** - Nationwide general strike called off after nine days after government agrees to lower recently-increased fuel prices.

**2003 August** - Inter-communal violence in the Niger Delta town of Warri kills about 100 people, injures 1,000.

**2003 September** - Nigeria's first satellite, NigeriaSat-1, launched by Russian rocket.

**2004 January** - UN brokers talks between Nigeria and Cameroon about disputed border. Both sides agree to joint security patrols.

**2004 May** - State of emergency is declared in the central Plateau State after more than 200 Muslims are killed in Yelwa in attacks by Christian militia; revenge attacks are launched by Muslim youths in Kano.

#### ***Trouble in the south***

**2004 August-September** - Deadly clashes between gangs in oil city of Port Harcourt prompts strong crackdown by troops. Rights group Amnesty International cites death toll of 500, authorities say about 20 died.

**2005 July** - Paris Club of rich lenders agrees to write off two-thirds of Nigeria's \$30bn foreign debt.

**2006 January onwards** - Militants in the Niger Delta attack pipelines and other oil facilities and kidnap foreign oil workers. The rebels demand more control over the region's oil wealth.

**2006 February** - More than 100 people are killed when religious violence flares in mainly-Muslim towns in the north and in the southern city of Onitsha.

**2006 April** - Helped by record oil prices, Nigeria becomes the first African nation to pay off its debt to the Paris Club of rich lenders.



**2006 May** - The Senate rejects proposed changes to the constitution which would have allowed President Obasanjo to stand for a third term in 2007.

Bakassi deal

**2006 August** - Nigeria cedes sovereignty over the disputed Bakassi peninsula to neighbouring Cameroon under the terms of a 2002 International Court of Justice ruling. A special transitional arrangement for the Nigerian civilian

administration will be in place for five years.

**2006 October** - Spiritual leader of Nigeria's millions of Muslims, the Sultan of Sokoto, is killed in a plane crash, the country's third major civilian air disaster in a year.

**2007 April** - Umaru Yar'Adua of the ruling People's Democratic Party is proclaimed winner of the presidential election.

**2007 September** - The rebel Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (Mend) threatens to end a self-imposed ceasefire and to launch fresh attacks on oil facilities and abductions of foreign workers.

**2007 November** - Suspected Nigerian militants kill 21 Cameroon soldiers in Bakassi peninsula.

Nigerian senate rejects Nigeria-Cameroon agreement for hand-over of Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon.

**2007 December** - Anti-corruption chief Nuhu Ribadu is sidelined, but a high-profile graft-related arrest follows soon after.

### ***Oil prices soar***

**2008 January** - Oil trades at \$100 a barrel for the first time, with violence in oil producing countries such as Nigeria and Algeria helping to drive up prices.

**2008 February** - Mend leaders Henry Okah and Edward Atata extradited from Angola on suspicion of involvement in attacks on oil companies. Report that Okah was subsequently killed in custody proved to be untrue.

Tribunal upholds election of Umaru Yar'Adua as president following challenge by rivals who wanted the vote annulled because of vote rigging.

**2008 April** - Two former health ministers and a daughter of President Olusegun Obasanjo are among 12 top health officials charged with embezzling around 470m naira (4m dollars) of public health funds.

Oil production cut by about half as a result of strike action and attacks on pipelines by militants; problems in Nigeria help keep world oil prices at record highs.

**2008 August** - Following agreement reached in March, Nigeria finally hands over the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon, ending a long-standing dispute.



Iran agrees to share nuclear technology with Nigeria to help it increase its generation of electricity.

**2008 September** - Militants in the Niger Delta step up their attacks on oil installations, in response to what they describe as unprovoked attacks by the military on their bases.

***Oil prices fall***

**2008 October** - The government announces major budget cuts following steep falls in the price of oil.

**2008 November** - At least 200 people are killed during clashes between Christians and Muslims in the central Nigerian town of Jos.

**2009 January** - The main militant group in Niger Delta, Mend, calls off four-month cease-fire after army attacks camp of an allied group.

**2009 March** - Nineteen opposition parties unite to form a "mega-party" to compete against the governing People's Democratic Party in elections due in 2011.

**2009 May** - Niger Delta militant group Mend rejects government offer of amnesty and declares offensive against Nigerian military.

**2009 July** - Hundreds die in northeastern Nigeria after the Boko Haram Islamist movement launches a campaign of violence in a bid to have Sharia law imposed on the entire country. Security forces storm Boko Haram's stronghold and kill the movement's leader.

Government frees the leader of the Niger Delta militant group Mend, Henry Okah, after he accepts an amnesty offer.

**2009 August** - Two-month offer of a government amnesty for Niger Delta militants comes into force.

**2009 November** - President Yar'Adua travels to Saudi Arabia to be treated for a heart condition. His extended absence triggers a constitutional crisis and leads to calls for him to step down.

Jos clashes

**2010 January** - At least 149 people are killed during two days of violence between Christian and Muslim gangs in the central city of Jos.

**2010 March** - More than 120 people are killed in clashes between Muslims and Christians in the flashpoint city of Jos.

**2010 May** - President Umaru Yar'Adua dies after a long illness. Vice-president Goodluck Jonathan, already acting in Yar'Adua's stead, succeeds him.

**2010 October** - Nigeria marks 50 years of independence. Celebrations in Abuja marred by deadly bomb blasts.

## BOKO HARAM



The Islamist group Boko Haram is loosely modelled on the Taliban movement in Afghanistan and has claimed responsibility for numerous attacks

- Boko Haram: What You Need To Know
- Who are Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists?
- Why can't Nigeria defeat Boko Haram?

**2010 November** - Nigeria intercepts arms shipment from Iran, reports find to UN Security Council.

**2010 December** - Christmas Eve bomb attacks near central city of Jos kill at least 80 people. Attacks claimed by Islamist sect Boko Haram spark clashes between Christians and Muslims. Some 200 killed in reprisal attacks.

**2011 March** - Goodluck Jonathan wins presidential elections.

**2011 July** - President Jonathan says he will ask parliament to amend the constitution so that presidents will serve a single, longer term in office.

Government says it wants to start negotiating with the Boko Haram Islamist group blamed for a series of recent attacks across northern Nigeria.

**2011 August** - Suicide bomb attack on UN headquarters in Abuja kills 23 people. Radical Islamist group Boko Haram claims responsibility.

**2011 November** - At least 63 people are killed in bomb and gun attacks in north-eastern town of Damaturu. Boko Haram claims responsibility.

President Jonathan sacks the head of Nigeria's anti-corruption agency, saying that the body has failed to get to grips with graft during her tenure.

Christmas Day attacks

**2011 December** - Nearly 70 people are killed in days of fighting between security forces and Boko Haram militants in north-eastern states of Yobe and Borno.

Christmas Day bomb attacks kill about 40 people. Boko Haram claims responsibility.

President Jonathan declares state of emergency to contain violence by Boko Haram.

**2012 January**-Fuel price strike causes major disruption. Unions suspend action when government reverses decision to drop fuel subsidies.

More than 100 killed in single day of co-ordinated bombings and shootings in Kano, shortly after Boko Haram tells Christians to quit the north.

**2012 April** - Chadian President Idriss Deby calls on countries neighbouring northern Nigeria to set up a joint military force to tackle Boko Haram militants as they continue their attacks. He warns of the danger of the Islamist group destabilising the whole Lake Chad basin area.

**2012 June** - Boko Haram claims responsibility for attacks on two churches in Jos city and Borno state, in which one person died and dozens of others were injured. An angry crowd kills six Muslims in Jos in retaliation.

**2012 July** - Nigeria signs a preliminary \$4.5bn deal with US-based Vulcan Petroleum to build six oil refineries. Nigeria lacks refinery capacity and has to import most of its fuel needs, despite being a major oil producer.

**2012 August** - The army kills 20 Boko Haram fighters in a shootout in the northeastern city of Maiduguri. The government says it has started informal talks through "backroom channels" with Boko Haram to try to end attacks. Boko Haram ruled out peace talks shortly beforehand.

Maiduguri clashes

**2012 October** - Boko Haram bomb army bases in Maiduguri. The army says it kills 24 Boko Haram fighters in subsequent clashes.

**2012 November** - At least 100 people are charged with treason after a march supporting independence for Biafra in the region's main town, Enugu.

**2012 December** - A French engineer is abducted in northern Katsina state. The Islamist group Ansaru claims responsibility.

At least 20 Christians are killed in attacks by suspected Islamist militants in the northern states of Yobe and Borno over the Christmas/New Year period.

**2013 May** - Government declares state of emergency in three northern states of Yobe, Borno and Adamawa and sends in troops to combat the Boko Haram Islamist militants.

**2013 July** - Secondary schools close in Yobe state after a massacre of 22 pupils at a boarding school, which the government attributes to Boko Haram. The Islamist group has burned down several schools since 2010.

**2013 September** - Boko Haram Islamists murder more than 150 people in roadside attacks in the northeast. Separately, security forces fight Boko Haram armed insurgents in the capital Abuja.

**2013** November - Six state governors defect from the governing People's Democratic Party (PDP) and merge with main opposition All Progressives Congress, leaving the PDP with fewer governors supporting it than the opposition.

**2014** April - Boko Haram kidnaps more than 200 girls from a boarding school. The US and Britain sends planes to help search for them and West African leaders agree to co-operate to fight the Islamists.

**2014** May - Nigerian cities are hit by a series of fatal bomb blasts blamed on Boko Haram.

**2014** July - Nigeria and neighbours agree to form a joint military force to combat the growing regional threat posed by Boko Haram.

**2014** August - Boko Haram proclaims a caliphate - an Islamic state - in the territory it controls in the northeast, a declaration dismissed by the government.

Re-opening of schools for the new academic year is postponed because of the ebola outbreak in the region. Five people have died in Nigeria.

Post-colonial period in Nigeria is the period in the country's history marked by self-governance. It began at the independence day of October 1<sup>st</sup> 1960 to present day history of the country. In it, the country has had to experience a variety of events and in their asserted forms to include its civil war history of 1966-1969, its period of military rule spanning more than 30 of the country's fifty four (54) years of existence, its history of ethnic tensions in the Niger-Delta region and now that of Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad North East region of Nigeria, Within this post-colonial period, ethnic tensions have constituted political instability over a period longer than half of its years of existence as an independent nation. However, it is perhaps due to a saturation of this period with biases among Nigerian oligarchy stemming from the country's past and present history that the country's philosophy of conflict has almost become sacrosanct as that of amnesty and its mode of application has been one that is intended to protect the interests of the country's oligarchy rather than the good will of the people of Nigeria. As explained in ([country studies. us](http://countrystudies.us)) post-colonial Nigeria is one now resembles its own history (as a widening gulf did separate north from south at amalgamation, the three regions under colonial rule and now Islam and Christianity proceeding to separate the north of the country from the south) there are, indeed, too many historical sentiments to identify Nigerian problems with. The one conclusion to draw from the foregoing is one which had already been highlighted, namely, that since president Jonathan cannot undo historical sentiments among his own oligarchic colleagues to enable him succeed his amnesty policies; it is expedient to change course while it is still possible and embrace true dialogue based on a one-on-one discussion with ultercators of his legitimacy as a Nigerian president.

### **THEORIES /PHILOSOPHIES OF CONFLICT IN SOCIETY AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING DIALOGUE FOR PRESIDENT JONATHAN**

It is only natural that since there exist a diversity of human personalities in society, opinions are likely to differ among different persons and different societies on what should be adopted as a philosophy for purposes of resolving disputes among persons. According to the online articles "Conflict theories" ([en.wikipedia.org/.../conflict theories](http://en.wikipedia.org/.../conflict_theories)). There exist an infinite number of conflict theories; however, despite their numerosity, they may be summarized into the following;

#### **Karl Marx Economic Theory of Conflict:**

Here, Marx argues that all human societies are created, sustained and perpetuated through a history of class struggle between the owners of the means of production and the labourers who work of them. In terms of his analysis, Marx has largely captured the conflict giving birth to amnesty policies in Nigeria since the Nigerian oligarchy and government now claim ownership

of the country with a view that they only have to instruct rather than dialogue with citizens even in matters leading to conflict. However, where Marx gets it wrong is his recommendation of a communist solutions for similar problems. Nigeria runs a mixed economy and applying a communist solution to its amnesty processes would amount to a square peg in round whole.

### **Ludwig Gumplowicz's Evolutionary Anthropology (cal) theory of human conflict:**

According to this Wikipedia sources ([en.wikipedia.org/./conflict](http://en.wikipedia.org/./conflict)), Gumplowicz, like Karl Marx was economic and historical, but unlike Marx, his materialistic theory was purely anthropological. Gumplowicz was of the view that everything in society-good or bad, etc, is a product of the conflict between tribe and tribe, government and people, colour and race, groups and individuals like Karl Marx, Gumplowicz only captures an aspects of the truce behind the Jonathan's successive grant of amnesty, as a philosophy of conflict. It did this in stating that the actual relationship between government and citizens is anthropological. But when deeply analysed, the problem is more of 'resource control' and 'power between the Nigerian government and the regions currently opposed to his goveremnt through active militancy.

### **Lester F Ward's Sociological Theory of Conflict:**



In the view of Lester, conflict is an outcome of social, competition for the limited resources available in society. He argues this retrospectively, not in terms of Marx's class competition, but Lamark's social conflict of "survival of the fittest" and the economist, Thomas Malthus who taught that while the resources of life are fixed, population is constantly increasing, such that there is always a social rivalry over the limited resources, therefore, conflict. In this Lesterian theory, the philosophy of

conflict is perceived to be a mixture of economic and social elements. The problem here is the difficulty of controlling population growth and the impossibility of increasing available resources to satisfy all citizens in a multi-ethnic and multi-populated country like Nigeria therefore, while Lester, Lamark, Darwin and Malthus are to be commended for identifying competition for limited resources as the primary source of conflict in society the solution which Lester offers, namely, that of birth control, can hardly satisfy the underlying conflict over power by Nigerian oligarchy which seem to stand as the underlying reason for successful amnesty grants by the Jonathan government in the Nigerian state. The point, therefore is that Nigeria may have to look elsewhere.

### **Emile Durkweim's Systems Theory and Philosophy of Conflict**

Like other philosophies and conflict theories already listed here, Emile Durkheims believes that conflict is a function of the human system. Thus, in his view of conflict ([en.wikipedia.org/.../conflict](http://en.wikipedia.org/.../conflict)), conflict is created in society whenever a part of the system of society fails to live out its function within the system. In other words, Durkheims believe that conflict would not arise unless members of the political, economic, social and religious system fail to deliver expected results. The kind of situation being envisaged by Durkheim's systems theory is one too many an explanation for instability in Nigeria; but the solution suggested can only be implemented by a country's oligarchy who have the interests not of their own selfish political ambitions but that of the people whom they represent. In particular, Durkheims is right in supposing that the origin of the Jonathan's amnesty policies is the effort by Nigerian government to remedy disaffection caused by failure of the country's leadership to provide for the socio-political needs of the various regions of the country which now register their grievances by refusing to cooperate with his government an pilot of the Nigerian state. But the solution offered by Durkheims still talls short of a final answer because even when the Nigerian

government in willing to address the socio-political and economic needs of its regions, the needs themselves can only be known and responded to through dialogue rather than forms of government imposition of “undiscussed” solutions. The point, therefore, is that though Durkheims invites the state to examine the totality of factors within the state to ascertain the causes and subsequently, solutions to conflict in the state; the one thing he fails to identify is that dialogue would be expected to play a definitive role in the entire process, hence, this provides the justification for recommending dialogue for president Jonathan.

### **Marx Weber’s Structural Theory and Philosophy of Conflict in Society:**

Weber in many ways, is a realist of modern making, and he believes in the philosophy that conflict is created, not as a function of the system but as a function of the structures or the leadership which holds the system together. Hence, in his views ([en.wikipedia.org/...conflict theories](http://en.wikipedia.org/...conflict_theories)), conflict is generated where the leadership of the state is weak to containing the excesses of its citizens power and the quest for control of it, is by that fact, the determining factor and duty of the leadership.

Therefore, the leadership can go to any length to suppress, oppress and to intimidated groups of dissenting voices within the political state; And no matter its fraudulent application of force by the leadership structure, this would not be seen as evil so long as the required peace is achieved within the political state. This, is a point-on-point explanation of the said amnesty programmes of the Jonathan’s administration(s) which this research work has criticized for its admiration for autocracy. The very emphasis on structures by Weber, makes power the whole point in any philosophy of conflict; and since this rules-out the possibility of dialogue, Webbers philosophy and understanding of conflict cannot provide us with the way forward in respect of amnesty policies in President Jonathan’s administration in Nigeria. The point, therefore, is to look outside of the leadership structures and to set our eyes on dialogue as a genuine mechanism for the support of separatist groups who are in the interim, opposed to the government of the day.

### **J. S. Mills Theory of Limited Power of Sovereignty:**



As solution for conflict in society; Mill, like other English utilitarian’s believes in the socialist doctrine but in the sort of socialist doctrine which maximizes the rights of individuals within the state. In the explanation of ([en.wikipedia.org/./conflict-theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/./conflict-theory)), Mill expects that the state and its leadership structure is to exercise its powers or limit the rights of citizens any to the such

circumstances, such as possession of harmful drugs or criminal breaches etc where the exercise of individual rights, harms society or interfere with the rights of other individuals in society. Mills conception is that conflict in the true sense of the work is entered by the state in its imposition of self on the citizen’s hence, to culture peace in any state, private rights must supersede the powers of the state. Minimizing the powers of the state in Mills theory would mean that the state would only exist as a referee to an umpire to supervise socio-economic relations without itself being an integral part of the system here called society. it would encourage parties to dialogue but would not participate as a party in the dialogue. Here, there is a fundamental error in making government an observer rather than a participant in the peace building processes of the state. In this way, though Mill’s efforts. Seem wonderful as a theory, the Nigerian amnesty philosophy of conflict requires something from the state which is deeper than spectatorship. What Mill suggested is already the idea of the sovereign National



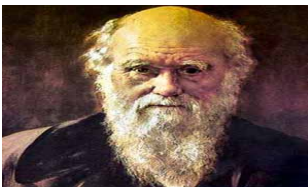
conference (CONFAB) sitting at the league in Abuja and cannot give Nigeria the political solution that the state requires. If President Jonathan must succeed in moving the country forward, then, we must be ready to have a one-on-one dialogue with separatist groups. No nations can progress profitably unless in the midst of peace and in the absence of conflict.

### **THREE (3) KEY PHILOSOPHIES OF CONFLICT ON APPLICATION TO THE POST-CONFLICT AMNESTY POLICIES OF PRESIDENT GOODLUCK JONATHAN IN NIGERIA**

#### **HOBBSUISM AS A PHILOSOPHY OF CONFLICT IN JONATHAN'S POST-CONFLICT AMNESTY POLICIES IN NIGERIA**

Thomas Hobbes believes that conflict is inevitable in any states and any terms such as Nigeria's Niger Delta military and Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria etc, its existence and eventual resolution is attempted, it must be done as the Nigeria oligarchy has done under the Jonathan's administration at the service of the state rather than the people. According to convincing sources ([www.rjgeib.com/hobbes](http://www.rjgeib.com/hobbes)), conflict is the real test of leadership that Hobbes, like the realists, believes that the government or the Leviathan must "rise and crush" any rebellion which arises in the state as a sign of successful rule. The question of the rights of the citizens need not arise in Hobbes Pedagogy because as he sees it, citizens all gave up their rights during the social contract which created the state and in exchange for security of their lives and property by the state; hence, to turn back and ask the state to respect same is in Hobbes view, self-contradictory. This attitudes is precisely what plays out in the Nigerian system' its ruling oligarchy like Hobbes, do not believe in dialogue'. If either believes in sending of troops as during military rule to disperse conflicting parties or a declaration of what parties as a way of getting to the root of the matter. Of late, the Jonathan's administration(s) have done no less than adopt such a Hobbesian spirit into his post-conflict amnesty policies here under contention. But the truth of it requires President Jonathan to rise beyond Hobbesism to make dialogue formidable and recognized philosophy of conflict for the Nigerian state.

#### **DARWINISM AS A PHILOSOPHY OF CONFLICT IN PRESIDENT JONATHAN POST-CONFLICT AMNESTY POLICIES IN NIGERIA**



Unlike Hobbesism which is political, Darwinism fixes the causes of conflict such as the immediate past Niger-Delta militancy, the Nigeria civil war and the current Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria together with the eventual resolution of local and national conflicts etc on the biological processes of nature. According to Darwinism as pointed out by sources ([www.ibbc.uk/./darw](http://www.ibbc.uk/./darw)) the rationale for conflict is that individuals and groups are in a constant search for self-improvement and this process the question of stiff injustice and endless competition for superiority (such as the tussle for political supremacy over the regions in Nigeria) remains the order of the day. Who would eliminate the other party in this contest between the Jonathan's government and the regions of the country affected by his amnesty grants? Darwin would answer thus; that the Jonathan's government would! Reasons! It has all the international and local connections which gives it a superior trait to win by "forces" of "arms" this battle of superiority. This in the on-going analysis ([www.bbc.co.uk/darwin](http://www.bbc.co.uk/darwin)) would not be politically analysable but biologically explainable in Darwinism to the extent that the hand (Boko Haram or any other militia group in the country) is not likely to defeat the head (federal government) which controls every part of the body (the Nigerian nation) in this contest for political supremacy (the said amnesty projects of the Jonathan's government).

## **MACHIAVELLIANISM AS A PHILOSOPHY OF CONFLICT APPLIED IN PRESIDENT JONATHAN'S POST-CONFLICT AMNESTY POLICES IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA**

Like any other Nigerian oligarchy, Machiavelli was a politician and a statesman. And just like the Jonathan's Amnesty policies, Italy was in factions and at the brink of becoming a failed-state when Machiavelli like President Jonathan suddenly turned a social reformer and his famous works "*The Prince*" bore a number of closed resemblances with the philosophy in application in the post-conflict amnesty policies of President Goodluck Jonathan in Nigeria. According to sources available on the internet ([www.historyguide.org/intell](http://www.historyguide.org/intell)) Machiavelli did believe the "Prince" or any legitimate environment, should imbibe the winning philosophy that "the end justifies the means", both in peace-building processes (as those of the two amnesty policies of the Jonathan's administration in Nigeria) and in matter of governance in general. The end being for the Yar'Adua-Jonathan leaderships in Nigeria a workable philosophy of conflict, it consequently seems right for them to have adopted a brutal military amnesty project at the expense of the democratic principle of dialogue, not minding the irreversible consequences of post conflict amnesty after all said and done. Though the belief among the Nigerian oligarchy is that in matters of government, Machiavelli was right in positing that for the "Prince" of the "leader", "the end justifies the means", in the opinion of this research paper, this could only have been expected of a military dictatorship. In contrast, any democratic would most likely adopt something more than the current sovereign national conference whose current effort in giving Nigeria a re-birth (currently taking place at Abuja) has largely been marred in sentiments arising from the country's past present history. Moreover, the same philosophy of government choosing representatives for and on behalf of citizens, gave birth to the said conference and in obedience to the Machiavellian philosophy that "the end justifies the means", hence, the current research argues that if president Jonathan must stabilize his government against obstruction by separatist groups, he must be ready to dialogue with "any" and "every" groups, individuals, communities, region, states of the federation or [political parties which disagrees with his government.

### **EVALUATION, CRITICAL COMMENTS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

As another history is currently being made in Nigeria following the on-going sovereign national conference sitting currently in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, a major issue which both gave birth to it and has consequently taken center-stage in all deliberations has been that of the unity and stability of the Nigerian state given the rising spade of violence created by successive separatist groups such as Boko Haram in the north and the immediate past insurgency by the Niger-Delta militants. What this research has done is to contextualize the said "history in the making" within the Jonathan's successive grant of amnesty and to reject amnesty as a philosophy of conflict, capable of moving the country forward. In place of successive amnesty policies and a sovereign National Conference not open to people's decisions, the paper has proceeded to suggest a philosophy of dialogue as a cure both from historical sentiments which have denied the Nigerian state, and indeed, Africa, from moving forward and a superior cure from such philosophies of conflict reflected in Machiavellianism, Hobbesism and Darwinism, all of which are rampant among Nigerian and African leaders. While the work replaces amnesty with genuine dialogue without being biased to the fact that a non-on-one dialogue with dissidents, disaffected communities, agitated regions of the country, opposition political parties in the country, etc shall be riddled with its own problems and difficulties, nevertheless, dialogue in the consideration of this research paper still remains what the Jonathan's government and indeed, all African leaders must seek with all amount of interest if they truly desire to make the African continent and the Nigerian state productive and stable as political entities which have emerged from stable trade, colonial rule, military history and different histories of war.

- From Granting Amnesty To Boko Haram The Nigerian Oligarchy Has Up-Draded to Full Scale Declaration of War Against Boko Haram
- This Same Declarants of The Said War Against Boko Haram All Lived to See The Artrocities that constituted the Abomination and the Desolation that befell Nigeria During its National(Civil War)
- What Exactly is it that has blinded Nigerian Oligarchy from visualizing innocent Civilian Casualties that would Accompany these Raids Against Boko Haram.

## Vanguard

### **BOKO HARAM: NIGERIANS ARE FRUSTRATED, HELPLESS; ANGRY SENATE ASKS MARK TELL JONATHAN**

September 17, 2014 / in [Headlines](#) 10:22 am / [Comments](#)

***Boko Haram installs new Emir in Bama***

***By Johnbosco Agbakwuru & Joseph Erunke***

**ABUJA**— THE Senate, yesterday, canvassed tougher and full scale measures to end the Boko Haram insurgency. It said that the sect has declared war on Nigeria.

The senators, who resumed from their two-month vacation, expressed dissatisfaction with how the war was being prosecuted and mandated the Senate leadership to meet with President Goodluck Jonathan and service chiefs to hammer out better strategies to checkmate the insurgents. President Goodluck Jonathan and Senate President, Sen. David Mark

Senator Mark, in his welcome speech said actions of the Boko Haram sect are a complete declaration of war geared towards undermining the nation's sovereignty.

Meantime, the Senate has referred President Jonathan's \$1 billion loan request to fight insurgency to its committees on Foreign, Finance, and Local Debt to report back within one week.

Senator Mark in his speech also said the Senate was waiting for Mr. President's action on the report of the just concluded National Conference which was convoked to discuss and suggest ways of resolving perceived structural defects in the polity.

The Senate President further tasked the President to ensure the 2015 Appropriation Bill gets to the legislative chamber before the end of the month to enable the lawmakers pass it into law before January 2015.

He noted that the escalation of violence and the heinous crimes being carried out on daily basis by the insurgents including the declaration of a caliphate had reached alarming proportions.

#### **Insurgency in North East can affect 2015 elections; So! Why Not Dialogue Now While it is Still Possible?**

Deputy Senate President, Senator Ike Ekweremadu warned that if drastic action was not taken to tackle headlong the activities of Boko Haram, it would derail the 2015 elections.

Senator Ekweremadu stated that Section 180 of the constitution provides that "if the Federation is at war in which the territory of Nigeria is physically involved and the President considers that it is not practicable to hold elections, the National Assembly may by resolution extend the period of four years mentioned in Sub-section 2 of this Section from time to time, but no such extension shall exceed a period of six months at any one time."



### **Furthermore, Ekweremadu said:**



“If we don’t resolve the problem in the North-east, we may not have elections in 2015 because Section 180(3) of the Constitution says if the country is at war, there may not be elections. Of course, the country is at war now. Democracy is being rolled back in North-east. It is very important as the Senate to take a firm stance to resolve this problem.”

Also supporting Ekweremadu’s position, the Deputy Senate Leader, Senator Abdul Ningi wondered why the country would be facing serious security threat from the Boko Haram sect and some people were going on with political

activities. In apparent reference to the ongoing rally by the Transformation Ambassadors of Nigeria, TAN, Senator Ningi, who represents Bauchi Central on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP said, “Section 2 of the Constitution says Nigeria shall be one indivisible nation. Many houses and villages are no longer parts of this country. Fighting this war is more important than any other thing. There should be suspension of electioneering activities until these wars are over. People are so disturbed and have been disenfranchised and some areas are no longer part of this country...All electioneering activities should be suspended until this war is over.”

### **Senator Bello Tukur representing Adamawa Central said: But Who is Fooling Who?**

“It took Boko Haram less than 10 days to move into five local governments. The problem we have now I believe is the lack of understanding of security agencies on how Boko Haram is operating. I have interacted with some people and they said the number of Boko Haram people operating in that area is not more than 100 and yet they are able to chase the military away.”

### **Mark’s speech; Someone Please tell Senator David Mark it is not time for speeches by Dialogue with Separatists Groups**

In his speech, Mark said among others:

“The escalation of violence and the heinous crimes daily perpetrated by insurgents and terrorists including the declaration of a Caliphate has reached alarming proportions. Regrettably, the Boko Haram sect, these harbingers of death have become more emboldened and daring, killing innocent Nigerians and destroying property at will.

“From abductions, kidnappings and bombings, the situation has now degenerated to capturing and occupying some parts of Nigeria. In what is obviously intended to humiliate us as a sovereign nation and test our resolve, the terrorists have brazenly hoisted their flags to confirm their assault and affront on our collective will as a nation.

“My dear colleagues, to put it otherwise is to shy away from the truth. In my candid opinion, the Boko Haram sect has in no unmistakable terms declared a total war on Nigeria and Nigerians. Their ideology is alien to our culture. We must as a people and nation handle this situation with all the seriousness it deserves.

“I have consistently advocated dialogue as the needed panacea to this malaise. Sure, dialogue must not be ruled out but this time around, with this scale of warfare, we must first demonstrate our strength, confront and defeat these terrorists and insurgents before we resort to dialogue.

“I am yet to come to terms with what the Boko Haram Sect actually wants. And I dare ask: What offence has the Chibok girls or any other school child, a market woman or artisan

struggling to earn a living committed that he or she deserves to be felled and decimated daily by the bombs and arsenals of these insurgents?

“This war has certainly come to our door-steps. As Senators of the Federal Republic, destiny has entrusted us to be at the helm of affairs today. We must all rise to the current challenge. The government must be supported fully by this Senate to confront the challenge head-long.

“Therefore, we must devise a better strategy to win this war at the earliest possible time. We must come out with clear, concise and unequivocal mission statement on how to win this war.

“As I have repeatedly said, we must as a matter of urgency, fish out the financiers of these terrorists and all collaborators wherever they are, and bring them to book. My appeal to you, my bosses, is to continue to provide the necessary legislative framework that is needed to win this war.

“Except to pretend and say otherwise, Nigerians are frustrated and presently appear helpless over the unfolding events. They watch in total disbelief and shock at the activities of the Boko Haram.

“But we must reassure them that they are not alone in this. We are indeed doing all we can to protect and secure their lives and property. As a responsible government, we will not tolerate this subversion of our sovereignty.

“It is reprehensible and totally unacceptable. The life of every Nigerian is very important to us and must be held sacrosanct. Total security is *sine qua non* to our existence.

“Obviously, these are trying times. We must not, under any circumstances, play politics with our collective security. This is not the time to wilfully castigate or criticize our armed forces and security operatives. We must not trade blames or pass the buck.

“We must not stand divided along any real or perceived fault lines. We must not abandon the dreams of our founding fathers and their belief in one united, indivisible and indissoluble democratic nation. We must not condone religious intolerance.

“We must not cave in to the rigid and bigoted views espoused by these terrorists. We must not succumb to intimidation, blackmail and threat under any extremist ideology.

“This is the time to stand united, rally round and encourage our armed forces and security operatives. They are our dear compatriots who have chosen to lay down their lives so that we all may live in peace.

“This is the time to give them maximum support so that they will be motivated to prosecute and win this needless war in the shortest possible time. We must also mobilize all our war efforts and **Legislative calendar is running at a Jet Speed; What Was the National Assembly Doing in their Four Years in Office?**

He also spoke on other tasks before the legislators.

“We have on our legislative calendar the Petroleum Industry Bill, Pensions Reforms (Amendment) Bill, Customs (Amendment) Bill, Immigration Repeal & Re-enactment) Bill, Public Procurement Act (Amendment) Bill, Proceeds Of Crimes Bill, National Automotive Industry Development Plan (Fiscal Incentives and Assurances), FCT.

“Area Council (Political Structural) Bill, National Health Bill, Labour Institutions Bill, Bio-Safety Management Bill, Agricultural Processing Zones Bill, further review of the Electoral Act, harmonization of the Senate and House positions on the proposals for the further amendment of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), and consideration of the 2015 budget estimates, amongst others.”

"I cannot overemphasize the importance of passing the Petroleum Industry Bill (P.I.B) as quickly as possible. Both operators and watchers of Nigeria's petroleum Industry are in agreement that this vital sector is in dire need of reforms and a new template that will enthrone these essential reforms is an urgent imperative.

"Every informed player in the industry that I have interacted with holds the view that one imperishable legacy the 7th Senate can leave behind is the passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill. Not only will it engender greater transparency in the operations of the oil and gas industry, it will also enable our country to maximize the benefits derivable from this God given resource.

"As the 2014 fiscal year draws to a close, we expect that the appropriation bill arrives this chamber before the end of this month. This will enable us work on the budget and pass it into Law before January 2015.

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