

## **EDUCATING CHILDREN IN INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS) CAMPS THROUGH BLENDED LEARNING: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Education occupies a central place in human rights. It is essential and indispensable for the exercise of all other human rights and for general societal development. Internally displaced people (IDPs) are considered as most vulnerable due to the increased demands of IDPs for essential public services and livelihoods. The children in these camps also face a lot of hardship with little or no education because of overcrowding and influx of people, especially in the North East of Nigeria. Blended Learning is a hybrid of face-to-face (F-T-F) and computer mediated form of instruction. As an instructional strategy it harnesses the better of the two methods to improve the instructional process especially of the children in IDP camp Schools which are usually over crowded with on the spot recruited teachers. Some challenges envisaged were inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, ready computer literate teachers and specialized manpower for the e-learning platform. It was recommended that educating displaced children in IDP camps should be given more concerted effort by more NGOs, Humanitarian organization, Philanthropists and not left for the host government alone. This is because the children are at the heritage of the future and investing in them educationally is vital for a healthy society for today and tomorrow.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Children, Instructional Strategies, Blended Learning.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Children are the torch bearers of any community as they determine the continuity of any generation of people. Children are also the tools with which the human race is propagated. Any society with a low population of children is tilting towards extinction. Thus, Children are assets to a people especially when they are properly educated to be useful citizen and thereby contribute to the development of any given society. As the saying goes “it is better to train a child than to repair an adult”. Also, “you bend the twig to the desired direction when it is tender”. So the need for early education of the children is a necessity. The Holy Bible also stressed that it’s importance by saying “Train up a child in the way, he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it”. (KJV of

the Bible) All these emphasize the need to train and educate children to become useful members of the society.

The education for these young children must be organized in a well conducive atmosphere that will foster the total development of a child. This is because the nature of the education children have at their first five years of life is imperative for their overall development and later chances. (Maduewesi, 2005). More importantly, good care and education during the early childhood years should be emphasized because children who are well cared for during childhood are more likely to benefit from later education and other social services (UNICEF, 1999).

Of the more than twenty seven (27) million children estimated to lack access to education in emergency situations, presently, a substantial number are internally displaced. (Mooney & Colleen, 2013). These displaced children are not only having their educational development denied but they are deprived of important benefits as well. Going to School is known to provide a degree of stability and normalcy in the traumatized lives of internally displaced children and can be a critical source of psychological support. It can help to reduce children's exposure to threats including sexual exploitation, physical and military recruitment. (Dryden-Peterson, 2011). Classrooms can also be effective forums for conveying life-saving information about other risks including land mines and HIV/AIDS. Moreover, access to education is an important element of internally displaced persons (IDP'S) integration into the local community where they are displaced as well as when they return to their home area or resettle elsewhere ((Mooney & Colleen, 2013).

In line with established international human right law, the guiding principle on international Displacement underscore the responsibility of national authority to ensure that IDPs receive free and compulsory education at the primary level. In addition, the principles urge authorities to make educational and training facilities available to the internally displaced including adolescents and women whether or not living in camps as soon a condition permits. (United Nations Guiding Principles, 2003).

According to UNICEF report (2015), it is estimated that there are twenty-six (26) million internally displaced persons (IDPs) world wide as a results of conflicts of which, 13.5 million are children and even more when those displaced by environmental disasters are included. Children are among the most vulnerable members of society during flight and displacement. Displacement exacerbates, poverty and at times lead to the breakdown of family and community structures and as such children become increasingly at risk of forced labour, forced early marriage, domestic violence, sexual exploitation and recruitment into armed groups. Faced with disintegration of their social norms, displaced children can find themselves without basic necessities such as shelter, food and their education disrupted or even terminated.

Though it is the responsibility of the national government of various countries to give basic amenities and ensure rights to education, many displaced children lack access to school especially in protracted displacement situations, some displacement can last for years or even decades and children faced with such situations may grow up without an education. (Mann, 2010).

Education is a basic human right for all children and it is very necessary that all children in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps be given this opportunity. In fact it should not be a matter of choice but compulsory because education creates a sense of security and hope which is often lacking in refugee settings. According to Bruijn (2009), educating refugees have multiple benefits and an immediate, positive and widely spread impact on society. Education teaches self-reliance, helps create the human social capital need for development, and plays a fundamental role in providing both physical and psychosocial protection for the children, Education is also critical for these children so they can be informed about their health and hygiene.

Another report says that there are approximately 13 million refugees and 38 million IDPs around the world and that these numbers will likely grow considering the horrific and continuous violence in nearly every part of the globe (UNHCR, 2014). Though education is the fundamental right of every human, it is in jeopardy in many IDP camps because it is not given priority but, rather neglected and ignored leaving million of children and young people without safe access to quality and free education.

Violence, conflict, environmental disasters and immense economic and social inequalities have led millions of people to flee their home with many ending up in refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps. The number of national disasters over the decade of 2003- 2013 averaged 450 per year, which compares to the mere average 90 disaster a year in the 1970's (Plan International, 2014).

Statistics reveal there are current 41 active conflicts and a survey of 162 countries showed only 11 countries could be said to be free of both internal and external conflicts (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015). It further revealed that states with conflicts experience extensive issues with education quality, parity and access because such state institution are at their weakest and any available funding is dedicated to military and defense budgets.

Education in refugees and IDP camps does not garner a lot of attention due to other circumstance which require immediate assistance, such as access to food, water and shelter along with ways to thwart rampant diseases and the need for security.

The barriers to a quality safe education are vast and in the setting of camps, the ability to report malfeasance is limited. Violence also comes from within the environment of the school, from teachers and other adults themselves. Displacement offers women and girls far fewer resources and opportunity which can leave women unprotected from sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation and other human right violations. Schools have the potential to be protective spaces especially from sexual and gender base violence, but investments in schools is lacking. In 2010, education only received 4% of the United Nations body entrusted with issues concerning refugees and internally displaced people in the United Nations High Commission of Refugees Budget (UNHCR) (Dryden Peterson, 2011).

In addition to the lack of resources available for refugees schools, the teacher are often people who have never taught before arriving at the camp and can be abusive and disempowering (Kirk and Winthrop, 2012).

Another plight of education in these camps is that those who attend school often face upheaval as children and teachers alike join and leave the school due to repatriation or new influxes of refugees thus, making the instructional process and experience unstable. A good example is the Meheba refugees settlement, where many Congolese student were transferred from other camps where French was the primary language of communication and instruction. Upon arrival in Meheba, many of these children have to repeat years taking the same classes over and over again because they cannot pass then in English, but have already taken them in French (Forge Report, 2008). This disruption causes instability and repetition which in turn makes the education of the displaced persons more complex and difficult.

Also teachers in these settings are vastly outnumbered by students and often lack any substantive educational training which can set the stage for schools being an unsafe place. For instance, teachers may utilize severe forms of punishment, discriminating against marginalized groups and reinforce dangerous behaviors in students like the sexual or physical harassment of other students. Girls can face violence and discrimination due to their gender, facing limits on their schooling due to cultural or family pressures, lack of safety specifically for girls or lack of safe spaces within school areas. Teachers have an important role to play for meaningful learning to take place in this IDP camps as they have a hand in creating and regulating the classroom space and style of instruction.

Dryden-Peterson (2011) is of the opinion that schools can provide additional support otherwise not found in camps. This includes structure, a safe space, and an opportunity for a better future. She further stated that school can provide meals for children, helping to address the issues of malnutrition, provide instruction on camp life, the spread and prevention of disease affecting camp life. The benefits of investing in and protecting education in IDP camp transcend the confines of the camps itself.

### **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) In Nigeria**

The United Nations (UN) guiding principles define internally displaced persons (IDP) as “Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their home or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, natural or human made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998).

The North east state of Nigeria makes up a huge population of displaced persons. The North Eastern states (Borno, Adamawa, Yobe and Gombe) and some states in Nigeria have witnessed unprecedented insurgency and conflicts from 2009 to date. This has even led to the declaration of state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, states in 2013. It is estimated that a total of 1,235,294 IDPs are currently living in host community (IOM, 2015). The displaced communities are mobile and largely living with host families and communities or make shift settlements in the bush a few kilometers from their village of origin where they are less exposed to violence. The DTM-IOM Round II report of 2015 on IDP report is as follows;

- 1,88,018 IDPs (149,357 Households) were identified in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe state

- Another 47,276 IDPs (5,910 Households) were identified in Plateau, Nasarawa, Abuja, Kano and Kaduna states
- Total of 1,235,294 IDPs were identified in northern Nigeria
- The highest number of IDPs are in Borno (672,714 IDPs) followed by Adamawa (220,159 IDPs) and Yobe (135,810 IDPs)

*The table below provides the numbers of IDP children in host communities in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe state*

General statistics	Adamawa	Yobe	Borno
Total IDP children (13-17yrs) 44% of total population	96,870	59,756	295,994
Total IDP children in hosting in communities	84,721	59,756	242,810
Total IDP children in IDP camps (3-17yrs)	12,149		53,183

**Source:** International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2015

According to UNCHCR (2017), some problems facing IDP's in Nigeria are as follows;

- The absence of camps in many situations of internal displacement
- The opportunity to pursue local integration
- Protection problems for certain IDPs within camps which lead them to seek greater security outside a camp.
- The simple opportunity of having relatives or friends and other social networks where hosting is possible or a combination of some or all of the above factors leading some families to split their options, where by parts of the family may reside in a camp while one or several family members migrate to areas where work opportunities are greater.

### **Education on Refugee and IDP Camps**

A refugee is someone, who owing to a well-founded fear of been persecuted for reasons of rape, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion outside the country of his or her nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him or herself of the protection of that country (1951 refugee convention, 1951 in UNHCR, 2012).

Most times, Education is treated as a secondary need to be addressed only once conflicts have subsided. Yet, conflicts and emergencies can go for years or even decades, leaving many IDP children to grow up without education as well as deprived of the protection and support that going to school can provide. Much attention needs to be paid to understanding and overcoming the barriers that IDPs frequently face in accessing their rights to formal education than the non-formal learning spaces of primary schools, supported by the international community but, IDPs have very limited access to secondary education (kirk & winthrop, 2007).

A global overview shows there are about 40.88 million internally displaced persons of which 8.6 million were newly displaced in 2015. Causes of displacement include conflict persecution, armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights, natural or manmade disasters (UN, 2016). The UNHCR has established formal partnerships with ministries of education in almost every country of the world in which it works and many host countries have adopted this approach. The UNHCR (2014), also gave the following reports;

- *Only one in every two primary school aged pupils attend primary school.*
- *Only one in every Four Secondary School aged children access secondary school education.*
- *Only one in every one hundred refugees access higher education or skills-based education.*
- *3.2 million school-aged refugee children and adolescents are out of school.*
- *IDPs outside of camps tend to receive less access and support from international humanitarian organization but they may have better access to local schools.*
- *Returning IDPs may face challenges in having their learning during displacement recognized.*
- *For demobilized child soldiers, education is an important part of the reintegration process as it provides social and emotional development as well as academic learning.*

The legal responsibility for provision of education for IDPs lies with the national government. In the absence of provision by the state, IDP communities often set up their own schools international support for education of IDP is generally treated as a short-term human tartan response however many IDPS live in Protracted displacement. Education tends to be high priority for IDPs themselves for humanitarian actors

- The education cluster plays a central role in coordinating support from IDP education especially girls and women.
- Many of the barriers are similar to that of refugees and other conflict and crises affected population but IDP's are more vulnerable because due to the loss of livelihood, home and possessions. School fees are one of the most significant barriers for IDPs
- Some barriers to education peculiar to IDPs include – lack of education providers within or near camps and other IDPs settlement
- Loss of documentation
- Inability to meet residency requirements for school enrollment
- Common strategies for providing education for IDPs include
- Expanding school capacity in host areas through multi-shift schooling
- Relaxing requirements for IDPs to have uniforms or documentation for enrolment
- Fee waivers strategies commonly used by the international community, often in partnership with national governments, include
- Child friendly spaces and temporary learning spaces
- Supplying teaching and learning material such as school – in – a – box
- Hiring IDP teachers especially female teachers to teach in IDP camps
- Issuing IDPs with temporary documentation
- School feeding programe with take home rations
- Providing alternative education classes, including accelerated learning classes



UNICEF and other actors often provide child friendly spaces

Teachers in schools serving IDPs are often given incentive rather than a salary because international organizations are reluctant to support salaries due to concerns over sustainability and finding but incentives often fail to attract qualified teachers. As a result many non – governmental organizations have developed their own teachers training courses.

### **Instructional Challenges of Internally Displaced Person (IDP)**

There is no universal instrument specifically addressing the plight of IDPs but in 1998 the UN General Assembly and the United Nations commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) took note of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. While these Guiding Principles do not constitute a binding instrument, they have received large support from the international community. More recently, in 2009, the African Union adopted the Kampala convention on IDPs.

This regional instrument is an important step forward in the protection of and assistance to IDPs in one of the continent's most affected by displacement (Kampala Convention, 2009).

It is also stated that in International armed conflict, parties to the conflict must take the necessary measures to ensure that children under fifteen, who are orphaned or are separated from their families as a result of war are not left to their own resources and that their education is facilitated in all circumstances. Occupying powers must also facilitate the functioning of educational facilities in occupied territories. It is further stated that in situation of Non-International armed conflict, children must receive an education including religious and moral education.

Some common challenges facing refugees and IDPs as identified through research (Bengssom & Naylor 2010) are:

- *Provision of Post primary Education and training opportunities for adolescents and youths remain unaddressed properly.*
- *Need for increased support from national and international actors.*
- *Exploration of innovative means of providing cost-effective access to education in this group.*
- *Long term flexible funding and*
- *Urgent need for relevant and meaningful curriculum.*
- *National Capacity to address ICT education need to be strengthened. This should cover inclusion of IDPs in the education sector plans, educational management, information systems, budgets and contingency planning to reduce the disruption of education even in unforeseen future displacement crises.*
- *Improved National level planning, international level planning and international support is needed to improve teacher recruitment and compensation in IDP situations including strategies to retain qualified teachers*
- *Some IDPs schools have become targets of attack and recruitment of child soldiers. However quality education can be given to them to protect them by*
- *Providing a safe space for children to spend time*
- *Teaching skills and knowledge to children to protect themselves from exploitation, health risk, genders based violence, land mines and other risks.*
- *Supporting child psychosocial wellbeing*

- *Providing sites where children can receive other support such as vaccinations and counseling.*

Governments' legal responsibility to protect IDPs right to education needs to be strengthened through the development of legal frame work at global, regional and national levels.

Bengssom & Naylor (2010) also suggested the following as the way forward in improving education of children in IDP camps.

- *Cash transfers ensuring protection, psychosocial support, and safe spaces and building resilience.*
- *Training teachers and parents to cope with traumatized children, alongside self-regulation exercises for children*
- *After school programmes providing academic support, problem solving skills and nurturing positive peer relationships*
- *Using school as a site for delivering mental health interventions addressing disruptions in learning*
- *Accelerating learning programmes (ALPs) support overage, children to catch up on missed learning time.*
- *Provide training in literacy and numeracy, livelihood skills training and life-skills for youth aged 15 – 24 who missed out on schooling.*
- *Mobile schools e.g. schools in a boat or bus.*
- *Using mobile tablets to enable interactive learning.*
- *Deploying female teaching assistants to support girls.*

### **Blended Learning As An Instructional Strategy**

Instructional strategies are the prescribed sequences and methods of delivery to achieve desired learning outcomes. Instructional strategies play a significant role in the achieving of set objectives. Effective teaching and learning can be achieved when the learner is given the right task e.g. (problem centred tasks) to accomplish by instructing them with the right methods such as activation, demonstration, application and integration. The goal of Blended learning is to optimize learning outcomes and cost effectiveness of programme delivery (Siggh and Reed, 2001)

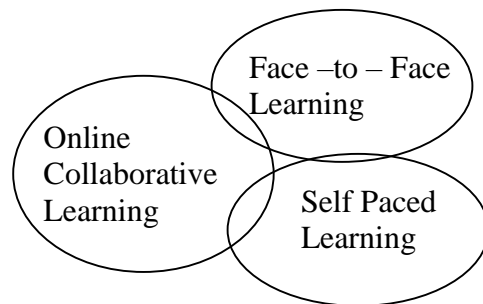
Blended learning can be described as a combination of e-learning and the traditional face- to – face (F2F) learning or instructor led training. (Bonk and Graham 2006). It combines multiple delivery media that is designed to complement each other and promote learning. To further buttress this point Garrison and Vaugh (2008) defined blended learning is the thoughtful fusion to face-to-face and online learning experiences. It is quite clear that no single mode of delivery system than can provide sufficient choices, engagement, social contact, relevance and context needed to facilitate successful learning and performance (Carner, 2010).

This is because learning environment has affordances that facilitates or constrain different types of interactions and activities. Though much can be learned and synthesized from research both distance and traditional learning environments blended environments provide a paradigm that is different than just a linear combination of the two According to (Graham and Dziuban, 2008) a



reactions to the use of computer mediated discussions can be quite different in course that also needs face-to-face versus a completely online course.

In IDP camps with population and different entry points, blended learning offers a range of possibilities by combining internet and digital media with established classroom forms that require physical co-presence of both the teacher and learners. Blended learning is a formal teaching and learning approach that combines in the most efficient manner, both e-learning and face-to-face direct teaching. That is teaching and learning both at the traditional face-to-face and the computer mediated technologies and therefore gives room for some form of flexibility of time and space thereby, encouraging individualized and self-paced learning. The diagram below is used to illustrate a blended learning environment depicting the interface or interaction of this hybrid instructional strategy.



*Source: Adapted from Halilu & Siliki, 2017*

### **Benefits of Blended Learning to Education of Children in IDP Camps**

Learning is an on ending activity that spans from infancy to old age and till last breath. Education as the major tool for learning is a fundamental right of every person. The main goal of education in Nigerian is the equipping of every citizen with the necessary knowledge, skills attitude's and values to enables him/her to derive maximum benefits from his/her membership in the society, lead a fulfilling life and contribute to the development and welfare of the society. Ochoyi and Danladi (2009) opined that education is the transmission of worst while values such as skills, knowledge and planned activities that can develop learner's self-actualization and potentials for national development.

The desire to achieve stated goals whether in the cognitive, psychomotor or affective domain have given birth to various instructional strategies. Individual differences and varying learning styles has also led to various forms of instructional designs and strategies. This include both the face-to-face instructional and computer or technology mediated form on instruction.

Technology-mediated learning is a generic term which compasses different teaching and learning approaches that is supported by the used of information and communication technologies (ICT) Blended learning is also a good example of learning which designates a range of possibilities presented by combing internet and digital media with established classroom forms that requires the physical co-presence of both the teacher and students. It harnesses the strengths of the classroom setting and online environment. (Friesen, 2012).

One major problem of classrooms and schools in the IDP camp is over population and overcrowding, the blended learning strategy with the use of computer mediated instruction will ease the pressure on the teacher as they will be engaged in a multi task level.

Secondly the problem of class placement will also be handled, as learners will be able to learn at their own level and pace thereby take care of the issues that arise as a result of multi-grading in the IDP camp schools.

Thirdly the e-learning facilities of the blended learning environment can be created for these children by bringing experts online. It will give fast access to information for quick reaction, connect students with colleagues' experts both in and outside the learning environment

Fourthly teachers acting as guides can help learners select his or her activities from a personal menu of learning opportunities most relevant to his or her area of study.

Fifthly it enables teachers and learner access learning events from many sources enabling the learner to select a favoured format or learning method or tracing provider and enabling the organizations to form functional learning communities.

Most teachers in IDP camps are not professionals but teachers made by on the spot assessment and may not be too competent especially regarding classroom control and management of large classes as is the case in many IDP camp schools and the use of e-learning facilities will immensely augment form such weaknesses.

Blended learning will make it easy to download desired pictures and materials to facilitate learning. The e-learning facilities in blended learning will also enable easy access of information and increase knowledge as there are no ready libraries in IDP camps. Face-to-face or brick-mortar learning will be enhanced with the added computer mediated benefit of blended learning as learners will access information online and not merely on physical environment.

They will have access to a lot of learning materials from open resource websites and enrich the instructional process.

### **Challenges of Using Blended Learning As An Instructional Strategy for Children In IDPs Camp**

In spite of the aforementioned benefits there will be some major challenges that will need to be overcome to get the full benefits of the use of blended learning for IDP camps schools. Some of these challenges are

- Provision of adequate facilities especially the computer mediated aspect to facilitate blended learning
- Adequate funding to get desired computer software application as at when due and necessary
- Specialized manpower for the e-learning facilities as most teachers in IDP camps are handpicked and not professionally trained to facilitate such instructional processes
- Poor computer and internet literacy skills among these teachers can constitute a hindrance to the use of the blended learning instructional style
- Poor attitude to education of children can also be a major hindrance to the use of the blended learning style. This is because in most IDP camps the primary concern is the feeding, safety and health while education which is a major tool for re-integration is ignored or handled with levity.

- Security issues on most camps will make the host government and even nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) not want to make good investment on the provision needed media to enhance the instructional process for meaningful use. For instance. UNICEF's School-in-a-Box contains supplies for a teacher and up to 80 students (UNICEF, 2010) and they may not want to do anything outside the box.
- The down turn in the global economy is also an impending factor as most host government that would have assisted may be affected by the recessed economy.
- Network connectivity issues may come up and present some difficulties especially if network supply mast( e.g. Mtn ,Glo, Etisalat, Airtel) are not within reasonable distance.

### **Recommendations**

- i. There should be a keener interest in the education of children in IDP camps and it should be collective efforts and not left for the Host Government alone.
- ii. UNICEF'S School-in-a-box system of education should be reviewed to allow for other innovative instructional strategies that will enhance the teaching and learning in IDP camps.
- iii. Professional teachers should be sent to IDPs camps and not the fire brigade approach of teacher recruitment presently obtainable in many IDPs camps.
- iv. Security should be beefed up in IDPs camps so as to allow NGO'S, Humanitarian organizations, the Host Government and well-meaning individuals to invest in providing better educational facilities and media without fear of burglary.
- v. Adequate ICT specialists and manpower be attached to these camps to help in facilitating computer mediated instruction.
- vi. Child friendly teachers should be prepared ahead of time for IDPs camps rather than on the spot recruitment as IDPs is now a common phenomenon that mankind may have to cope with as a result of various forms of disasters resulting in displacement. Children at IDPs camps should be given access to e-learning to broaden their knowledge in various lessons as most of the teachers may be ill prepared for some topics as they have no professional training to do so.
- vii. Parents should also be taught at camps. Adult literacy programming should be organized for adults and parents as well so that they can be better support to their children or ward's education.

### **CONCLUSION**

Children are the heritage and foundational future of any nation because the children of today are the leaders and Adults of tomorrow. So the need to invest for quality and functional education for children in IDPs camps is a necessity. As it is said, Education is a fundamental right of every person, a key to other human rights; the heart of all developments, the prerequisite for equity, diversity and lasting peace. For nations, education opens doors to economic and social prosperity, dynamic work force and well informed citizens who are able to compete and co-operate in the global arena. The internally displaced persons are citizens as well and need to be partakers of quality education. This need for education for IDP's cannot be overemphasized as its benefits are numerous. In fact education is one major tool for these displaced persons to be re-integrated back to the society and become useful.

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