

## **How far have we developed as a nation since colonial rule, is our colonial mentality holding us back from developing as a nation?**

SHADE BABALOLA  
Leyton Sixth Form College, United Kingdom

**ABSTRACT** The purpose of this paper is to explore the current mind-set trending in Nigeria focusing on key issues such as education, mind-set, health-care, cultural identity, and colonial rule. This paper intends to explore whether a colonial mentality is responsible for holding Nigeria back as a nation and impeding on her development and economic growth. This paper highlights the current state of Nigeria's education and healthcare systems, which current research suggests are in urgent need of reform and improvement.

*Keywords:* Mind-set, education, health care, cultural identity and colonial rule

### **Introduction**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the British had conquered the different parts of the present Nigeria at different times, and established control and authority over them. These areas were grouped into protectorates namely Lagos, Niger coast (Q1 River Protectorate), and the Northern Protectorate. For ease of administration and control the Northern protectorate and the Southern Protectorate made up of Lagos and Niger Coast were amalgamated in 1914 by the British. Thus came into existence the country Nigeria (Nigerian Embassy, Washington D.C 201, p.1). On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1960, Nigeria became self-governing from British colonial rule and was administered at the centre by the Federal government and three Regional Governments in the East, West and North of the country. In 1963 the Midwest Region was carved out of the Western Region making a federation of four regions. During this first republic, a parliamentary system of government was in operation. This lasted till January 1966 (Nigerian Embassy, Washington D.C 201, p.1). Nigeria has

experienced a succession of leaders since colonial rule from General Olusegun Obasanjo, President Shehu Shagari, General Sani Abacha, President Goodluck Jonathan and the most recent elected President Mohammed Buhari to name a few since independence was achieved. In hindsight it may be argued that colonial rule brought with it a particular mind-set that has impacted on the current norms and values within Nigeria's society. The purpose of this paper is to explore the extent to which mind-set has influenced current and future developments within Nigeria.

On a positive note Nigeria remains a strong economy in comparison to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, a contributing factor for this is driven by the oil sector. However, on the other hand, the national per capita poverty rate remains very high, this is currently 60% of the population and as a result of this there is little progress in poverty reduction (World Bank, 2015, p.3). According to the World Bank (2015) pg. 1 The Nigerian economy has continued to experience robust growth in 2014 largely driven by the non-oil sector while oil production declined GDP is estimated to have grown by 6.1% owing to a strong performance mainly in the services industry. Oil and gas GDP is estimated to have declined by 1.3%, relative to a decline of 13.1% in 2013. The decline in oil GDP was due to the continued oil theft in the Niger Delta Region of the country and the consequent disruptive effects, which included major oil companies having to shut down during the year. It is evident from the above data that Nigeria as an economy has huge potential for economic growth and development however, performance indicators suggest that poverty remains a serious cause for concern within Nigeria judging by the figures that suggest that 60% of the population still live in poverty.

### **Colonial mentality**

The burning question we should be asking ourselves is whether some of the challenges Nigeria faces are developmental or whether they are also compounded by our colonial mentality. According to Rajan (2014, p.1), colonialism is a phenomenon in which a country established its rule over another country with the sole aim of economic exploitation. During this process the ruling country establishes political, socio economic structures such that the ruled country becomes its colon. The rulers of colonial western powers had one set of attitude this is famously known as "white man's burden". They perceived colonies as primordial societies, incapable of learning to transform themselves and saw it as their responsibility to reform them.

Rajan (2014, p.1) further argued that "the psychological imprints left on the minds of people of colonies is another aspect of colonial mentality". He suggests that "perceiving oneself as inferior and the British as superior, in the process blindly imitating their culture, imbibing their attitudes is seen as an aspect of colonial mentality". The political, socio economic structural

changes brought by colonial powers resulted in various attitudinal and behavioral changes which are seen even today. Rajan, (2014) also argued that the continuous colonial mentality in India has to be looked at so roles of both colonial ruler's mentality and colony people mentality have to be analyzed on India's successes and failures, a similar perspective may be considered for the current situation in Nigeria. Nigeria has been reluctant over the last number of years to build a strong education system and as a consequence of this Nigeria has a weak and under-skilled labour- market that has impacted significantly on the economy and growth of the country in general.

On a similar note according to Jabbar (2014, p.1), as Africans she states we freed ourselves and won our independence but psychologically we continued to view ourselves through the lens of whiteness. In other words we were left with the shackles of our colonial mentality. Nigeria's current successes but most importantly failures must be considered to see if our past history of colonization continues to play a detrimental role on the future development of the country.

### **Methodology**

The method of research adopted for the purpose of this paper focused on both secondary and primary research, secondary research was conducted to consider existing research in the area. Primary research has also been gathered in relation to relevant statistics and data that exist to support a number of the findings. Observation as a form of primary research has also been taken into consideration for the purpose of this research paper. The limitations of this paper are centred around the subjective and unmeasurable nature of the concept mind-set. However, this has been addressed to some extent by focusing on current readings which have included up-to date data and statistics which are relevant to this paper.

### **Literature Review**

A colonial mentality, are we totally independent? Marley (1979) in his defining song titled "Redemption Song", encouraged listeners to "emancipate themselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds". It may be argued that Marley was referring to the psychological effects of colonisation. This may be referred to as a mind-set, a state of mind where we have been unable to free ourselves from a form of conditioning as a consequence of colonial rule. This conditioning may be referred back to Rajan's understanding of colonisation (2014, p.2), where he states" that perceiving one-self as inferior and the British as superior, in the process blindly imitating their culture, imbibing their attitudes is seen as an aspect of colonial mentality".

Similarly, Anikulapo -Kuti and Africa 70 organisation (1977) sang “He be say you be colonial man, you don be slave before, them don release you now, but you never release yourself”. In other words Fela spoke of how Nigeria was once colonised as a nation but where later given back their independence, however, he then appears to suggest that mentally we have as a nation been unable to psychologically release ourselves from the constraints and limitations of colonisation. Furthermore, Kolawole (2014, p.1) argues that Nigeria is still embedded deeply in a colonial mentality he suggests “we don’t know what we are doing in this country and because we don’t know what we are doing we keep on doing things that hurt us, and because we keep on doing things that hurt us, we keep going round and round in a vicious circle”. He provides two examples to further elaborate his point.

He states that the security and Exchange Commission has come up with a discriminatory policy which, if unchecked will amount to a form of genocide and a mass killing of the local rating agencies in favour of promoting the foreign ones. According to the Security and Exchange Commission, the capital requirement for Nigeria’s rating agencies should now be N150 million, up from N20 million. He argues, “what has a capital base got to do with a job that is purely intellectual and has no fiduciary commitment to customers”, he further suggests “that the colonial mentality in SEC’s new policy is very evident in its exemption of foreign rating agencies from the capital requirement”. In fact he states “that foreign agencies are not required to register in Nigeria at all and that they are virtually unregulated”. He further states that “it is easier for foreigners to be given billion naira businesses simply because they are foreigners and as a result of this they are respected and have access to better jobs”.

### **The current state of Nigeria’s education system**

There is an argument that might suggest that the current crisis within Nigeria’s education system is highly beneficial to the United Kingdom and to the development and growth of the British economy and is highly detrimental to Nigeria’s economy in terms of development and growth. As a reminder there are currently 10.5 million children out of school in Nigeria, UNESCO (2014, p.1). According to Nigerian Watch (2013, p.1) . Nigerian students studying for university degrees in the UK have trebled over the last eight years to a staggering 17,640 according to the latest statistics published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (Hesa). Hesa’s figures showed that there were 17,640 Nigerians enrolled in UK universities during the 2011/2012 sessions, compared with 5,385 in 2003/04. Some may argue that the reasons why many parents have opted to send their children abroad is due to the current unrest and regular strikes within universities at home, the counter argument is that many believe that the education young people re-

ceive in Nigeria is not good enough, the question we should be asking ourselves is why? Many state governments have also joined the band wagon in sponsoring their youths to study abroad; the question perhaps we should be asking is why are we not adequately resourcing our home institutions?

Recent government policy has done little to benefit young people in Nigeria. According to UNESCO (2015, p.1). 1 there are currently 10.5 million children out of school in Nigeria and the figures are fast rising, not only are there huge amounts of young children out of school but youth unemployment is at an all-time high. According to Akande (2014, p.1), there are currently 11.5 million young people between the ages of 15-24 who are unemployed, some may argue that this is a direct consequence of an inadequate education received by many coupled with poor skills acquisition. There are several reasons as to why so many children are out of school one being because past governments have failed to invest adequately enough in Nigeria's education system. According to the World Bank (2014, p.1), Nigeria only invests 1% of her GDP in education; this has resulted in inadequate buildings and infrastructure, poor resourcing of schools and generally a huge percentage of children unable to access education and in the long-term they are denied access to the workplace due to poor skill acquisition.

Past governments in Nigeria have invested less than 1% in education according to the World Bank (2015, p.1) figures between the years 2010- 2014. In comparison to Ghana who invested 5.5 % of her GDP in 2010 and 8.1% of her GDP IN 2011. Figures for 20/12 -2014 have not been provided. UNESCO (20125) suggests that to aid economic development countries should invest at least 5-6% of their GDP in education.

As a consequence of the current crisis a huge number of young people are seeking education opportunities abroad it appears that the current mind-set is for young people and these are likely to be from middle class backgrounds to attend private sixth form colleges and universities in the United Kingdom or in economies that invest heavily in their education system. We must begin to ask ourselves some deep questions as to why there is a failure to invest in our current system of education as opposed to sending young people abroad.

There appears to be an on-going trend in some circles in Nigeria to educate young people in western universities, although there are many merits with regards to receiving a western education, there are many concerns as well, these concerns are related to the fact that while there appears to now be an alternative to educating those whose parents can afford to send them abroad, past governments have done little to invest in the current education system in Nigeria leaving those whose parents cannot afford to send them abroad leaving them to study in under-funded institutions.

Although it may be argued that many students find it a real benefit to experience living in another country while studying for their degrees, the ques-

tion that this paper raises is one of mind set; surely it is worth investing, developing and building Nigeria's education system.

There are many who benefit from Nigeria's education system being in a crisis and one such stakeholder is the British Government, Nigeria's students pay large sums of money to British Universities ranging from £11,000+ per year for a Masters programme and up-to £13,000 per annum for a full-time degree programme. While many Nigerians earn less than a dollar a day UNESCO 2013/14 pg 1, these figures are beyond the reach of many Nigerians.

### **Healthcare**

According to Burke and Sridhar (2013, p.3), data on health care funding was collated for South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana, the data was collated to find out if all countries met the Paris declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008). The Paris Declaration was endorsed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005 as an international agreement to which over one hundred Ministers, Heads of Agencies and other Senior Officials adhered and committed their countries and organisations to continue to increase efforts in harmonisation, alignment and managing aid for results with a set of monitorable actions and indicators (Burke and Sridhar, 2013, p.2). The results of the funding show that South Africa meets the Abuja target whilst Nigeria and Ghana do not. The total resource envelope for health is much larger in South Africa (\$497 per capita) than in Nigeria or Ghana (\$74 and \$54 respectively). Half (51%) of all health care spending in Ghana is from public funds, in South Africa this figure is 41% and in Nigeria only 25%. The tax capacity of the country—that is the ability of the government to raise public funds through taxation- is similar in South Africa and Ghana(23 % and 27 % respectively), and no data exists for Nigeria. Perhaps this is why It is common knowledge that many wealthy Nigerian's seeking access to health-care facilities in Nigeria are in the habit of accessing health-care services in the United Kingdom as well as other countries in the west, the question that should be asked is do they access medical care in the United Kingdom because they feel the care they will receive in the west is superior to that which they would receive in Nigeria, or do they access care in the UK and other western countries because the medical facilities are in short supply in Nigeria (Babalola, 2015). According to Ofoegbu (2015, p.1) as well as figures quoted from the Nigerian Medical Association, more than 5,000 Nigerian patients travel abroad for medical treatment every year, spending over N120b (\$800m) annually on foreign trips.

## **Cultural Identity**

Some may argue that another consequence of colonial rule is the fact that many Africans and for the purpose of this research Nigerian's struggle with their cultural identity. According to Jabbar (2014) pg. 5, a legacy of colonialism is "colourism" (system of privilege, discrimination and hierarchies based on social meanings attached to skin tone). In Africa before contact with Europeans in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by and large in the past Africans used shared culture, language and traditions, rather than skin tone as a means of identification.

Jabbar (2014, p.5), argues that part of the process of creating a European Empire was to define the European self in contrast to everyone else, she suggests that the Europeans were able to justify dominating and enslaving their colonies, she suggests that if they did not tell those they colonised they were better in every-way, they would have been unable to justify enslaving them. Jabbar (2014) pg. 5, further argues that Europeans placed themselves at the pinnacle of the human race and dark skinned Africans at the very bottom, she further suggests that after centuries of promoting this way of seeing the world, white skin and features became established as the hall marks of beauty and status and is an intrinsic part of the global system of capitalism today that is taken for granted: white—or light—is right.

Perhaps a consequence of this "global system of capitalism", is that in Nigeria 77% of women are reported to whiten their skin, Guardian Africa Networks (2015, p.1). However, some women argue that societal pressures, particularly from men have forced them to use corrosive products on their skin, some African women suggest the importance of role models and the fact that many women on national television are seen to whiten their skin has not helped the current situation however, others suggest the need to see more role models on TV.

## ***Analysis of Data***

Current figures and data related to education in Nigeria suggests that Nigeria's education system is currently in a crisis, and poorly funded, the current figures for children out of school in Nigeria remain at 10.5 million UNESCO (2013/14, p.1). These figures are set to grow without targeted government intervention and increased funding in education. Nigeria currently spends less than 1% of her GDP on education (UNESCO 2013/14, p.1). As a result of poor funding on education there has been a rise in high levels of illiteracy most especially in the North Eastern Region of the country. According to UNESCO (2013) pg. 18, the number of illiterate youths exceed 1 million in twenty countries, (Nigeria being one of them). In Nigeria

the total number of youth illiteracy exceeds (10 million). This has resulted in poor skill acquisition and high youth unemployment in Nigeria, the number of young people in Nigeria between the ages of 15-34 who are unemployed are 11.5 million Akande (2014, p.1).

However, it appears that those who can afford to pay for a western education have taken the current crisis into their own hands with a view to overcoming it. According to Nigerian Watch (2013, p.1), the number of Nigerian students studying in UK universities have trebled over the last 7 years. The Higher Education Statistics Agency, suggest that there were 17, 640 Nigerian students enrolled in UK universities during 2011/12 SESSIONS, compared with 5,385 IN 2003/4. With regards to accepting our skin colour and cultural identity as a nation, Research has shown that 77% of Nigerian women are prone to bleach their skins, Guardian Network (2015, p.1). It is hard to analyse these figures and examine whether there is a link to trends and fashion however, taking into consideration the dangers of bleaching the skin (skin cancers) these figures remain very, very wondering. The research suggests that many of the women use corrosive products on their skin to feel accepted, this suggests that dark skin may often be seen as an unacceptable quality in some quarters of Nigeria's society.

## Findings

There is a growing need for Nigeria to take ownership of her education system, and to stop relying on alternative systems to address a problem that needs to be fixed immediately. The number of Nigerians studying in the United Kingdom according to figures released by HESA continue to rise. According to HESA Nigeria is in the top 10 of countries that have students studying at Higher Education in the United Kingdom. They are currently the only African country in this category. In 2009/10 there were 16680 this figure rose to 17585 in 2010/11 making this an increase of 5.4% these figures are set to rise if the current education crisis is not addressed.

In addition to the above crisis there are currently a number of UK University campuses based in Nigeria although it may be argued that they are meeting the needs of students that gain admission into them, they are often unaffordable to the average Nigerian. In addition to this they have created a class system within Nigeria or a "them and us" situation with regards to those who have been given the opportunity to study abroad and those who pay excessive school fees. The vast majority of youth in Nigeria are unable to afford either.

There is a growing need to invest in Nigeria's education system and where investments are not made those responsible should be held accountable. Education is a key factor that will aid the development and growth of the country and in the long-term reduce poverty and unemployment, According



to UNESCO (2013, p.18), there are 10 million youths who are illiterate in Nigeria and as a result of this many remain unemployed as well as being unemployable. There are other pressing issues that need to be tackled within Nigeria and that is the issue of employing mainly expatriates in key positions in some sectors of the economy at the expense of experienced Nigerian teachers. Many international schools within Nigeria place adverts in international newspapers such as the TES as a means to target westerners for certain key positions, although there are many benefits of securing the skills of expatriates and using a wealth of skills and knowledge, when this becomes a norm or growing trend, it becomes a cause for concern.

According to Deji-Folutile and Asaolu (2012, p.1), some school owners suggest that the crave for expatriates, apart from being a unique selling point was aimed at bringing the country's education to a global standard. Besides, they said "more parents preferred schools with expatriates as principals and pressured schools to employ white administrators. To them, this would not only increase enrolment, but confer the status of elitism on their schools".

Other reasons for the growing trend include increase in the number of Nigerians seeking higher education abroad; the need to have school administrators that are conversant with educational innovations and development; and demand for people who have proper foundation and a commendable expertise that will impact the curriculum and teaching methods.

Finally, Folutile and Asaolu (2012, p.1), further argue that schools take the step to employ white administrators to please parents and that some parents just have this erroneous belief that the white man or anyone with a white skin is superior.

### **Implications for policy and reform**

This paper has highlighted a number of key issues and concerns that need to be addressed within Nigeria in relation to policy implications and reform. The first being Nigeria's crumbling education system and the second being the health care system that struggles to meet the needs of a growing population. Nigeria's health care system is in dire need of adequate funding, access and affordability. On the other hand, Nigeria's education system requires fitness for purpose, with a growing population of over a 170 million people, many young people are unable to gain access to schools and colleges and as a result of this there continues to be a steep rise in adult illiteracy and high youth unemployment. One of the Education for All learning goals is to achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. According to Easton (2014, p.100), there is little hope of this goal being achieved as funding for education currently remains at less than 1% in Nigeria. World Bank (2014, p.1).

## **Conclusion**

Mind-set and colonial mentality are terms that are both difficult to quantify and measure as they are both psychological states of mind. However, current research suggests the growing need for Nigeria to take ownership of her education system both at the secondary level and tertiary level. Current research shows that Nigeria has made huge investments in the UK Education System as more and more young people especially those that can afford to seek an education outside of the UK. However, the repercussions of this are that those who do not have the means are often left to their own fate. According to Akande (2012, p.1), there are 11.1 million young people between the ages of 15-34 who are currently unemployed.

With regards to Health-Care it is evident from the figures provided by Ofoegbu (2015, p.1) that 5,000 Nigerians travelling for health treatment every year is an indication that our health service is not fit for purpose this also corresponds with the average life expectancy in Nigeria, which is currently 52 years of age as of 2011, the World's Banks recent report suggest that this is the 17<sup>th</sup> lowest average life expectancy in the world (OKPI , 2013, p.1). When measured in comparison to 30 countries in Europe that have an average life expectancy of 80 years and above, with Switzerland and Hong Kong having the highest average of 83 years (OKPI, 2013, p.1).

Finally, taking into account Rajan's definition of colonisation (2014, p.1); he suggests the ruling party establishes political and socio-economic structures such that the ruled party becomes it's colon, taking into account the most recent statistics and data based on health care and education it is almost certain that:

## ***Recommendations***

- The adequate collection and sharing of data from key sectors such as education and health-care.
- Adequate funding for both Health –Care and Education in Nigeria
- Establish public libraries in Nigeria to reduce the growth of illiteracy.
- A Re-awakening of our cultural identity
- An awareness of those inhibiting factors that prevent us from developing as a nation.
- Further examination into the theme colonial mentality and consider if it is causing harm to the development of Nigeria.

***Correspondence***

Shade Babalola  
Leyton Sixth Form College  
Essex Road Leyton  
London E10 6EQ  
United Kingdom  
Email: shadebabalola@hotmail.com

**Reference**

Akande T (2014) Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: A situation analysis: Africa in Focus.

Anikulapo Kuti F (1977), Colonial Mentality (Colo-mentality) Emi Music Publishing.

Asaolu and Deji-Folutile (2012) Expatriates take over private schools leadership, The Punch Newspaper 6<sup>TH</sup> April 2012.

Burke R and Sridhar D (2013) Health Financing in Ghana, South Africa and Nigeria: Are they meeting the Abuja Target? The Global Economic Governance Programme: University of Oxford.

Easton (2014) Sustaining Literacy in Africa, Developing a literate environment, UNESCO.

HESA (2010/2011) Higher Education Statistics Agency, Non-Domicile Students< HESA AVAILABLE AT [HTTPS://WWW.HESA.AC.UK/Pr172](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/Pr172)

Jabbar S (2012) who taught you to hate your dark skin?-This is Africa, February 27<sup>th</sup> 2014  
Available at: <http://thisisafrica.me/who-taught-you-to-hate-your-dark-skin/>

Kolawale S (2014) it's called Colonial mentality, this day live, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2014, Available at [www.thisdaylive.com/articles/its-called-colonial-mentality/179364](http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/its-called-colonial-mentality/179364).

Nigerian Watch (2013) Number of Nigerian University Students in the UK trebles over the last three years. 28<sup>th</sup> November 2013. Available at [www.nigerianwatch.com/news/3238-number-of-nigerian-university-students-in-the-uk-trebles-over-the-last-three-years](http://www.nigerianwatch.com/news/3238-number-of-nigerian-university-students-in-the-uk-trebles-over-the-last-three-years).

Ofoegbu (2015) Nigerian health Sector: The desired wind of change, Independent Newspaper, April 2015.

Okpi (2013) Life Expectancy in Nigeria 17<sup>th</sup> Lowest globally- Report, The Punch Newspaper 13<sup>th</sup> October 2013. Available at <http://www.punchng.com/news/life-expectancy-in-nigeria-17th-lowest-globally-report>.

World Bank (2015) Government Expenditure on Education (% of GDP) available at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS/countries>.

World Bank (2015) working for a world free of poverty available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/Nigeria/overview>.

The Guardian (2015) Ivorian's ignore ban on lightening creams despite damage to skin, Guardian online 14<sup>th</sup> August 2015 available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/14/ivory-coast-skin-whitening-ban-effect>.

Webb R (2010) Story of the Song: Bob Marley's Redemptive Song, Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010 the independent available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/story-of-the-song-bo...> <http://plsssnraju.wordpress.com/2014/06/29/is-colonial-mentality-hindering-indias>; <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/literacy-statistics-trends-1985-2015.pdf>.