

BELGIAN AND HAITIAN EDUCATIONS: LESSONS FOR THE NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

One of the blessings colonization brought to Nigeria is education. With education, Nigeria as a country parades some of the best professionals all over the globe, especially in North America and Western Europe. However, in spite of all these remarkable achievements, experts still believe that the management of the country's education is one of the worst in the world. For instance, it is argued that this is one of the reasons Nigeria has not been able to transform its huge population and natural resources into developmental indexes. Okadigbo once noted that most leaders of national governments of Nigeria do not have the benefit of formal intellectual training...the conception of selfless services and pursuit of good of every citizen's is not present. Today, Nigeria has a mono-economy that runs predominantly on oil. Also, in spite of the many number of professors in the country, there is poor synergy between Nigerian schools and the labour market on the one hand and little or no innovations coming from the schools to boost the labour market. Consequently, this research applies the method of analysis to compare the educations of Belgium and Haiti in order to find out how the lessons learnt can help to improve Nigerian education. The study discovered that there are a number of similarities and dissimilarities in Belgian and Haitian education. In the first instance, the ownership of educations in both countries are both private and public. The major difference is that the government in Belgium has a greater say in education. Structurally, education in the two countries are also similar. The difference lies in the management of the systems. Whereas the Belgian system runs smoothly due to availability of funding, the Haitian system is punctuated with irregularities as a result of lack of funding. Also, while the curriculum of Haitian education does not represent the need of the country, there is a close synergy between education in Belgium and the need of the country. What is clear from the comparison is that education is better in Belgium than in Haiti. The reason comes from two major areas: funding and relevance of the curricula. Looking at the roles education plays in development and the variances in the developmental indexes of the two countries the paper concludes that the lack of development in Haiti is due to lack of progress in education. It recommended that to improve its education system and chances of development, Nigeria must firstly, increase its budgetary allocation to education. Secondly, Nigerian education curriculum should be restructured to reflect the need of the country.

Keywords: Belgian and Haitian education systems, Nigerian education, labour market, curriculum, funding,

Introduction

This paper uses the method of analysis to compare the efficiency of education management of Belgium's and Haiti's education systems using the following features as templates: ownership of education, system/structure of education, nature of curriculum, funding/allocation of funds, problem of education in the country and trends in education. This comparison is circumscribed within a table. Outside the table, the outcome of the comparison is used to make basic recommendations on how Nigerian education system can be improved.

Consequently, the paper is structured around three parts: the first part is the introduction laying the semantic background of the nature and procedure of the research. The second part is comparative perspective of education management systems in Belgium and Haiti. This part is contained within a table using the elements indicated above. The third and final part is an analysis of the table and its application to the Nigeria education management.

Table: Comparative Perspective of Belgium and Haitian Education System

Basis of Comparison		Belgium	Haiti
1	Ownership of Education	Education in Belgium is regulated and for the most part financed by one of the three communities: Flemish, French and German-speaking communities. Each community has its own school system, with small differences among them. The federal government plays a very small role: it decides directly the age for mandatory schooling and indirectly the financing of the communities The schools can be divided in three groups (Dutch: netten; French: réseaux): Schools owned by the communities; (GO! Onderwijs van de Vlaamse gemeenschap; réseau de la Communauté française) Subsidized public schools (officieel gesubsidieerd onderwijs; réseau officiel subventionné), organized by provinces	The educational sector is under the responsibility of the Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle (MENFP, 2014). However, providers of education are the government, NGO, individuals and churches. That is education is jointly run by the public and private sectors. Private schools account for 80% of total enrollments and serve the majority of Haitian students. According to Wolff, there are three main types of schools that make up the private sector. The first and largest type of private schools is for-profit private schools run by entrepreneurs. These schools have very few, if any, books and unqualified teachers and school directors. They are popularly known as “écoles borlettes,” which translates to <i>lottery schools</i>, because “only by chance do the children learn anything” (Wolf, 2008). The second types of private schools are those run by religious organizations such as Catholic and Evangelical churches, as well as some nonsectarian schools. The Ministry of National Education at the time of the 2010 earthquake reported that Christian missionaries provide about 2,000 primary schools educating 600,000 students – about a third of the population that is school age. Some of these schools offer a better quality of education than for-profit schools do, but they often have risky conditions and staff with no professional capabilities (New York

		and municipalities Subsidized free schools (vrij gesubsidieerd onderwijs; réseau libre subventionné), mainly organized by an organization affiliated to the Catholic church. The latter is the largest group, both in number of schools and in number of pupils. Also, education in Belgium is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 18 or until one graduates from secondary school.	Times, 2010). The final type of private school composes of ‘community schools,’ which are financed by whatever funds the local community can mobilize. They tend to be of very poor quality, worse than for-profit schools, but they do charge very low fees. A handful of private schools in Haiti, mostly clustered around the capital city, Port-au-Prince, and accessible to the rich (except for limited scholarship fund opportunities), offer education with relatively high quality standards. Furthermore, three-fourths of all private schools operate with no certification or license from the Ministry of National Education. This literally means that anyone can open a school at any level of education, recruit students and hire teachers without having to meet any minimum standards.
2	System/Structure of Education	The different stages of education are the same in all communities: Basic education (Dutch: basis onderwijs; French: enseignement fondamental), consisting of Preschool education (kleuteronderwijs; enseignement maternel): -6 years Primary school (lager onderwijs; enseignement primaire): 6-12 years Secondary education (secundair onderwijs; enseignement secondaire): 12-18 years Higher education	The education system has the following structure: Preschool (3 years): Primary (6 years): Ecole Premiere (Traditional System) Middle (3 years): Lower Secondary (Traditional System) Middle (9 years): Ecole Fondamentale (Reform System) Secondary (3 years): Secondary (Reform System) Secondary (3 years): Technical Secondary School Secondary (4 years): Secondary (Traditional System)

		(hoger onderwijs; enseignement supérieur) University (universiteit; université) Polytechnic/Vocational university (hogeschool; haute école)	Vocational (3 years): Teacher's Diploma Tertiary (4years): Bachelor's Tertiary (1 year): Master's Tertiary (2 years): Doctorate (Wolff, 2008).
3	Nature of Curriculum	The aim of pre-school is to develop, in a playful way, children's cognitive skills, their capacity to express themselves and communicate, their creativity and independence. There are no formal lessons or assessments, and everything is taught through a framework of play. Education in primary schools is rather traditional: it concentrates on reading, writing and basic mathematics, but also touches already a very broad range of topics (biology, music, religion, history, etc.). The Belgian secondary education grants the pupils more choice as they enter a higher cycle. The first cycle provides a broad general basis, with only a few options to choose from (such as Latin, additional	The following are to be observed about the curriculum of Haitian Education system: 1. The Haitian curriculum is not very good. There is a great gap between reality and the things learned in school. 2. The curriculum emphasized the classics and the arts to the detriment of the sciences (Wolff, 2008).

		mathematics and technology). This should enable students to orient themselves in the most suitable way towards the many different courses available in the second and third stages. The second and third cycle are much more specific in each of the possible directions. While the youngest pupils may choose at the most two or four hours per week, the oldest pupils have the opportunity to choose between different “menus”: like Mathematics and Science, Economics and Languages or Latin and Greek. They are then able to shape the largest part of the time they spend at school. However, some core lessons are compulsory like the first language and sport, etc. This mix between compulsory and optional lessons grouped in menus make it possible to keep class structures even for the oldest students.	
4	Funding/Allocation of Funds	Education in Belgium is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 18 or until one graduates from secondary school and this is funded by the government and	The Haitian government, mainly the Ministry of National Education is not in a position to close deficient schools because it is neither equipped to take on the additional responsibility, nor does it have the resources or capacity to do so (Carlson, 2011). After a peak of 19% in 1987–88 and

		the different communities. Higher education is also directly subsidized by the state through bursary aid scholarships.	22% in 1994–95, the percentage of Haiti's national budget allocated to education declined from 17% to 10% between 2001 and 2010 with 20% of education-related expenditures reaching rural areas, which is where 70% of Haiti's population is found (Carlson, 2011). This figure is low compared with other countries that are comparable according to the Human Development Index (HDI), which puts Haiti in 145th place out of 169 countries. However, Haiti receives international aid which supplements, to a certain extent, the insufficient educational budget. In 2006 the country received \$10.4 million to support basic education programs and \$2.5 million to support higher education programs. According to USAID, ongoing US-supported education programs have lowered dropout rates and raised the performance of more than 75,000 Haitian youth (Ribando, 2007). The substantial growth of the private sector, despite the constitutional guarantee of free education, indicates that the reality is that providing free education for all is very expensive. The majority of private schools do not receive any government subsidizes. There is no government scholarship program to alleviate the burden on poor families. Help comes from the “Fonds de Parrainage”, a private sector foundation which offers scholarships to needy children enrolled in eligible private schools. The annual number of beneficiaries is around 13,000, representing a mere 1.3% of the student population enrolled in private schools. Financial support from the government is a salary subsidy covering approximately 500 teachers working full-time in private religious schools. This represents 2.5% of
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			the private sector teaching force. The public schools have collected fees because government funding has been insufficient. It had become common practice for school principals to require a parental financial contribution from each student. Thus, for many parents, it did not make as much financial difference to put their children in public or private schools. When President Aristide returned from exile, he decided that public schools would no longer collect fees. This decision actually had a negative effect because it left public schools more destitute. It is clear that the growth of the private sector has become a substitution for public investment, as opposed to an addition (Jean, 2014).
5	Problem of Education	Violence in schools is identified as the major challenge facing Belgium education system. A 2007 study found that violence experienced by teachers in francophone Belgium was a significant factor in decisions to leave the teaching profession. Schools in Belgium have less favourable disciplinary climates in science lessons compared to other OECD countries, according to students' reports in the Programme for International Student	The following challenges are identified: 1. Education does not appear to be focused on the specific needs of the country. From the outset, the orientation taken by the administration of public education had nothing to do with the reality of Haiti except for the fact that it served the particular interest of an elite who sent their children to study in France and considered themselves French. 2. The educational sector is under the responsibility of the Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle (MENFP, 2014). The Ministry provides very little funds to support public education. As a result, the private sector has become a substitute for governmental public investment in education as opposed

	Assessment (PISA) 2015, with an index of disciplinary climate of -0.16 (the OECD average index value was 0.00. Students in Belgium were also less likely to report that their science teachers adapt their instruction more frequently than the OECD average, with an index of adaptive instruction of -0.38 (the average index value was 0.01). Recent information from the Flemish and the French Communities of Belgium points to a growing teacher shortage from 2018 onwards that will have to address ways of mitigating the replacement of retiring teachers and attracting new teachers to the profession (National data reported to the OECD).	to an addition. The Ministry is limited in its ability to improve the quality of education in Haiti. 3. The Haitian Educational System yields the lowest total rate in the education realm of the Western Hemisphere. Haiti's literacy rate of about 61% (64.3% for males and 57.3% for females) is below the 90% average literacy rate for Latin American and Caribbean countries. The country faces shortages in educational supplies and qualified teachers. The rural population is less educated than the urban. The 2010 Haiti earthquake exacerbated the already constrained parameters on Haiti's educational system by destroying infrastructure and displacing 50–90% of the students, depending on locale (UNDP, 2014) 4. The majority of schools in Haiti do not have adequate facilities and are under-equipped. According to the 2003 school survey, 5% of schools were housed in a church or an open-air shaded area. Some 58% do not have toilets and 23% have no running water. 36% of schools have libraries. The majority of workers, about 80% do not meet the existing criteria for the selection of training programs or are not accepted in these programs because of the lack of space in professional schools. 6 out of every 1,000 workers in the labor market have a diploma or certificate in a technical or professional field. In addition, 15% of teachers at the elementary level have basic teaching qualifications, including university degrees. Nearly 25% have not attended secondary school.
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6	Trends in Education	Children can start preschool as soon as they reach the age of two, so class size for the youngest children grows during the year. In the Flemish region, start dates are limited to 6 per year, after a school holiday period and the first school day in February. Most pre-schools are attached to a particular primary school. Preschools and primary schools often share buildings and other facilities. Some schools offer special pre-primary education for children with disabilities or other special needs. Primary school usually starts about 8:30 and finishes around 15:30. A lunch time break is usually provided from 12:00 to 13:30. Wednesday afternoon, Saturday and Sunday are free. While morning lessons often	The following trend are identified: 1. Almost all schools in Haiti are privately run 2. Most schools ask for tuition fees, a barrier for many 3. In the past decade, school schedules have not been uniform because of addition of privately run school modeled on American and the need for schools to adapt to the recent suburban phenomenon. Also, the increase of school-age population and lack of personnel, facilities and equipment have prompted the schools to switch from all six-hour day to half-day of four-hours. This strategy enabled the schools to serve two groups of pupil a day. 4. In general, the academic year begins in October and ends in July. With two vacations at Christmas and Easter, the number of hours in school year is considerably reduced. Those parents who can afford it pay for private lessons in subjects where their children show the greatest need. Competent teachers who are poorly remunerated depend on tutoring to make ends meet and sometimes earn more this way than by regular means. In the more traditional schools children are admitted at age six and are expected

	concentrate on reading, writing and basic mathematics, lessons in the afternoon are usually about other topics like biology, music, religion, history or "do it yourself" activities. Flemish schools in Brussels and some municipalities near the language border, must offer French lessons starting from the first or the second year. Most other Flemish schools offer French education in the third cycle. Some of the latter schools offer non-mandatory French lessons already in the second cycle. Primary schools in the French Community must teach another language, which is generally Dutch or English, depending on the school. Primary schools in the German Community have obligatory French lessons. There are also some private schools set up to serve various international communities in Belgium (e.g. children of seafarers or European diplomats), mainly around the	to complete the primary cycle in six years 5. French is the language of instruction in the private schools but Creole and French are used in the public schools. 6. Students are subject to three sets of trimestral examinations a year, plus finals in July. The grading system on 10 points is rigid. A grade average of 5 points is required to pass a class. In general, schools are not technologically equipped. Mediated facilities do exist, however, in a few business and professional schools. Textbooks have always been a concern, mostly imported. They are often in short supplies and their prices, like all imported products can be prohibitive for families who must strive to put food on their tables. Many children go to school without books. In addition, the books are not adapted to the Haitian environment. 7. The Haitian education is heavily influenced by the French model.
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		larger cities. Some schools offer special primary education for children with disabilities or other special needs (Education in Belgium, 2021).	
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2. Analysis of Result

A careful examination of the table shows remarkable degree of similarities and dissimilarities of ownership of education in Belgium and Haiti. Basically, educations in both countries are regulated by their ministries of education. Nevertheless, the private sector plays key roles in the provision and managements of their various education systems. Significantly though, the table shows that the government in Belgium, especially on the community level has a greater say in education. Also, the structures of education in both countries are similar. Where the difference lies is in the management of the system. While the system in Belgium runs more smoothly due to availability of funding, the Haitian system is punctuated with irregularities, including school dropouts as a result of lack of finances and parents sending their children out to study overseas, especially in France.

In addition, there is serious dichotomy between the curriculum of Haitian education system and the Haitian environment. The curriculum does not represent the need or the reality in the country. Contrary to this, there is a close interaction between the curriculum of the Belgian education system and the environment. This explains why education is run on community levels. The table also indicates that the major problem of the Haitian education system is lack of funding. The budgetary to education in that country is very low. The consequence is the proliferation of private school system and poor regulation of the system. In Belgium on the other hand, education is well funded. Finally, the tables also indicates that children starts school earlier in Belgium and have less holidays while in Haiti, children take longer time to start school and have longer holidays. There is also lack of qualified teachers and study materials for Haitian students.

3. Lessons for the Nigerian Education System

What is clear from the analysis of the results of this study is that the Belgium education system is better than the Haitian education system. The differences come from two major areas: funding and relevance of the curricula to the environments in the two countries. Looking at the roles education plays in development and the variances in the developmental indexes in the two countries one could reliably assume that the lack of development in Haiti is due to lack of progress in education.

Consequently, the first lesson the Nigerian education system can learn from this comparative study is the importance of funding to education. Funding has been a constant issue in Nigerian education. Teachers and lecturers have gone on strikes on many occasions to protest lack of

funding. Thus, to improve its education system and chances of development, Nigeria must be ready to increase its budgetary allocation to the education sector.

The second lesson is the need to create a curriculum that reflects the need of the Nigerian environment. For a long time now, people have been calling for the decolonization of the Nigerian education system. This would include, teaching students in their local languages, incorporating home grown technologies and epistemologies and establishing interaction between the Nigerian local market and the school system. This second lesson is a basic difference between the Belgian and the Haitian education systems for whereas the Belgian system reflects and incorporates the need of the country to its curricula, the Haitian system is colonial representing a dichotomy between the need of the country and its education system.

Conclusion

This work comparatively analyzed the Belgian and Haitian education systems in order to know whether there were lessons from the comparison that could be used to improve the Nigerian education system. The study discovered that while the two education systems shared a number of similarities especially in terms of ownership and structure, they differed significantly and fundamentally in areas of funding and curriculum, that is, on the relationship between what is taught and the need of each country. Drawing on this finding the study inferred that the availability of funding and relevance of curriculum explain why the Belgian education system is able to stimulate growth and development in the country and lack of these, the reason why the Haitian system was not able to bring about the required and expected development need of the country. It therefore recommended the overhauling of curriculum to reflect the need of the country and injection of funds as the two things planners of the Nigerian education system must do urgently in order to bring about the needed positive change in the system.

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