

Education and the Development of the Nigerian Army, 1960- 1999

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ABSTRACT

The hallmark of every professional military institution is training and education. From classical times to the present, every human society has designed and applied education to develop its military according to perceived threats and developmental needs. This paper examines the critical role of education in the development of the Nigerian Army. It discusses the historical context, as well as the current and future directions of military education. By evaluating the impact of educational initiatives on military professionalism, the study emphasises the urgent need to align education in the Nigerian Army with international transformations and standards in this era of digital technology and computerisation. It also advocates for substantial investment in nuclear research and technology. Such investments should not be viewed as wasteful, as spin-offs from military research and development often benefit civil society. The study highlights the necessity of a robust educational foundation to enhance the operational standards of the Nigerian Army.

Keywords: Education, Development, Transformation and Military

INTRODUCTION

The military, across the world, is a poly-professional organisation, comprising officers and personnel from diverse professional backgrounds who execute tasks and provide services ranging from the simplest to the most complex—all aimed at the high-risk yet patriotic duty of defending the fatherland. The Nigerian Army consists of the Nigerian Army Infantry, the Nigerian Armour (NAAC), the Nigerian Artillery (NACA), the Nigerian Army Engineers (NAE), and the Nigerian Army Signals (NA SIGNALS).¹ It has teachers and engineers, chaplains and imams, doctors and nurses, lawyers and accountants, as well as drivers, mechanics, and weapon designers. Thus, no other single professional group draws more extensively from the fountain of knowledge, skills, strategy, and wisdom of education than the Army. The Army is the fundamental fighting arm, and no military operation can be successfully concluded without it. From classical times to the present day, societies have consistently structured and applied education in the development of their militaries as they deemed appropriate, taking into account their geographical location, threat analysis, external and internal policies, historical circumstances, and even religious beliefs and practices. Consequently, political thought dating back to the days of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle reflected the role of education in the organisation, development, and application of the military.²

The basis for this study is not far-fetched. First, as technology advances in military warfare, shifting emphasis from large armies to smaller units equipped with sophisticated weapon systems, the role of education, particularly digital education and computerisation, becomes increasingly evident and essential. Nigeria's political and military leaders, especially considering the country's status as a developing nation, must fully recognise the importance of such education in modern military forces. This is particularly significant given Nigeria's leadership role in Africa and the frequent deployment of its military in peacekeeping missions across various parts of the world. Second, the 21st century and the future do not belong to militaries with low educational standards, but to those with the highest levels of literacy, computerised administrative and operational efficiency, and advanced weapon systems.³

Finally, the Nigerian state today is not adequately attuned to educational development in general, and to the research component in particular. Yet no military

¹Nigerian Defence Academy Cadets Precise, *Organisation and Administration*, (Kaduna: NDA Press, 1998), p. 3.

²Brig. Gen. J. O. Olorunfemi, "The Role of Education in Military Development", *The Nigerian Army Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 1, No 1, (2005), p. 2.

³*Ibid.*

can develop or perform effectively on a platform of self-reliance and self-sufficiency without properly funded education and research and development (R&D). Nigeria must therefore recognise that neglecting education for military development comes at its own peril. This paper thus seeks to contribute to the ongoing calls by concerned military leaders and civilian stakeholders for improved funding of education and research within the Nigerian Army. There is a pressing need to fund and advance the frontiers of education, research, and technology in Nigeria generally, and in the Nigerian Army in particular. As Professor Olugbemiro Jegede rightly observed:

The world has become a global village linked and networked together by technology and in which Army formations all over the world, especially those of the developed countries have integrated digital technology, e-training, and simulation, as well as computer literacy as part of their daily routine.⁴

Professor Jegede went further to emphasise the need for urgent positive action through education in pursuit of development in the Nigerian military by giving examples from nations of Nigeria's development bracket thus:

Coming closer to our situation, using as examples countries within the same development bracket as Nigeria, it must be mentioned that extensive development and progress that have been recorded by the military in the Republic of South Africa, India, Pakistan, Libya, Zimbabwe and Jordan, have been hinged firmly on education and technology. It does appear from the examples of the military in developing countries that the language of development within their armies has changed from traditional military strategies to one of modern outlook with education and digitalization: as the fulcrum.⁵

Indeed, the Nigerian Army has undergone significant transformations since its inception, influenced by various socio-political factors. Education and training are pivotal to this development, providing military personnel with skills and knowledge necessary to navigate complex security and operational challenges. This study aims to

⁴Olugbemiro Jegede, "The Place of Digital Education in the Nigerian Army of The 21st Century", in *The Nigerian Army Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 5, (June 2002), p. 24.

⁵*Ibid.*

analyse the importance of education in fostering a competent and professional military force in Nigeria.

Understanding Education

Education can be conceptualised as "the transmission of the values and accumulated knowledge of a society".⁶ In this sense, education becomes a process of socialisation or enculturation, enabling children (naturally born without culture) to be brought up to learn and internalise cultural values, adult behaviour, and their eventual roles in society. The Latin word *educare* means "to bring up," "to train," or "to educate"—all of which point to upbringing in terms of manners and behaviour, skills acquired through training, knowledge, and enlightenment.

To educate refers to the development of faculties and abilities through teaching, instruction, or study. Education is also understood as the process by which a person learns something—either from others or independently. This may occur in dedicated institutions with qualified teachers, structured courses, books, equipment, and activities, or informally in homes, streets, and other communal spaces. Thus, education is not confined to traditional school subjects taught by paid teachers; parents, elders, siblings, and peers can all play crucial roles in the educational process. Education, therefore, should develop the whole person, not merely provide narrow academic training.⁷

Education may be aimed at acquiring knowledge and expertise (skills) for a new job, or for retraining to meet the demands of a changing job situation. Hence, education encompasses the act or process of imparting or acquiring knowledge or skills, the end result of instruction, training, or study, as well as the science or art of teaching. It can be theoretical (learning to know or imparting knowledge) or practical (learning to do or imparting skills). Education also has informal, formal, and non-formal dimensions, each with its own impact and relevance to development. Similarly, both academic and vocational education have distinct contributions to the development of individuals, groups, and society at large.⁸

The goal of education is therefore to inform, enlighten, impart knowledge, inculcate expertise (skills), liberate the mind, develop the mind, orientate or re-orientate the mind, all geared towards the over-all development of the whole person.

⁶The Cambridge Encyclopedia, (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 371.

⁷G. Psacharopoulos and M. Woodhall, *Education for Development: An Analysis of Investment Choices*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 43.

⁸Brig. Gen. J. O. Olorunfemi, "The Role of Education in Military Development", pp. 4-5

In doing this, ideas, images, formulas, theories, equipment, practices, and standards are collated from certain areas or all over the world to meet the specific needs of the individual, group, or society.⁹ For forward looking individuals, groups, and societies, they have the duty to ensure that at any given time in human history, they are not below the acceptable international standard if they will be relevant in the political economy and decision-making processes of their times, and if their children will be relevant in the same thereafter.

For a military organisation, this means acquiring the most contemporary knowledge, skills, equipment, and technologies aligned with the highest international standards, along with the indigenous capacity to maintain and apply these resources for its operational, developmental, and national well-being.

Development

Development as a Social Science concept is not used here as mere economic advancement as defined by scholars like Psacharopoulos and Woodhall¹⁰, and Todaro¹¹, who see the term from the angle of improvement of a nation's productive capacity, measured mainly by its Gross National Product (GDP). Rather, development is seen as a multifaceted phenomenon, which includes "changes in social structures and institutions, change in social attitudes, values and behaviours, and ... changes towards social and political equality and the eradication of poverty".¹² The expression "to develop" implies bringing out the capacities, potentials or possibilities in an individual, group, structure, or society. The rapid pace of technological change requires the military to continuously invest in research and development to stay ahead of emerging threats. Eskor Toyo presents a definition that best suits this study when he conceptualised development as:

...a qualitative change which enhances the capacity to perform a stipulated function. For self-reproducing or living beings, development is a qualitative change in the entity which

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰G. Psacharopoulos and M. Woodhall, *Education for Development: An Analysis of Investment Choices*, p. 65.

¹¹M. Todaro, *Economic Development in the Third World*, (London: Longman, 1989), p.31.

¹²L.G. Saha and I. Fagerlin, "Education and Development", in, *The International Encyclopedia of Education*, Vol. 3, (1994), p. 78.

*enhances their capacity to control their environment or destiny.*¹³

When one, therefore, mentions development with regard to the military, one refers to qualitative change in the armed forces manpower, modern equipment, development in cyber security, weapon systems, procedures, operational strategies and tactics, doctrine, rapid response and other relevant areas and items which are necessary for sustained successful, efficient, and effective performance of defence and operational functions. Development in the military context encompasses various aspects, including technological advancements, training and capacity building. This development enhances the military operational effectiveness, adaptability and ability to respond to emerging security challenges and ultimately ensuring national security and stability.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative historical research methodology to examine the impact of education on the development of the Nigerian Army between 1960 and 1999. The historical method allows for the systematic collection, evaluation, and interpretation of data relating to past events in order to understand how educational reforms influenced the professionalisation and operational capacity of the Army. The study relies primarily on secondary sources, including official publications from the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), the Armed Forces Command and Staff College (AFCSC), and the National War College. Other sources consulted include military training manuals, government policy documents, academic books and journals, as well as speeches and memoirs of retired military officers.

The data were subjected to chronological and thematic analysis. Chronological analysis was used to trace the development of educational policies and institutions within the Army over the decades, while thematic analysis enabled the identification of key patterns and issues related to military education and training. Particular attention was given to how education shaped leadership, strategic thinking, and internal capacity building in the Army. This approach ensures a critical, context-sensitive understanding of the nexus between education and military development within Nigeria's evolving political and security landscape.

¹³Eskor Toyo, *Conceptual Issues in the National Question", The National Question and Economic Development in Nigeria*, (Ibadan: The Nigerian Economic Society, 1993), pp. 8-9.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Education in Military Development

Education plays a significant and multifaceted role in the development of the military. Primarily, it develops the faculties and capabilities of the fighting man (the soldier), transforming him from an ordinary civilian into a trained soldier, then into an officer and a member of the noble profession of arms. The continuous enhancement of the military professional throughout his service years depends on ongoing education and in-service professional training. Education imparts the necessary knowledge, disposition, and skills required for the effective and efficient execution of both administrative and combat assignments. Through this process, the military professional is able to internalise and exhibit the military culture expected of him within and outside the military institution.

Secondly, it is through education that the military acquires the tools—administrative, mobility, and combat—necessary to carry out and accomplish its tasks. The ability to properly maintain, effectively apply, and safely store these tools of the trade is also rooted in education. Thirdly, all qualitative improvements in the performance of both the individual military professional and the military organisation as a whole are products of education. The development of new weapon systems and administrative instruments, as well as the capacity to use and maintain them, stem directly from educational advancement. In essence, education equips the military progressively with the knowledge, skills, tools, and capacity required to effectively and efficiently perform its defence functions.

The Role of Education and Training in the Development of the Nigerian Army

The hallmark of every professional military institution is education and training.¹⁴ Therefore, every human society has always structured and applied education in the development of its military as deemed appropriate, in order to respond to both internal and external threats. In the Nigerian Army, the role of education and training has similarly been fundamental. It begins by developing the faculties and capabilities of the fighting man (the soldier), transforming him from an ordinary civilian into a trained soldier or commissioned Army officer. The continuous enhancement of the soldier's competence throughout his service years relies heavily on sustained in-service professional training. The Nigerian Army has consistently placed significant emphasis on training to ensure that its personnel are well-equipped to perform their duties

¹⁴Brig. Gen. J. O. Olorunfemi, "The Role of Education in Military Development", p. 1.

effectively. Education and training also provide the necessary knowledge, disposition, and skills required by combat troops to carry out their assignments efficiently.

The Army training programmes include basic training, during which new recruits undergo comprehensive instruction to acquire essential military skills and knowledge. Specialised training is also provided in areas such as infantry, artillery, engineering, and signals. In addition, Nigerian Army units participate in tactical operational training, which covers patrolling, ambushes, raids, as well as human rights and humanitarian law. Through these initiatives, military personnel are able to internalise and exhibit the military culture required of them during both internal and international operations.

To meet its diverse educational and training needs, the Nigerian Army established various corps and training schools. These corps and institutions have played a vital role in the education and professional development of Army personnel, thereby catalysing broader development within the Nigerian Army. They include:

Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC)

The Nigerian Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), located in Minna, Niger State, was established in 1981. Its primary objective is to develop, conduct, and evaluate doctrine, training, and research for the Nigerian Army. According to Major-General Abayomi Kayode, TRADOC is often regarded as the think tank of the Nigerian Army.

Its functions include the development and implementation of training programmes for both officers and non-commissioned officers; liaison with the Nigerian Defence Academy and the Command and Staff College for the conduct of pre-commissioning and staff training, respectively; and conducting research, development, testing, and evaluation of material, equipment, and systems. TRADOC is also responsible for organising promotion examinations, assessing training requirements, and anticipating future training trends within the Nigerian Army.¹⁵

The Nigerian Army being a conservative societal organisation with its unique nature in the society is guided by customs, traditions, form of regimentation and discipline. It is important to note that the Nigerian Army was fashioned after the British Army. However, its operations, rules and regulation were fashioned by the TRADOC, to enhance orderliness for the good of the Nigerian Army. Indeed, Gen., S. O.

¹⁵Nigerian Army Education Corps and School (NAECS), *History of the Nigerian Army*, (Abuja: NAECS, 1992), p.43.

Bolarinwa, noted that, essentially, TRADOC measures how the Army is equipped, re-equipped, fed, cared for and coordinated by command, control and communications.¹⁶

TRADOC teaches military intellectualism, which involves the development of military doctrines, theories, and concepts. It also explains the use of the Army to achieve not only military and strategic objectives but also structurally integrated operational effectiveness across the different units of the Nigerian Army. As such, TRADOC has come to be associated with the establishment, administration, and management of the Nigerian Army as a training, command, and control structure for matters relating to war, defence, and internal security.¹⁷ It assumes the place of the military force as permanent feature of defence and security. As Aja Akpuru-Aja puts it, “war is not just about the possession of weaponry and weapons training. More is involved”.¹⁸ Thus far, TRADOC has largely fulfilled its expected roles, despite facing some constraints over the years. It has developed and provided operational doctrine for executing missions and has collaborated with other military branches and security agencies to conduct joint operations and promote inter-operability.

Overall, TRADOC has had a positive impact on the development of the Nigerian Army, particularly in improving responsiveness to civil unrest and enhancing operational effectiveness. Its emphasis on professionalism has contributed to an improved reputation and better relations with the civilian population, as well as a reduction in human rights abuses—especially during periods of student protests, religious crises, and ethnic conflicts in the 1980s and 1990s. Through its training and doctrine development, TRADOC has helped the Nigerian Army respond more effectively to challenges and has supported national stability and internal security.

Post-Civil War Training Reforms

Following the Nigerian Civil War, it became evident that many officers and soldiers were inadequately trained—a direct consequence of the war, which had disrupted regular training schedules. For instance, in the pre-war period, recruits underwent nine months of training at the depots before being posted to their respective units, after which additional courses were provided to enhance their competence. In contrast, wartime recruits received only two to four weeks of training, depending on the

¹⁶S. C. Ukpabi, *The Nigerian Defence Academy in Perspective*, (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1988), p. 93.

¹⁷J. A. Obiora, “The role of the Nigerian Army in the First and Second World War”, in J. W. T. Gbor (ed), *Military History: Nigerian from Pre-Colonial Era to the Present*, (Lagos: Longman, 2004), p. 137.

¹⁸Aja Akpuru -Aja, *War Studies: Foundation of Defence and Strategic Studies*, (Nigeria: Keny and Brothers, 2006), p. 67.

situation, which resulted in poorly prepared soldiers. A similar trend was observed among officer cadets, who were given only about four months of training instead of the standard nine months.

By the 1970s, it was clear that both officers and other ranks required further training to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. For the officer cadre, the establishment of local training institutions became imperative. The following institutions were subsequently established:

- Nigerian Army School of Military Engineering (NASME) – 1970
- Nigerian Army Military Police School (NAMPS) – 1973
- Nigerian Army School of Artillery (NASA) – 1974
- Nigerian Army School of Signals (NASS) – 1974
- Nigerian Army School of Armoured Corps (NASA) – 1975
- Nigerian Army Intelligence School (NAIS) – 1976
- Nigerian Army School of Music (NASM) – 1976

In addition to institutional training, seminars and workshops were organised to familiarise personnel with developments in their respective fields. Some officers and soldiers were also sent abroad to undergo specialised training not available locally, as well as to learn the operation and maintenance of newly procured weapons.

It is noteworthy that, prior to 1976, the Nigerian Army lacked a local institution for the training of senior officers. While the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) produced junior officers, and the schools listed above provided specialised training, the need for a senior officers' training institution remained unmet. This gap was closed in 1976 with the establishment of the Army Command and Staff College in Jaji.

In addition to creating training institutions, the Army reintroduced practical examinations for promotion across all ranks. Furthermore, institutions were established for the joint training and development of manpower for the officer corps of the Armed Forces. These include:

- Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA)
- Command and Staff College (CSC)
- National War College (NWC)
- Nigerian Army School of Education (NASE)

The Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA)

The Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) was established in Kaduna in 1964, with the primary responsibility of training officer cadets for the Nigerian Armed Forces.

Successful cadets are subsequently commissioned as officers into the Army, Navy, or Air Force. The Academy was created to meet the growing needs of the expanding Armed Forces, particularly when the limited training slots available overseas for Nigerian officers proved insufficient. Its establishment also enabled Nigerian military officers to develop the necessary qualities and specialised skills required for effective service. The first intake of officer cadets commenced training on 21 January 1964 and passed out in March 1967.¹⁹

The NDA recruits cadets from all the states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria through a common entrance examination. Successful candidates then appear before an interview board composed of serving military officers from the Army, Navy, and Air Force. This recruitment process ensures the reflection of Nigeria's federal character. The selection of officers and men into the Nigerian Armed Forces follows a quota system, enabling the officer corps to represent the diverse states, local governments, and ethnic groups of the country.

In 1978, the Academy introduced a six-month course known as the Direct Short Service Commission (DSSC), designed for training graduate officers who were directly commissioned into administrative and service corps of the Nigerian Army. However, the responsibility for training these officers was later transferred to the Nigerian Army School of Infantry (now the Infantry Centre and School).²⁰ Between 1967 and 1979, the Regular Course at the NDA lasted two and a half years for academic instruction and one year for military training. From January 1978, the duration was extended to three years—two for academics and one for military training. At that time, cadets pursued the Nigerian Defence Academy Certificate of Education (NDACE), moderated by the University of Ibadan, which was equivalent to the GCE Advanced Level or Higher School Certificate. This certificate was later phased out, and in September 1985, the NDA was upgraded to a degree-awarding institution, enabling officer cadets to graduate with academic degrees.

The head of the Academic Branch is the Academy Provost. The first to hold this position was Professor S. C. Ukpabi, who was succeeded by Professor Jibril. As highlighted by Major-General Zamani Lekwot, the objectives of the NDA include the pursuit of academic learning and research in military science and technology to foster innovation and support the steady development of the Nigerian military. The institution also aligns its activities with the social, economic, and military needs of the Nigerian

¹⁹Ubah, "Nigerian Defence Academy in the Evolving Global Military Academies", p.67.

²⁰ Ubah, "Nigerian Defence Academy in the Evolving Global Military Academies", p. 68.

Armed Forces. For example, the NDA contributes to the development of military doctrine, which shapes the Armed Forces' approach to internal security operations.

In all, the Nigerian Defence Academy is an institution established with the mandate of training officers for the Armed Forces of Nigeria. With the establishment of the Postgraduate School in 2005, and the attendant admission of civilians, the academy has been expanding and deepening frontiers of knowledge beyond the Armed Forces.²¹ By offering academic opportunities to both military personnel and civilians, the NDA has promoted closer civil-military relations while maintaining its core mandate of producing officers for the defence and security of Nigeria.

Since 1988, when the first batch of graduate officers passed out, the NDA has consistently exercised its authority to confer degrees upon deserving cadets who are found worthy in character and learning. The Academy currently comprises faculties of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering, with 14 academic departments offering programmes such as Intelligence and Security Science, Defence and Security Studies, and Strategic Studies. Between 1988 and 2013, the NDA produced nearly 4,000 graduate officers with degrees in various disciplines. These officers acquired the essential knowledge and skills to address the challenges of internal security.

The NDA also teaches tactical training, discipline, professionalism, and military ethics—key components for the effective conduct of operations. Its academic and military programmes, including those focused on conflict resolution, peace-building, and security studies, are designed to prepare cadets for operational challenges. Consequently, the NDA produces professional military personnel equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values required to address security threats, maintain law and order, and support civil authorities.

The Armed Forces Command and Staff College (AFCSC)

The Command and Staff College (AFCSC), Jaji was established on 26 May 1976. By the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970, the strength of the Army had increased tremendously from about 10,500 officers and men in 1967 at the outbreak of the war to 250,000 for four years. This increase in strength also effected the training of military personnel, especially staff training among senior officers.²²

²¹Major-General Zamani Lekwot, "The Nigerian Defence Academy Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow", in S.C. Ukpabi (ed), *The Nigerian Defence Academy in Perspective*, (Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation, 1988). pp. 50-52

²²J.W.T Gbor, "The Development of the Nigerian Armed Forces", p. 149.

The sudden expansion of the Armed Forces necessitated the training of officers proficient in the art of command and staff duties to ensure the effective management of personnel and equipment. This was essential to maintain the high standard of discipline that the Armed Forces had attained over the years. However, the number of training vacancies available abroad for Nigerian military officers was grossly inadequate, particularly in the aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War. To address this gap, the Army Headquarters, under General Theophilus Yakubu Danjuma, then Chief of Army Staff, resolved to establish an Army Command and Staff College in 1976. For this purpose, the Army Headquarters secured the assistance of the British Army Advisory Team (BAAT).

Originally known as the Army Command and Staff College (ACSC), the institution was modelled on the British Staff College at Camberley, albeit with modifications to suit Nigerian requirements. The first set of students commenced their course on 26 May 1976 and included two Brigadier-Generals, twelve Colonels, and twenty-six Lieutenant-Colonels.²³

On 24 April 1978, the Junior Division of the Army Command and Staff College was established to train Captains of the Nigerian Army for junior command and staff appointments. That same year, the scope of the College was broadened to accommodate officers of the Nigerian Navy and the Nigerian Air Force. Consequently, the institution's name was changed to the Command and Staff College, and in 2003, it was further renamed the Armed Forces Command and Staff College (AFCSC) to reflect its tri-service nature.²⁴

Beyond comprehensive training in command and staff duties, students of the AFCSC are also grounded in geo-political and strategic studies, a responsibility handled by the Faculty of Joint Studies. In addition to lectures delivered by experts from Nigerian universities and foreign missions, students of the Senior Division are required to undertake a study tour of an African country before graduation. The College also offers admission to officers from sister African nations such as Ghana, Uganda, Botswana, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, as well as a few countries outside the continent.

²³Abdulhamid, Yahya Harbo, "Before Operation Lafiya Dole: Nigerian Army in the Counterinsurgency Operations in the Nigerian North East." In, A. M. Ashafa and Hussaini Jibrin, *The Nigerian Army in a Democracy since 1999: A Professional Demonstration of Military Subordination to Civil Authority – Essays in Honour of Lieutenant General Tukur Yusufu Buratai*, (Kaduna: Pyla-Mak Services Ltd, 2017), pp. 295 – 196.

²⁴F. F. Oyenehin, "The Art of Modern Warfare and Strategic Information", in, *Nigeria Army Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 3 No 1, (2010), pp. 1-5.

Graduates of the Senior Division are awarded the designation “Passed Staff College” (psc). Officers who distinguish themselves may return to the College as Directing Staff (DS) or Directors. Those who successfully serve as DS or Directors for two years are conferred with the enhanced designation “psc (+)”.²⁵

A tragic event in the history of the College occurred in September 1992, when a Nigerian Air Force aircraft carrying students and staff of the College from an exercise in Lagos crashed shortly after take-off, killing over one hundred personnel on board. It was a sombre moment, described by then-President General I.B. Babangida as the “loss of a generation of officers.” Among the deceased were two foreign officers, two civilian staff of the Ministry of Defence, and a student from the Nigerian Military School (NMS). They were honoured with a state burial in Abuja in October 1992.²⁶

The National War College (NWC)

The National War College has played a significant role in enhancing the Nigerian Army’s capabilities in both internal security operations and international peacekeeping missions. As the highest military training institution in Nigeria, it was established in Lagos on 16 June 1992 and relocated to a temporary site in Abuja in August 1995. Prior to the establishment of the National War College, only a limited number of graduates from the Command and Staff College in the Nigerian Armed Forces had the opportunity to receive advanced training overseas for senior command, policy, and staff appointments. Nigerian military officers were offered places at the War Colleges of friendly nations such as the United States of America, the Imperial Defence College of the United Kingdom, the National Defence College of India, and the National War College of Pakistan. However, the number of available slots was insufficient to accommodate all qualified officers.

Although the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, established in 1978, provides strategic-level training, it is not a military institution and its course content does not cover the professional expertise required for high-level military command and regimental responsibilities. The National War College, Nigeria, was therefore established to enable senior military officers to stay abreast of global developments in the military profession, receive advanced training in strategic

²⁵The ‘psc (+)’ is a prestigious honor bestowed upon students who demonstrate exceptional performance and achievement during their training at the Armed Forces Command and Staff College (AFCSC). The plus sign (+) denotes academic excellence and outstanding.

²⁶Tunde Agara, “The Military in a Democratic Environment: Changing Patterns of Democratic Control of the Military in Africa”, in. *Nigeria Army Quarterly Journal*. Vol. 5, No 1, (2015), p.14.

planning, and develop effective strategies for military operations. Essentially, the mission of the National War College is:

*To prepare senior officers of the Armed Forces and their civilian counterparts for higher-levels policy, command and staff functions, by imparting to them the knowledge, skill and expertise required to fulfill these roles in single services, joint services, and extra-regimental military and civilian appointments in Nigeria.*²⁷

Some of the potential effects of the National War College, Nigeria, include the provision of senior officers capable of operational-level planning, grounding command and staff duties in a firm understanding of leadership, decision-making, and problem-solving skills essential for managing complex operational challenges. The College also fostered collaboration among the military, government agencies, and civil society, promoting a holistic approach to internal security. Additional benefits include the study of leadership principles and the art of high-level command, the execution of planning, practice, and battlefield shaping to achieve strategic objectives at the level of the National Defence Council, and the integration of higher defence management with broader national interests within a democratic framework.

Some of the core study themes at the College include the conduct of operations at varying levels of intensity, the role of technology in warfare, the logistical imperatives of sustaining the Armed Forces, and the higher management of defence.²⁸

By 1998, the College had successfully graduated over 250 participants, who were awarded the title *Fellow of War College (FWC)*. The breakdown, representing participants from the contributing services, agencies, ministries, and foreign countries, includes: 93 Nigerian Army officers, 37 Nigerian Navy officers, 36 Nigerian Air Force officers, 10 Nigerian Police officers, 4 civilian staff from the Ministry of Defence, 5 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4 from the Ministry of Finance, 1 from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1 from the National Planning Commission, 2 from the Presidency, 2 from the National Intelligence Agency, 2 from the State Security Services, and 8 military participants from foreign countries.²⁹

In addition to training Nigerian military and civilian officers, the National War College, Nigeria, also offers placements to foreign countries. The first foreign student,

²⁷*National War College, Year Book*, p.17.

²⁸J.W.T Gbor, "The Development of the Nigerian Armed Forces.", p.174.

²⁹Gbor, "The Development of the Nigerian Armed Forces", p. 185.

Colonel J.A. Lesulie of the Tanzanian Defence Forces, attended Course 4 during the 1995/96 session. He was later promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General and held a command position in the Tanzanian Armed Forces.³⁰ Since its establishment, foreign participation at the National War College has steadily expanded to include military officers from countries such as Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Angola, Namibia, Senegal, Mali, India, and Pakistan, among others.³¹ Participants from the Nigerian Army must have successfully completed a staff course either in Nigeria or abroad and must hold the rank of Colonel or its equivalent. They are also expected to have commanded a battalion or unit of equivalent status, or to have held at least a Grade 1 staff appointment at Divisional or Army Headquarters level, or the equivalent in the other services.³²

The Nigerian Army School of Education

The Nigerian Army School of Education (NASE) is the training arm of the Nigerian Army Education Corps (NAEC). The NAEC was originally known as the Directorate of Army Education (DAE), which was established as a necessity following experiences during the Burma Campaign, where significant losses were recorded largely due to communication problems between troops and their foreign commanders. The teaching of the English language initially fell under the purview of education personnel. However, following the Nigerianisation of the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF), these roles and responsibilities were formally assigned to the NAEC and, by extension, to NASE during both peacetime and wartime.³³

NASE was established in 1970, shortly after the Nigerian Civil War. It became one of the Nigerian Army's key training institutions, primarily responsible for training army personnel in foreign languages such as Portuguese, Arabic, and French. Other courses offered include Map Reading (MR), System Approach to Training (SAT), Curriculum Development, Young Officers' Courses, Instructional System Technology (IST), and the Training Development Advisor's Course (TDA), among others.³⁴ Over time, NASE has continued to expand both in scope and function. The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) was later introduced to support soldiers who wished to

³⁰*Ibid*, p.175.

³¹National War College, *Year Book*, p. 16.

³²*Ibid*, p. 29.

³³ T.Y. Danjuma, "The Nigerian army and professionalism". *The guardian*, Sunday, 3 September, (2001), p.2.

³⁴B. B Aindigh "Dimensions of Nigeria's contributions to international peace and security" in, *The Nigerian Army Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 1, No 1, (2016), pp. 16-18.

further their education. This opportunity was subsequently extended to sister services, including the Nigerian Police Force and other paramilitary organisations such as the Immigration Service, Customs, and the State Security Service.³⁵

Education at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels complements other security sectors in enhancing Nigeria's overall national security.³⁶ Education has generated and continues to generate tremendous development in the Nigerian military. This has resulted from both the explosion in the search of knowledge by individuals in the wider Nigerian society which also had effects in the military, and increased professional training for military personnel at home and abroad.

There was a time when highly educated officers were subtly discouraged in the Nigerian Army, especially following the coup of 15 January 1966, which was led by majors—some of whom held university degrees. From the 1970s to the mid-1980s, officers with university qualifications were viewed with suspicion and often pushed out of service under the guise of maintaining military standards. That, however, characterises a bygone era. Today, education has transformed the perception and acceptance of educated officers and soldiers within the Army. Currently, the Nigerian Army comprises dozens of PhD holders, hundreds of MSc or MA holders, and thousands with BSc or BA degrees. This qualitative advancement in educational attainment among officers and soldiers has significantly enhanced the intellectual capacity of the military, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of its professional defence functions. It has broadened intellectual horizons for individual personnel and for the military as an institution.

Although Nigeria has yet to develop the capacity to produce its own tactical weapon systems or modern equipment such as computers, it has acquired the skills to operate sophisticated imported weapons and communication systems—thanks to education and training obtained both locally and abroad. Education has also improved planning and execution capabilities, as well as organisational competence within the Nigerian military. These developments indicate that both the Nigerian government and military leadership now place greater value on education within the armed forces.

³⁵Remi Aiyede, "The Military and the Sustenances of Democracy in Nigeria", in *The Nigerian Army Quarterly Journal* Vol. 4, No 1, (July 2017). pp. 29-30.

³⁶O. E. Tangban,, . . CC. COsakwe, S. O. Okeniyin, S. O, and H. E. Ayamasaowei, *Nigerian Defence and Security: Essays in commemoration of Nigerian Defence Academy Golden Jubilee*, (Kaduna: Nigerian Defence Academy, Press, 2004), p. 586.

CONCLUSION

The high degree of efficiency, effectiveness, and impact in combat demonstrated by the militaries of nations such as the United States, France, and the United Kingdom (where officers and personnel are highly educated and where digital technology, e-training, and computer literacy have been fully integrated into daily operations) clearly illustrates the pivotal role of education in military development. Prior to the early 1980s, education was not considered a significant component of the Nigerian Army, and higher education only began to be seen as essential in the late 1980s. This neglect contributed to a longstanding colonial and post-colonial perception of the Nigerian military as comprising largely illiterates, school dropouts, and societal misfits. That perception has changed drastically in recent decades, as the Nigerian Army has undergone a substantial educational transformation, with many officers and soldiers now holding master's and doctoral degrees, in addition to qualifications from both local and foreign professional training institutions.

Undoubtedly, with the global winds of change brought about by modern technology such as computers, the internet, and digital systems, education will continue to play a crucial role in military development, both in Nigeria and globally. In this information age, where digital technology, e-training, simulation, and computer-based systems have become fundamental to military operations worldwide, the strategic importance of education in military affairs is only set to increase.

There is therefore an urgent need to align military education in Nigeria with international standards and contemporary technological transformations, particularly in areas of computerisation and digital integration. Now that Nigerian leaders have begun to recognise the importance of revitalising the country's nuclear research capabilities, appropriate funding must be allocated towards nuclear development. Education and technology remain central to progress in this field. As Professor Jegede aptly observed, the importance of investing in education for the Nigerian military cannot be overstated. In his words:

With the contemporary development in the world in general and within the military in particular, the responsibilities of the military and the individual soldier will be better executed if education is purposefully and effectively provided... After all, soldiers are supposed to prepare for war all the time in peacetime, and go into battle to put in practice all they have learnt about warfare when the actual show begins. But it is precisely the need to do all these more efficiently that education

*has been seen as the way out to training a soldier to be useful to his profession, to the country, and to uplift him regarding personal development.*³⁷

One way to catalyse the role of education in the development of the Nigerian Army is to transform the National War College, Abuja, into a University of Peace and Defence Studies. The existing Centre for Peace, Research, and Conflict Resolution within the college could be restructured into two separate faculties: the Faculty of Peace Studies and the Faculty of Defence Studies. Additionally, two more faculties should be established: the Faculty of Political Economy and the Faculty of Technological Research and Development, the latter being affiliated with the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria and key universities with strong programmes in nuclear research and technology.

Furthermore, the establishment of military command polytechnics to train middle-level manpower in advanced technology, as well as colleges of education to train instructors, would introduce a new impetus into military education—particularly in the area of technological advancement. This would enable both Nigeria and its military to reap greater benefits from educational development. Achieving these objectives will require significant investment in military education. However, such investment should not be regarded as wasteful, since the spin-offs from military research often yield benefits for the wider civil society.

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³⁷Professor Olugbemiro Jegede, "The Place of Digital Education in the Nigerian Army of the 21st Century", p. 31.

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