Toward Improving Access to Quality Education for Underprivileged Youth from Slum Communities in Liberia, 1989-2003: A Case Study of New Kru Town Community in Monrovia

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ABSTRACT

In Liberia, access to quality education is one of the major challenges affecting the social and economic productivity of a significant number of underprivileged youths, especially youth living in slum communities in Monrovia. Fourteen years of civil war in Liberia (1989-2003) damaged a once effective educational system, and now there is a poor educational system. This research paper examines the basic quality of the educational system in Liberia, before and after the war and its policies and structures, especially among primary and secondary high schools. This paper focuses on the New Kru Town community and employs Paulo Freire's philosophical analysis of the laboratory approach to education and the resiliency theory. It addresses the impact of the ineffectiveness of the present-day educational system on the concerned community.

Several studies show that the Ministry of Education of Liberia, in collaboration with its international partners, has strived to improve access to quality education in Liberia by providing free and compulsory education for secondary school-aged children, but its efforts have been to no avail because of poor policies and lack of effective implementation strategies. Through an analysis of interviews and relevant primary and secondary sources, this paper argues that the Liberian government has failed to provide quality education because of these poor policies (for example, the Liberian educational policies lack efficiency, due respect for accountability, and an effective supervisor by the policymakers) strategies and the lack of effective leadership by the policymakers.

Ministry of Education. Therefore, Liberian youth have been denied the opportunity to fulfill their potential, resulting in their inability to secure a better future or a productive lifestyle.
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Reason for Interest in the Study

Growing up in a country that was plagued by fourteen years of civil conflict made it difficult to endure and to predict my future. When I was a child, I attended rural schools in Liberia. Most schools in rural Liberia never had furniture or even provided textbooks and school materials. Worst of all, during the rainy seasons when there was a heavy downpour of rain, schools did not operate. Because of my experience with the Liberian educational system, as well as my professional hopes for the future, I was extremely afraid during the civil war. While fleeing with my family in late 1994, I witnessed the destruction of schools, as well as other social amenities and other institutional buildings. Additionally, I lost my father, friends, and other family members to the war. These experiences made for a formative childhood that continues to influence the direction of my life.

It was not until I began my graduate studies in the United States that I realized how poor the education system really is; my encounter with professors and other students outside my social niche in America has opened my eyes to the high illiteracy rates among Liberians, especially of the youth. This led me to believe that the system was broken and failing the youth of Liberia, but it also inspired me to work to solve these problems in my future.

Pursuing this topic is significant to me because it is a pathway to articulate my knowledge to the future generations of Liberia and to the world as a whole. This triggered my quest to pursue education, so that I could obtain the knowledge and skills to educate young people in Liberia and to contribute to the betterment of education by working toward founding a school based on Freire’s educational ideas. Freire’s premise for education is that education can widen the mind of an individual and provide an individual with the abilities to regain humanity,
as well as a light to enlighten his or her mind and to overcome adversity.³ Freire contends that for the oppressed group to overcome this social adversity, the individual needs to engage with others and, thus, struggle for liberation and recognize his or her oppression in societies.⁴

³Freire, 10-19
⁴Ibid.,
Section One: Introduction

In researching this study, I explore the current issues that are affecting the state of education in Liberia, especially its structure, policies, and implementation strategies in primary and secondary education. Scholars such as Barbara Reynolds have placed a significant amount of emphasis on the civil war’s (1989-2003) impact on the social and economic fabric of Liberian society. Reynolds maintains that the negative influences of the Liberian Civil War include the “loss of family and friends, home and health, as well as limb and livelihood.” In addition, the war also affected infrastructure owned by the national government, such as school buildings, roads, and electrical infrastructure, which, for example, were the immediate targets by the rebels during the conflict.

Using the status of the Liberian educational system as a base, I realized that for the foreseeable future, the narrative of this system in Liberia could be seen as stemming from the fourteen years of civil conflict that took place between 1989 and 2003. To gain substantial insight on the current state of Liberia’s educational system, it is essential to understand the history of Liberia before and after the war. I thought it would be useful to utilize this historical information to examine Liberia’s current educational system, policies, structures, and Paulo’s implementation strategies to look beyond current perspectives and, instead, explore how the conflict has shaped the educational system and what this means for its future prospects.

My research indicates that the government of Liberia, and its international partners on educational development strived to improve the quality of education but are faced with several
challenges. Because of inadequate resources and effective implementation strategies, as well as accountability for educational expenditures, among other things, access to decent education is poor for young people. I therefore argue that despite the adversities that are impeding young people in Liberia in their access to quality education, they can be empowered to live a productive lifestyle, as underprivileged youth in Liberia are able to overcome these adversities to rebuild their lives and reconstruct their social and economic status mainly through resilience, because the government of Liberia has failed the youth. Markedly, as this study focuses on access to quality education for underprivileged youth in slum communities, I also argue that their efforts to struggle for a better and more productive lifestyle helps to contribute to our understanding and produce meaningful insights that demonstrate resilience on a daily basis.

I construct an interdisciplinary mode of inquiry to gain a critical insight on the educational system of Liberia from the fields of education, psychology, and history to uncover an accurate picture of the effects of the educational system in Liberian society, notably for underprivileged, young children in the New Kru Town slum community. Although scholars in the past decades have been concerned with and sought to understand the mechanisms of how young people strive to cope with the effects of civil war, this interdisciplinary analysis provides a useful framework to comprehend the ways in which some people were courageous in dealing with those difficulties. Researchers have long been interested in comprehending the instances of adaptive functioning in those children and adults who have been struggling by historical adversities and traumatic events in their early childhood but nevertheless have had positive developmental outcomes. Because young people in Liberia continue to persevere and are

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determined to pave their own ways through the devastating effects of the conflict through their varied experiences, I used this study to understand the indomitable determination and courage that kept them moving. It is important to note that research on access to quality education for young people in Liberia, especially for youth living in slums and underprivileged communities, is an essential area of investigation because it offers a compelling account of an emergence of social and economic problems that are critical to Liberian society. However, in the broader perspective of this research, I also adopt Paulo Freire’s *Critical Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to educate and empower young people to liberate themselves from these oppressive circumstances.9

Correspondingly, the results of this research demonstrate that as individuals endure these struggles with resilience, they can make a significant difference in the way that individuals they encounter adapt to adversity. As individuals are motivated by others in society based on their success stories, they could become empowered and able to adapt and shape their individual and collective agency in a constructive way.

According to Tarnue Carver Johnson’s *Education and Social Change in Liberia*, adopting a model that placed institutional mechanisms for power-free dialogue in Liberian civil and political life improved the education system.10 I thought it would be more instructive that the Liberian educational system fashion a dialogue model of the learning process that encourages an invaluable engagement among individuals in the society and institutions, including private stakeholders, government, and social partners to ensure a common vision for the betterment of education. As a result, it will help to initiate the process of educational advancement and transformation that sought to afford unique opportunities to hear the voice of the people, with the

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9 Freire’s *Critical Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 23.
10 *Education and Social Change in Liberia; New Perspective for the 21st Century* (Bloomington, Indiana: Author House 2004), 82.
hope to create an avenue for a fair and honest educational policy among stakeholders.\textsuperscript{11} This study is essential because it serves as a pathway to enlighten not only underprivileged youth in Liberia, but also all young people of Liberia, to gain an invaluable insight into their own social and economic status and to redefine their roles despite these oppressive circumstances.

Thus, to accomplish the research purpose and satisfy the research concerns stated above, the following questions have guided the process:

- What is the impact of the civil war on the public secondary education system, particularly for children ages 12-18 years in Liberia?
- What are those tendencies that hinder the progress of quality education for Liberian youths?
- How is education being made accessible to disadvantaged young people in poor communities, particularly New Kru Town? Has the destruction of the war made worse the problem of quality education in disadvantaged communities and of access to education in such communities?
- How can Freire’s dialogic process provide a feasible approach to education that empowers students?
- Finally, what would be the solutions for the problem of education in the future?

\textbf{Interdisciplinary}

Based on the complexity of the education problem in Liberia, it is essential to integrate an interdisciplinary approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the problems. Thus, to comprehend how education functions and malfunctions in society, it is essential to tap into an interdisciplinary framework. As Allen Repko and Rick Szostak explain, “Each discipline’s overall perspective illuminates the problem or some fact.”\textsuperscript{12} The impact of the war on education in Liberia, with special attention being paid to disadvantaged communities, especially New Kru town, required an interdisciplinary approach. Therefore, I integrate three distinct fields of study:

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory} (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2008), 283.
To do this, I correlate these diverse fields of research to investigate how the civil war affected the quality of secondary education for youths in postwar Liberia, especially in New Kru Town. These disciplines are critical because they provide me with the impetus to understand the nature and impact of the civil war on youth’s social and economic development. From a sociological perspective, the civil war disrupted the social structure of the Liberian society, causing damage to an educational system, which provided access to trained teachers, small classrooms, organized facilities, and a strong curriculum.

The situation has resulted in the privatization of many schools that require expensive tuition fees from students and discriminate against poor people. This discrimination continued a pattern of privilege established in the nineteenth century. From a historical perspective, education in Liberia was established on the basis of privilege. Before the civil war, the educational system in Liberia was controlled by the minority Americo-Liberians, who are the descendants of freed slaves from the US and the Caribbean. The freed slaves from America who came to be known as Americo-Liberians were freed by their masters or worked for their freedom in the United States and were sent to Africa to an established place for those who formerly had been enslaved. This group of people created a system that privileged themselves and their children and excluded indigenous Liberians throughout society, including in education. Even though this discriminatory system based on ethnic privilege has been eliminated since the civil war, it has been replaced by a system based on financial privilege that benefit Americo-Liberians and thus prevents most youth from accessing a quality education; this is especially true in New Kru Town. Using one interview, I explored my claim that the civil war and poor

14 Johnson, Education and Social Change in Liberia, 17.
structure and implementation strategies, among other things, are the factors hindering the educational system of Liberia.

Statement of the Problem

The primary concern that led to this research study is the poor quality of primary and secondary education in postwar Liberia. Secondary education is a form of formal education that students begin between the ages of 11 and 13 years and usually finish between ages 15 to 18 years; the age ranges are broad to accommodate financial issues and other outstanding problems. Liberia, the oldest country in West Africa, experienced a devastating 14-years of civil unrest.\(^\text{15}\) This left an indelible impact on the formal educational system for a significant number of young Liberians. The conflict that engulfed the Liberian society greatly affected the educational infrastructure, leaving a broken educational system.

In addition to accounting for the loss of over 250,000 lives, the civil war destroyed Liberia’s economy and denied almost an entire generation of youths the privilege of formal education during the conflict.\(^\text{16}\) Saddened by the effect of the war, most of the children who were privileged not to be conscripted into the fighting had no access to quality education.\(^\text{17}\) Many children lost their lives and almost thousands more were separated from their parents and became orphans.\(^\text{18}\) As a result of the conflict, the war has left an enormous gap in the critical thinking of the generation who experienced the war.\(^\text{19}\) Reynolds explained that the “International Rescue Committee reported that the Liberians’ educational system has been devastated by the civil war

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 265.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.,
\(^{18}\) Ibid.,
\(^{19}\) Ibid.,
effects, the war destroyed school buildings, and causes a widespread migration of trained
teachers, as well as the disconnection of governmental infrastructure.”  

Although the civil war is still the major problem within the educational system of Liberia, the negative effects of the civil war on Liberian education can be seen even today. Many reports, among them such as Suku’s, have discussed the importance of focusing on reinvigorating the education system, mainly its structure, policies, and implementation strategies.  

The neglect of quality education for young people in Liberia is alarming because it leads to lack of critical thinking and knowledge production by many youths. Many primary and secondary schools operating in the country over the years have been in substandard unfurnished buildings. For example, many primary and secondary schools in Liberia lack the basic facilities to provide to children for the intended purpose. Most schools in the country are overcrowded, poorly facilitated, and sometimes lack benches, desks, and trained teachers for students.  

Furthermore, Pah Suku revealed in his book *Why the Education System in Liberia is a Big Mess* that the government of Liberia is a broken one, and he advocates for schools in Liberia to be privatized.

### Relevant Primary and Secondary Sources

The paper utilizes selections of primary and secondary sources that are useful for understanding the complexities of the problem of education in Liberian societies, especially for youth in slum communities. The following primary sources or documents are useful in order to get current information on the education system in Liberia. These sources include an interview with a vice-principal of a secondary school. Also, I used photographs in significant secondary-

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21 Ibid.
23 Suku, 20.
source articles from international organizations, such as USAID and the Ministry of Education, to show the current state of education in Liberia. I used primary-source documents found online on the education ministry website. These primary sources will provide insight on the ongoing activities of educational progress in Liberia.

Moreover, this research paper will assess the current trend in the educational paradigm of the Liberian society. Suku Path and Tarnue Johnson’s scholarship and work, in particular, provided me with the necessary impetus to explore the problem in the educational system in Liberia. The article by Wleh Kpannedh Doe titled “New Kru Town Today: Yesterday, Today and the Future.”24 is also essential. This source provides current information on the ongoing problems and headships that are hindering New Kru Town’s social and economic development, particularly their current education system.

Section Two: Research Design and Interview Methodology

I chose this research design because it is useful in generating answers to my research questions and methodology. Therefore, I chose to employ a qualitative method and textual analysis to address my primary and secondary research questions. Examples of qualitative methods include the use of interviews. The qualitative method was used as the key research tool. Implementing the qualitative research approach, I conducted one semi-structured interview as a means to gather information from a vice principal of a high school in Monrovia. I found it necessary to employ qualitative methodology to gain an understanding of the participant’s experiences and perceptions.

Kathryn Roulston, a prominent researcher, defines the semi-structured interview as one that offers the interviewee an opportunity to enhance and establish a face-to-face conversation with interviewer through several questions and guide.25 I also utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach with the purpose of making sense of phenomena emergent in the data.26 Therefore, I conducted a phenomenological approach to better understand youth’s experience in New Kru Town within the current Liberian education system. One limitation of this study was my inability to gather survey questionnaires from educations in New Kru Town. However, I relied on Liberian government reports, as well as the reports of research institutes and NGOs on education in Liberia and in the slum communities of Monrovia.

Methodology

My quest is to understand the current problems that are trending within the educational system of Liberia, as well as to learn about the effect of the poor state of education on the lives

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25 Reflective Interviewing: A Guide to Theory and Practice (California: Sage, 2010),
26 Ibid., 161
of underprivileged youth. I found it necessary to employ a qualitative interview and textual approaches to gain an understanding of the problems of education in Liberia. Also, in my research, I drew on the works and analysis of several scholars such as Pah Suku, Tarnue Johnson, Paulo Freire, Barbara Reynolds, and Wleh Chea Kapnneh to analyze the concerned questions. Overall, the research design for this study was utilized by the use of critical pedagogy, the resilient approach that focuses on the individuals’ lives and experience, and the use of critical thinking skills and provides a substantial insight of the study.

Theory and Methodology

In this section, I offer a detailed description and analysis of the research design and method that I used to examine my primary research question. As I mentioned earlier, the current state of education in the Liberian system, particularly for underprivileged young children in Liberia, leaves much to be desired. It is therefore crucial for researchers, educational stakeholders, notably those individuals in the educational sector, including the government of Liberia and its international partners, to pay critical attention to these social and economic problems. I have chosen to adopt a resilience approach because many young children in Liberia are faced with a myriad of difficulties that make it difficult for them to have productive lifestyles as a result of the legacy of the 14 years of civil war. Several studies show that a resilience-based approach to persistent social issues such as gender-based violence, rape, and poverty may very well offer long-lasting solutions for overcoming their negative impacts. Therefore, in order to examine and document the experience of Liberian youth and comprehensively explore what factors enable them to cope and adopt resilience, I approached this research from two theoretical perspectives: resilience and Freire’s concept of banking and laboratory theory.
Ann S. Masten states that “resilience refer[s] to positive patterns of functioning or development during following exposure to adversity, or more simply, to good adaption of a risk context.”27 This focus on resilience can serve as a pathway for youths to learn to be courageous in working hard and to better themselves in adverse and stressful situations in their daily lives. This study also employs Freire’s banking system and laboratory system of education as a platform for youth to advocate for the dialogical approach to the educational system. The significance of this study is not only for one’s personal benefit but also for social change because the resilience approach is one that emphasizes strength in adversity, as Liberian youth advocate for change in the educational sector for the betterment of the Liberian society. In an effort to avoid bias and to distinguish my personal narrative from my role as the researcher in this study, I maintain a careful analysis and address the issues of power struggle between the interview, interviewer and the interviewee.

Structure of the Paper

This research paper contains six sections. First, I present an introduction that introduces the problem or research and its importance and sets forth clearly the major claim (thesis statement), as well as accommodate an interdisciplinary foundation. Second, I set forth the research design and methods. To do this, I begin by analyzing my various primary sources, which includes interview analysis and the analysis of relevant theoretical framework. Third, I provide a literature review by relying on the scholarship from relevant disciplines regarding the current issues of educational practices in Liberia, especially secondary education, and the impact of the civil war on Liberian education. In Section Four, I discuss New Kru Town as a case of poor education in a slum community in Monrovia and of the need for educational reform that

follows Paulo Freire’s revolutionary critical pedagogy. In Section Five, I present findings and analyze the results of my primary and secondary research. In Section Six, I present findings and insights from an analysis of both primary and secondary sources. In Section Seven, I set forth my recommendations for future research and a conclusion.
Section Three: Theoretical Framework Scope

The use of a theoretical framework in a research study is to guide the research process that plays a vital role in the step-by-step analysis of the research process. I adopt an interdisciplinary research approach set forth in Allen Repko and Rick Szostak’s work, which explains that the use of theory “drives the questions asked and the phenomenon under investigation.”28 In addition, the authors point out that theory provides disciplinary insights into the research problem through its methods, assumptions, and perspectives. Therefore, in order to find a pathway to documents and to analyze the complexities of the Liberian educational system and its influences on the lives of youth, especially underprivileged children of slum communities, I therefore approached this study from two major theoretical frameworks: resilience and critical pedagogy of the banking system and laboratory system of education as set forth by Paulo Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed.29 Using resilience theory, I thought it would be invaluable to have tangible insights to understand how young people in Liberia, especially underprivileged young people who live in slum communities, cope with their lives and redefine their social and economic status in spite of their difficulties. According to Masten and Auke Tellegen, “The study of resilience is a process of capacity for, or outcomes of successful adaption despite challenging or threatening circumstances.”30 As the key to my research, resilience theory, grounded in social and behavioral psychology, guides the discussion on the

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https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ac49/c266c144cf4358a6bc0829ed516296939149.pdf
development, well-being, risk, and topic of resilience on children who are exposed to adversity.\textsuperscript{31}

As noted above, this paper draws upon Freire’s laboratory theory and banking system of education, which provides insight on some of the unsustainable practices in the educational system in post-conflict Liberia. Freire’s philosophy provides a useful lens to address some of the current issues that hinder access to quality education for youths, especially youths in the urban slum communities such as New Kru Town in Monrovia. The theoretical constructs of both resilience and Freire’s laboratory theory and banking system of education provide insights that guide my research questions, design, and methodology.

**Resilience Theory and Concept**

The study of resilience began over three decades ago as developmental psychopathology emerged.\textsuperscript{32} It steadily expanded after gaining significant attention to uncover the causes and the path leading to psychopathology. This study investigated at-risk children for a variety of reasons, including the genetic risk of ill parents and the difficulties of growing up in the context of poverty, war, violence family, and many adversities.\textsuperscript{33} In “Promoting Resilience in Child Welfare,” Masten argues that the emergent wave of resilience context across academia is helping professionals.\textsuperscript{34} There are several reasons why the steady rise of resilience theory is prevalent in academic research. One approach lays emphasis on the issues associated with children at risk and facing adversity. Some scholars in the field of social science drawn their attention to finding what factors enable people to thrive and become successful despite these difficulties.\textsuperscript{35} As a consequence of the growing complexity of present-day society, it is no wonder researchers are

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid. 373.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 35
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.,
paying attention to resilience as a sustainable approach to understanding and possibly resolving social problems.\textsuperscript{36}

Several studies show that a resilience-based approach to persistent social issues such as psychological child development, rape, and poverty may very well offer long-lasting solutions for overcoming their negative impacts.\textsuperscript{37} Using resilience as a base, in adopting strength-based approaches to persevere, individuals, groups, communities, and even generations can learn how to function well and succeed in spite of adversity. Lastly, studies show that many individuals who undergo difficult events in learning, such as some youth in Liberia, can strive to overcome these experiences with appropriate support and intervention. Scholars, scientists, and practitioners have studied and adapted the phenomenon of resilience to a wide range of circumstances and perspectives, each expanding the theory of resilience.\textsuperscript{38}

Indeed, in Vanja Kiswarday’s article “Empowering Resilience within the School Context”, Masten and Jelena Obradović describe resilience studies as a dynamic field that evolves with positive patterns of coping with adverse situations, but the central concern of this theory is to discover the factors that imbue resilience in an individual’s exposure to significant threat or severe adversity and achievement of positive adaptation despite major assaults on the developmental process.\textsuperscript{39} Similarly, a group of researchers from thirty countries discovered that resilience “as a universal capacity which allows a person, group, or community to prevent,

\textsuperscript{36} Promoting Resilience in Child Welfare, 36.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 3
\textsuperscript{39} Vanja Kiswarday, Empowering Resilience within the school Context. (Univerza na Primorskem, Pedagoška fakulteta,2010) Accessed October 26, 2010. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7e01/e549e4dd2709de1ee7b9c4a64790fe9e0543.pdf
minimize, or overcome the damaging effects of adversity.”⁴⁰ This is not to say individuals with resilient experiences do not struggle with stress or suffer difficulties of coping with adversity, but rather that the presence of being indomitable and courageous enables them to cope better with hardship. Furthermore, this shows how some young people struggle in spite of adversity and succeed while others do not. The focus of this study is resilience in the face of poverty, environmental factors in the face of home, with adversity family, and the school setting. Edith Grotberg, an international scholar on a resilience project in the Netherlands, considered resilience as the pathway for how individuals interact with stress, depression, and anxiety in their environment and are able to develop different sets of skills, knowledge, and abilities to succeed in spite of the adversities they encounter in achieving their goal.⁴¹

Grotberg constructed her resilience framework on three perspectives, a concept based on the inner personal strength of an individual, social and interpersonal skills, and external supports and resources, which she believed to be essential blocks of self-confidence, self-image, responsibility, independence, initiative, effectiveness, and trust that build personal resilience.⁴² Implicit in Grotberg’s concept is the discovery of “I can features build a child’s initiative and effectiveness.”⁴³ Grotberg and her team of researchers carried out a mixed-methods study on over 600 youth in 30 countries to discover how they construct resilience. This study found that resilience was promoted in 38% of the nearly 600 children from different countries.⁴⁴ Grotberg discovered that children need support and inspiration from their community, teachers, adults, and

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⁴² Ibid, 95
⁴³ Ibid.
⁴⁴ Ibid.
parents to foster the resilience trait to enable them cope with difficult situations in their daily lives. Grotberg, could be challenges to meet and overcome adversities. Grotberg’s study revealed that because of the “powerful contribution that resilience offers to a child’s development, dissemination of the paradigm that claims the shift from risk to resilience and competence is imperative and binding for the society.” With resilience theory comes the understanding of the complexities that some people possess the capability to thrive in stressful circumstances depending on the coping resource available.

In cases of young people in Liberia, especially underserved children, the difficulties and struggles they faced to have access to quality education due to lack of available resources, resilience theory can offer an insightful knowledge and understanding base on how they can cope with the qualities of life and the decision they make to cope with adversity. Resilience theory can offer insight and knowledge on how young people in Liberia, especially underserved children, who have demonstrated adaptive behavior in time of adverse situation, such as conflict and difficult social setting. For example, one critical repercussion of the civil-war legacy was that young people were traumatized, assaulted, and witnessed profound atrocities and were even recruited to partake in the war. These young children missed out on the chance of an early childhood; unfortunately, they have now reached adulthood during the course of the war. As young children who have suffered and experienced the long-term effects of the Civil War atrocities, they are now returning to their former lifestyles. Some are courageous and determined to go to school and become resilient to live a productive lifestyle. As my experience as a former

46 Ibid,
48 Ibid.,
high school teacher in Liberia, I am convinced that Liberia will rise once again and take its role in Africa and the world at large. My belief can be founded in how young people in Liberia are indomitable in spite of these difficult experiences they face to access quality education. It is important to note that many young Liberians, especially underserved children who walked for a long distance sometimes without shoes, or meals, as well as lack the basic school materials such as copybooks and backpacks, among other things, to go to school. Upon return, they work with their parents at home for several hours just to make ends meet.

In the case of school in Liberia, many schools lack the basic resources, such as library chairs and even a blackboard to provide a healthy learning environment for students. Moreover, the major challenges to young children accessing quality education is the result of huge school fees expenses, unofficial grade entrance examinations, long distances to school and poverty are the major barrier to access and can lead to students dropping out of school.49 In the midst of all these struggles and challenges, young children in Liberia, especially the “haven’t” use their strength and courage to go to school in hope of a better future.

Section Four: Review of the Literature

The purpose of the literature review is to examine the literature on the current state of the Liberian educational system and provide background information that leads to more instructive insights of the Liberian society, especially during and after the time of its civil war. It is vital to recognize the ways in which the repercussion of the war affected the primary and secondary education for young Liberians living in slum communities, such as New Kru Town. The problem of education in Liberia, especially for young people in urban slum communities in Monrovia, is a major issue because it is imperative to assess the significance of investing in strategies for quality education for youth development. Using the resiliency theory and Freire’s banking and laboratory system of education is important for exploring the problems within the Liberian educational system, as well as persistent social issues present in the narratives of the civil war’s influence on the lives of young people in Liberia.

Regarding this section, I rely on scholarship from multiple disciplines, including education, to accommodate a broad lens of understanding to articulate the current problem of educational practices that are hindering Liberian youths’ social and economic development across all spectrums. Barbara Reynolds, an educationally-oriented researcher, postulated that the 14 years of civil unrest in Liberian society left lasting challenges to accessing quality education for many youths. According to Reynolds, during the conflict, trained teachers overwhelmingly escaped the war in search of safety and better job opportunities. In addition to the loss of qualified teachers, the war-damaged the social and economic infrastructure of Liberian society including roads, school buildings, and the social and economic well-being for many of the youth in Liberia.50

50 “Liberia Conflicts and Post- Conflict Trends,” In Education in West Africa, ed. Emefa Takyi-
According to Ozsel Beleli, et. al., the Liberian public educational system collapsed as a result of the 14 years of civil war. This contributed to a lack of educational access for most primary and secondary schoolchildren. For instance, Belei, et. al., argue that as a result of the effects of the war, 65% of boys and 62% of girls above the primary school age have had no access to education to this day in Liberia.\(^{51}\) Over time, the impact of the civil conflict on Liberian society has become a complex social phenomenon that continues to affect the lives of many young Liberians, notably youths living in the slum communities.

Additionally, Beleli, et. al., state that Liberia is one of the few countries in the world in which youth between ages 16 to 20 years have had no access to education; the literacy rate is approximately 37%.\(^{52}\) In addition, Beleli, et. al., claim that besides access to quality education, school attendance and retention is also worsened among primary and secondary youths. In addition, Ozsel Beleli, et. al., contend that children usually in nursery school are approximately four years old, while roughly 50% of children between six to ten years and 24% aged 11-14 years are still in kindergarten when they should have moved on to secondary school.\(^{53}\) The war also caused rapid change in the school attendance age for many secondary school children in the country. For instance, the average age for pre-nursery, primary schoolchildren is seven, fourteen for primary, and twenty-two years for secondary, which is one of the factors that is seriously impeding most youths’ progressing further in academic performance.\(^{54}\)

The problems of education in Liberia have raised tremendous concerns of late, especially because of the dramatic drop in youth performance in getting admission to higher institutions and

\(^{51}\) *Education in Emergencies and Early Reconstruction. UNICEF Intervention in Colombia, Liberia and Southern Sudan* (Princeton University: Woodrow Wilson School of Public and international Affairs, 2007), 44. [https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509234.pdf](https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509234.pdf)

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 46

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 47

\(^{54}\) Ibid.
their low productive lifestyle. Pah Suku, a Liberian scholar, describes the lack of essential learning resources and leadership as contributing factors resulting in a large proportion of students receiving poor education.\textsuperscript{55} According to Suku, “In 2013, out of 25,000 high school students, not even one of them was able to achieve the minimum passing grade for the entrance to the University of Liberia.”\textsuperscript{56} Suku argues that the quality of poor education has led to the inability for Liberian youth to obtain higher education, which, in turn, has led to the decline in productivity, living standards, and economic outlook for many adults in Liberia.\textsuperscript{57}

Tarnue Carver Johnson, another Liberian scholar as well as a social and political education researcher, expands on Suku’s claims and advocates that existing education must prioritize a dialogic form of education as a fundamental model in the education system of Liberia.\textsuperscript{58} This is a pathway to embrace a democratic development in the leadership and social and economic progress for the Liberian society. Johnson contends that post-secondary educational sectors must focus on a “fundamental nature rather than the mere adoption of externally borrowed institutional forms and models.”\textsuperscript{59} As Suku and Johnson show in their work, the civil war played a major role in the derailing of the Liberian education system.

Over time, now that the system has been disrupted by the fourteen years of civil conflict, this has resulted in the overall decline of the quality of education, including the inability for the system to attract qualified and competent teachers. This problem is a critical social phenomenon that requires a careful investigation of the problem from different perspectives. One vital topic

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{55} Why the Education System of Liberia is a Big Mess (Pah Suku: Monrovia Liberia, 2017), 13.
\bibitem{56} Ibid.
\bibitem{57} Ibid., 62
\bibitem{58} Ibid., 63
\bibitem{59} Ibid.,
\end{thebibliography}
that this review addresses is the issue of the social, economic, and psychological effects of the civil war on the lives of young Liberians.

Ghobaraha, Adam Hazem, Paul Huth, and Bruce Russett, explored the topic on the post-war public health effects of civil conflict.\textsuperscript{60} In addition, in time of war, civilians are more likely than combatants to suffer, and many of these adverse consequences accrue long after the civil war in the form of disease contracted during the war.\textsuperscript{61} The above authors’ analysis reveals that the repercussions of the civil conflict destroy the social infrastructure of Liberia. Furthermore, the civil war resulted in the loss of physical and human capital, which then reduces the steady per-capita income for the state. Ghobaraha and his teams indicate that the civil war diverts foreign direct investments from the country because of instability.\textsuperscript{62} Ghobaraha, et. al., contends that the civil war increased the government’s military spending on the conflict and, thus, channeled money away from productive economic activities and decreasing spending on infrastructure, such as road networks, communication systems, healthcare, and especially the educational sectors.\textsuperscript{63}

Paul Collier, V. L. Elliott, Håvard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis conducted a similar study on the effects of social and economic developments. Collier, et. al. argue that the civil war is development in reverse, because it causes double economic loss to a nation through the loss of available resources to the war and the loss


\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 86

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid
through the damage to existing sources of capital.\textsuperscript{64} Furthermore, Collier, et. al., point out that the greatest economic impact of a civil war is from the direct destruction of infrastructure, because the destruction of physical infrastructure such as telecommunications, airports, seaports, roads, and bridges is part of rebel tactics in bringing down legitimate regimes.\textsuperscript{65}

According to Christina P.C. Borba, Lauren C. Ng, and Anne Stevenson, the fourteen years of civil war that Liberia experienced have had an enormous negative impact on the Liberian society. The authors contend that during the war there were widespread abuses against humanity, such as ethnic execution, as well as youth being forced or recruited to fight in the war.\textsuperscript{66} Moreover, youth who were forced to partake in the war were treated as slaves and served in horrible positions, such as bush wives, cooks, or as chiefs for the fighters.\textsuperscript{67} As a result of the aforementioned ill treatment, most young children suffered from psychological effects that led to trauma. Borba, et. al., point out that the war caused approximately 240,000 Liberians to lose their lives; thus, many in the surviving population migrated to seek refuge in other neighboring countries.\textsuperscript{68} It is especially true that the war contributed to tremendous physical and moral abuses and led to the destruction of public structures, government institutions, and health infrastructure, as well as the education system.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid. 58.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid. 57.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 58.
Research studies on population-based prevalence of trauma have shown that the war constituted a negative psychosocial trauma on young adults during the aftermath of the civil war. Moreover, the legacy of the conflict also caused physical injuries, low-education attainment, sexual violence, as well as substantial abuses and social dysfunction among youth in post-conflict Liberia.\(^70\) Furthermore, Borba, et. al., contends that youth in conflict reported that the most needed services, which included health care, education, and vocational-skills training, were all not accessible during the war.\(^71\) To gain invaluable insight into why the current Liberian educational system and the basic structure and implementation strategies to provide quality education for youth the way they are, it is vital to understand how the civil war influenced the socio-cultural development of youth in Liberia.

Given the persistent social issues that are hindering young people within Liberian society, especially youth living in slum communities such as New Kru Town, I advocate for a resilience-focused approach as a phenomenon for a positive youth development in order to understand how youth struggle to succeed in their daily lives. Using a resilience-based approach in this research is important to comprehend how youths who have been exposed to hardship and faced with extreme poverty can cope with this adversity. Resilience as a subject has an essential implication on the narrative of youth lives, especially young people living in slum communities such as New Kru Town.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 57.
\(^{71}\) Ibid.,
Section Five: A Case Study of Pedagogy and Empowerment in New Kru Town

In my experience with life in Liberia, particularly in Monrovia, when one walks on the streets of Monrovia, one can see many young folks wandering aimlessly about. In many places, one can see poverty in the faces of many people, while at the same time others display their wealth amid an impoverished population and feel proud and comfortable with life. Another scenario is that because of high rates of unemployment, many young people gather in the streets of Monrovia where they sit in small Fula shops and drink athie.72

Monrovia is the capital city of Liberia and the only large urban settlement in the country. The fourteen years of civil unrest that Liberia experienced continues to adversely affect the socio-economic and educational infrastructures of the country, especially the capital where most of the commercial and administrative activities are concentrated.73 Apart from the social and economic destruction from the civil war, the country suffered from stagnation in terms of managing and maintaining existing infrastructure because of rapid internal and external migration in Monrovia.74

According to Singh in the report on the Liberia labor force 2010 survey, 70% of the population settlement lives in an informal urban slum community.75 As of 2016, the population of Monrovia is approximately 1.2 million out of the 4.5 million of Liberia’s population; the

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72 Athie is a form of traditional Fulani alcoholic drink that is that most common to many adults in Liberia.
74 Ibid.,
Sanjee Singh, is the director of International Housing Programs, Global Program Development, Habitat For Humanity International.
majority of Monrovia’s population lives in overcrowded, informal slum settlements. These urban slum settlements do not benefit from the national budget because of the lack of representation to meet the needs of the residents. Because of this exclusion, municipal housing, land, infrastructure, and environmental sanitation programs underserve these slum communities, and the residents live under constant threat of eviction. In addition, the city lacks basic public ordinance and infrastructure development. In Monrovia, the rapid development of post-conflict reconstruction is plagued with serious challenges due to the informal settlement and despair of residents, as well as poor urban-planning policy. Prior to the civil war, Monrovia experienced a rapid informal settlement that began in the 1950s, but the current problems facing the city are also a result of the destructive war. The civil war (1989-2003) that Liberia experienced dramatically increased the population of urban residents because many people fled the conflict from the rural areas where the war initially began and migrated to the capital. Because Monrovia was considered one of the safer places for people to escape in Liberia to have more accessible resources such as food, and because of its coastal location and less expensive food prices during the war, the population began to escalate.

After the war many have chosen to return to their rural residences; however, others decided on staying in Monrovia in order to establish a better living. As a result of the rapid migration of people from the rural areas to the capital, the population concentration of Monrovia

77 Williams, Rhodri. “Beyond Squatters’ Right: Durable Solutions and development- Induced Displacement in Monrovia, Liberia,” Norwegian council (Thematic report from the Norwegian Council: 2011) 1- 5 Access date December 1, 2018
78 Ibid.,
increased, thus resulting in considerable issues as the urbanization of Monrovia.\textsuperscript{79} In addition, the majority of the housing facilities (at least 80\%) have been destroyed by the effort of the 14 years of civil unrest or a diverse situation of settlement.\textsuperscript{80} The aforementioned problems have been escalating because of the urban slum communities’ failure to upgrade the slum, especially in the New Kru Town community. Furthermore, an increase in the urban population creates a sobering effect on the quality of life. Lack of development as the result of poor policy, planning design, and a fragile system of administration, among other things, leads to a lack of poor urban growth among residents of slum communities in Monrovia.\textsuperscript{81} Indeed, this rapid development and inadequate urban infrastructure have undermined and posed serious challenges for the quality of life of the people of Liberia, especially for youth.\textsuperscript{82} Over time, the population of Liberia has been concentrated in Monrovia since 1984. This can be shown on the map below, which reveals most of the population-concentrated areas in Monrovia. As the map demonstrates, the population density is more concentrated in slum-community areas like Clara Town, West Point, and New Kru Town that comprises the highest number of slum populations.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{79} Rhodri. Beyond Squatters’ Right: Durable Solutions and development- Induced Displacement in Monrovia, Liberia. Norwegian council (thematic report from the Norwegian Council, 6.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
In addition, this has also affected the health facilities and particularly the educational system of these urban-slum communities. For instance, according to Beleli, et. al., the war also has had a grave impact on the many communities that lack major social services, such as schools and health facilities. Consequently, Beleli, et. al., further contend that the civil war left approximately 68% of homes without access to safe drinking water, as well as 75% with no access to sanitation facilities in the country. Furthermore, the authors discovered that only 9% of the households in Liberia were found to be food secure during the course of the Civil War. As mentioned above, most Liberians could not earn one dollar per day, especially for urban slum communities such as New Kru Town. Moreover, there was massive unemployment among urban populations (especially youths), which put a serious burden on the poor. Consequently, this poor


85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.
quality of life has placed Liberia in the 2013 *Human Development Index* at 174 out of 187 countries in the world.\(^87\)

New Kru Town is an urban slum community that is the coastal suburb of Monrovia, on the north shore of the Bushrod Island in Monrovia, with estimated populations of over 75,000 inhabitants.\(^88\) According to Wleh-Cheah Kpanneh Doe, New Kru Town was officially founded in 1916 by an act of the legislature of Liberia and came to be known as the Borough; in 1945, it came to be known as New Kru Town.\(^89\) The majority of the people in New Kru Town, where the majority of the residents are from the Kru ethnic groups, survive from fishing activities. New Kru Town is one of the oldest informal settlements in Liberia, and, thus, one of the more established communities. New Kru Town is an independent municipality unit in the city of Monrovia and has its own town, city council, police stations, court magistrate, and a number of schools, hospitals, churches, and mosques especially photographs.\(^90\) Within New Kru Town, there are a variety of housing types, reflecting differing levels of land availability, material availability, migration patterns, and socio-economic statuses. Most houses are shelters built from wood siding, corrugated zinc, and cardboard, or concrete block units.\(^91\) The residents are aware that concrete blocks will gradually replace tin and zinc as residents accumulate the resources to

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\(^{89}\) Ibid, 2


make these improvements to housing structures. Today, there are many challenges facing the New Kru Town community, including the lack of basic human needs such as social, economic, and infrastructure development, like safe drinking water, electricity, good road connections, and access to quality education for youth.\textsuperscript{92}

Most youth lack the basic human needs to become productive citizens because their parents lack the opportunities to provide the basic livelihood for their family and children. As a result, this adverse situation causes many youths to live in poverty, and many are left with poor education in the Borough of the New Kru Town urban-slum community. The analysis reveals that many young people in the New Kru Town community have fallen into a poverty trap, and this causes many to engage in harmful acts and negative social behavior that has adverse impacts on the community and society. The above problem has also affected the education system for young people in the New Kru Town community. Although there are a number of primary schools within the New Kru Town or located in its immediate neighborhood, including government schools, private schools, and schools for profit, there is only one secondary public school, the D. Tweh Memorial High School that is sinking due to constant erosion by the Atlantic seacoast.\textsuperscript{93} Moreover, children have to travel between 30 minutes and two hours to make the journey to secondary schools. Even though children are attending school, they are not receiving quality education because most of the teachers are not up to the task. Teachers are teaching the children from outdated, insignificant school materials and courses, meaning teachers are not improving the quality of the student’s education. Consequently, the lack of access to quality education and effective social services has contributed to the inability of youth to become productive and

\textsuperscript{92}Graham. “Liberia Housing Profile: UN Habitant for a Better Urban Future”
\textsuperscript{93}“New Kru (Klao) Town: Yesterday, Today and the Future,” (The Liberian Dialogue, August 22, 2015) http://theliberiandialogue.org/2015/08/22/new-kru-klao-
contribute to the socioeconomic development of both the New Kru Town community and Liberia. One common narrative of the poor learning environment and the barriers to quality education, which are believed to be the bedrock of a given social system, have hindered the youth of Liberia, rendering them unable to challenge the oppressive system of government that impedes progress and fulfillment of their dreams, to think for themselves, and make quality decisions for their future.94

The establishment of school-based programs in underprivileged communities such as New Kru Town will serve, to a large extent, to empower the students and lend support as an explicit and central objective for youth empowerment. Placing an individual community resident at the center of exploring problems affecting the community and the solicitation of ideas from individuals is relevant to the approach of the community’s participation in the establishment of a school.95 Furthermore, offering individuals the opportunity to participate in the groundbreaking process for the development of a school in a poverty-stricken community such as New Kru Town is essential because it helps to empower individuals to shed light on their life experiences and the plights that they face.

The aforementioned analysis is essential to the establishment of a school in New Kru Town because the primary concern of the project and research paper is to address the basic needs of the people in the community. Inherent in this premise is that individuals will become empowered to serve as agents of change to the community through their activism, not only because they feel that their voices have been heard, but also because they are part of the decision-making process as Freire notes in Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Given the significance of

95 Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 86.
establishing a school-based program in the New Kru Town community, this process will begin by encouraging the mobilization of individuals to serve as agents of change.

Therefore, the establishment of an educational foundation for urban-slum communities, such as the New Kru Town community, will rely on the ideas and strategies of Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and the Freire Institute for Educational Empowerment and Transformation, both of which focus on community engagement through critical theory set forth by Freire.96 The educational foundation, with a theme *Reaching Out to One Child at a Time: A New Liberian Educational Foundation*, focuses on providing reading skills for children of New Kru Town. This program will focus on encouraging students to develop critical thinking skills Freire relied on Horkheimer’s description of critical theory97 as a focus “to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them.”98 Inherent in this analysis is that critical knowledge and skills serve as a gateway for empowering young children to become active and conscious agents to investigate and transform their realities of being oppressed by the elite. The Friend of the Children International Charity Organization will also teach students a generative theme. To do this, the organizational teams will collaborate with individual community members to determine from a dialogical mode of understanding to discuss their paramount concern. In this manner, the community members will articulate what is most important to them regarding education and community life.99

Therefore, from their input, the Friend of the Children International Charity Organization will determine a generative theme. In other words, the organization will encourage a liberation

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96 “Freire Institute Education Empowerment and Transformation.” See pages 138-139 of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
97 Ibid.,
98 Ibid., 80.
99 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 139.
education that focuses on providing a learning process that can empower youth with major issues that are central in their lives and communities. In addition, as Freire advocates, this process will help students to codify the world in such a way that they can examine a form of dialogue that is vital to them as related to their social and educational well-being. This system of learning will also provide students with critical tools to liberate themselves from their oppressors. Freire argues that the most important historical task is for humanity to liberate both the oppressor and the oppressed.\footnote{Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 39.} In other words, by the means of acquiring knowledge through critical inquiry, individuals will have the ability to transform his or her environment through the ideas he or she gains.

Therefore, encouraging an educational premise that focuses on liberating youth from oppression will enable them to reflect on their knowledge, while they learn and think critically for the betterment of societal development. As discussed above, understanding the reality of being oppressed is vital to youth in slum communities. Ultimately, underprivileged youths need to be aware of the unfair behavior by their oppressor and need to understand the reality of being suppressed before they can change their lifestyles. Consequently, as Freire notes, the “submersion of their consciousness and their internalization of the oppressor, act as major hurdles to liberation, for the oppressed.”\footnote{Ibid. 80.} That is, critical pedagogy can guide young people through the expansion of self-reflection and critical thinking, while helping them cultivate a sense of agency essential to understanding and acting upon their life conditions in order to change them.\footnote{Ibid., 81.} These concepts serve to provide a better educational environment for at risk young children in an urban slum community in Liberia. After all, as Freire believes, being able to

\footnote{Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 39.}
\footnote{Ibid. 80.}
\footnote{Ibid., 81.}
transform praxis into action, and not just wishful thinking, is just as important as conducting action with awareness of theory and historical struggles.\textsuperscript{103}

The process for establishing an educational foundation is as follows, as detailed in Freire’s \textit{Pedagogy of the Oppressed}. The first step will be setting up a committee, preferably headed by an individual with a broad range of knowledge and experienced in the discipline of education, not-for-profit management, and community development. The next step will be paying a visit to the site. This will help determine the number of students one can expect, as well as community concern and support for establishing a school in the area. Also, this will help inform decisions about the facilities on-hand needed to run the school. Moreover, crafting a provisional mission statement in accordance with the vision of Prince M. Massaquoi is essential. It is important that the head of the committee represents the educational organization that aims to founds a school. The head of the committee will be open to what the community members express as critical needs to them. The further step is to go through a registration process. This is in accordance with the educational law and policy of the department of the Ministry of Education of Liberia. This policy requires all schools to register with the Ministry of Education in order to seek accreditation, and thereafter to develop a provisional draft of a legal structure. The Education Act clearly states that “the Minister of Education shall: a) have full power over and supervision of all public schools and institutions of higher learning to the extent provided by the law and permitted by their charters.”\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Pedagogy of the Oppressed}, 81.
Furthermore, drawing up a constitution for the school and setting up a governing body is important. This will help provide a rule of law in governing the school. In addition, focusing on a financial model in order to maintain and operate the school for a designated period of time, and setting up a budget for that period is significant. It helps the board members because this will detail the expenditures to operate the school for three years.

Throughout Freire’s life, he considered education as a critical tool of struggle for social change and refused to accept fixed methods of traditional education that focus on top-bottom approaches. Freire believed that the purpose of education is to provide the individual with the necessary skills and knowledge to think critically as part of being a citizen in a given society. Therefore, central to Freire’s radical pedagogy is the assertion that oppression manifested in deep-rooted and ongoing social, political, economic, and cultural relations of domination and exploitation exists, but so do possibilities for liberation and societal transformation.105

For instance, liberal academics such as Gerald Graff disagree with Freire’s critical pedagogy and argue that any notion of critical pedagogy that is self-conscious about its politics and engages students in ways that offer them the possibility for becoming critical, or what Lani Guinier calls the need to educate students ‘to participate in civil life, and to encourage graduates to give back to the community, which through taxes made their education possible either leaves students out of the conversation or presupposes too much and simply represents a form of pedagogical tyranny.106

As mentioned above, many scholars in the field of education embraced his ideas, but the political and social elites in the West rejected his ideas. Henry Giroux noted the following: The aforementioned example shows that some liberal academics from the West disagree with Freire’s

105 Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 23.
critical pedagogy theories because its directly ties with social movements and radical societal transformation that essentially guide social justice efforts in the field of education and for the betterment of societal development. It is important to note that Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a form of radical social advocacy that liberates the disenfranchised group of a given society from adversity. Moreover, it also enlightens individuals to advocate for changes in the social, economic, and political structure of a given society.

Graeme Currie expands on Freire’s pedagogy and argues “even though people are encouraged to come up with their own generative themes, the process of labeling these themes is leading (the teacher-student presume to place a label on their generative without recognizing that people might not choose to label these themes in the same way).”\textsuperscript{107} It is important that the government and non-governmental organization (NGO) collaborate with individuals to identify with obstacles affecting people in order to give their support, but to a large extent in some cases it is difficult because of the power struggle between the workers and the people they are serving.\textsuperscript{108}

The concept of empowering young people from the New Kru Town community through a Critical Pedagogy of Education is essential to youth’s social and economic development. Employing critical education as a pathway for freedom is essential because it will enable individuals to examine their lives from a critical standpoint and investigate the status quo of a given society. Freire proposes in his pedagogical theory an effort to provide a platform and pathway in which humankind could become more and fully aware of humanity. Freire portrays a unique framework of educational practices that are interconnected with the social and cultural forces critical to the education system that is manifest in the Liberian society. His in-depth

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid. 16.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 139.
understanding of an oppressed reality allows him to focus on the pedagogical mode of knowledge in the banking system of educational practice as traditional but still oppressive. To understand Freire’s pedagogy, he claims that the liberation of education lies in its drive towards reconciliation.\textsuperscript{109} In addition, Freire contends that the purpose of liberation education is to acquire a distance from a situation so that it can be perceived as a cultural-historical situation and not as given reality that cannot be changed. Freire observed that the nature of the banking system of education is not to serve the purpose by which the oppressor class exerts control and dominates the status quo of a given social system in a perpetuated ideology of domination.\textsuperscript{110}

The above mode of traditional pedagogy is common in the Liberian education system because education in Liberia lacks the content praxis of knowledge and the learning process through which the students can learn and advocate for change. This creates an opposed and unjust social and economic policy that favors them and their children. This is especially true for young people in New Kru Town community who have been marginalized by their oppressors because of the systematic narrative in the education system of Liberia relies solely on teachers and school administrators as the key providers of knowledge. In this scenario, the students are ignorant and justify the existence of the teacher as the master of possessing the knowledge. In this method and curriculum, the system allows the students to be the receivers of knowledge because they are seen as empty vessels and should be filled up with knowledge by the teacher. Students are made passive and, hence, become receptive to their oppressive reality.\textsuperscript{111}

Therefore, Freire argues that in the “banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those who they consider

\begin{footnotes}
\item[110] Freire, \textit{Pedagogy of the Oppressed}, 73.
\end{footnotes}
ignorant. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as a process of inquiry.”¹¹² The teacher presents himself or herself to students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence.¹¹³ Hence, for youth to liberate themselves from this oppressive circumstance of the learning process, the liberation system of education is essential to social and economic development.

In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire contends that the modification understanding of knowledge rely on depositing motivation such as “man is merely in the world, not with the world or with others, man is spectator, not re-creator.”¹¹⁴ Freire suggests that a learning process in this sense is simply a tool of forcing students to store information without necessarily having to reflect on the knowledge they have acquired. Contrary to this system of learning justifies the status quo that oppresses the “have not” that served as a strong platform and pathway that can help in the constructions of socio-political and economic structures of an oppressive circumstance in a given society.¹¹⁵

In ‘banking’-style classrooms, Freire wrote that: Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat…. In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing…. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world.”¹¹⁶ (Freire 1970:58, 60, 25.

¹¹² A Critical Encounter, 25.
https://libcom.org/files/peter-mclaren-paulo-freire-a-critical
¹¹⁴ Ibid.
¹¹⁵ Ibid., 73.
¹¹⁶ Freire, A Critical Encounter, 58, 60.
Freire’s work on liberation and the banking system of education provides a relevant framework for examining the educational practices in the Liberian education system. The concept is essential to the context of the Liberian education system because evidence of a banking system of education dominates the way knowledge is imparted in this system.

The proposed organizational solution will advocate for social changes in Liberia. In particular, young people in the New Kru Town community must oppose the banking system and advocate for a pedagogy of learning via critical inquiry. It is important that young people oppose the banking system because it does not encourage learners to reflect, to be creative, to transform, and to want to know more. Freire’s philosophical laboratory theory of education is useful. It is useful because it offers a learning process that provides a self-reflective education to a student, and this equips the student with a better decision-making process to transform his or her environment.\textsuperscript{117} Underprivileged youth who have been neglected with basic social services in Liberia, especially youth in New Kru Town, need to be provided with critical education to citizenship in Liberia. This will help enlighten the minds of these young people and allow them to think critically and become innovative in transforming their social environment as well as making effective decisions for a better future. Freire’s work on liberation and the banking system of education provides a relevant framework for examining the educational practices in the Liberian education system. The concept is essential to the context of the Liberian education system because evidence of a banking system of education dominates the way knowledge is imparted in this system.

In Liberia, for example, educational practices and implementation strategies are based on a traditional pedagogical model. This model relies on teachers to work hard for the completion of

\textsuperscript{117} Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 138.
lesson plans and curriculum activities and pays less attention to content analysis. The student’s understanding of the contents of teaching materials is critical. Consequently, these current educational strategies have a negative impact on academic performance and lead to poor intake of the lesson’s content. This results in many youths performing ineffectively on public exams. My experience with the Liberian educational system, especially secondary education for public and private institutions, is that school administrators do not encourage community members or the students to get involved in a dialogic form of learning process. The aforementioned learning practices always lead to imparting knowledge and skills to the student through the institution’s models and at the teacher’s discretion. For instance, according to Johnson, the core curriculum of the practices of the Liberian educational system was largely based on a learning process that focuses on memorization, as well as on the content of the textbooks that was unsuitable for African experience, especially for youth in Liberia.118 As individuals advocate for being more humanized and engaging thoughtfully in approaches for working with young people in socially-neglected communities to liberate themselves in countries such as Liberia, providing provisions through a quality education is essential. This is especially true for youth living in underprivileged communities such as the New Kru Town. I strongly uphold the laboratory education and the dialogical models of critical pedagogy as suitable principles and practices for empowering people to learn how to think and act critically for themselves and to transform their lives and communities significantly. Evidently, the lack of critical education has made it difficult for people to understand and challenge the status quo, or to attempt to work for change in the political, economic, and educational systems as well. Therefore, an educational system that focuses on this premise of learning practices inspired in these laboratory concepts has the

118 Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 138.
propensity to help empower and advance youth by their actively engaging in the process of individual and social transformation. This struggle for liberation will help reduce illiteracy rates and ensure education accessibility and opportunity for youth to reclaim better education in Liberia.

Over time, dialogic engagement with students, fellow teachers, and communities of various ages to investigate those social issues in various ways will serve as a pathway for meaning-making, and identity may be possible. Along the way, my identity as a writer of this research project has been informed by my background to enlighten all educational stakeholders of Liberia and researchers in a variety of settings. In Becoming Somebody, Toward a Social Psychology of School, Philip Wexler profoundly describes the school as a key site for this negotiation where people are “engaged with each other in the interactional work of making meaning.”119 “These are places for making the CORE meaning of self or identity among people.”120 This narrative implies that individual educators must be careful and considerate of their role as educators, especially for those who teach and those of us who engaged in research. The focus of this research is to help young people in Liberia, especially the “have-nots,” to access quality education by providing a system of education that will help them to think independently and investigate issues in a unique way to reach their objectives.

In this study, I also adopt Socrates dialogic mode of learning because it provides tangible insight into the concept of critical skills set forth by researchers. Critical thinking skills are a major theoretical and research topic for conceptualizing the individual’s ability to objectively analyze and evaluate issues in a more comprehensive way to form a judgment. Research on the

120 Ibid.
discourse on critical thinking skills dates to 469 -399 BC and continues through to the present. One important insight on the effectiveness of the critical thinking technique widely used today by some educators to lead students toward their goal was the example set forth by Socrates, an “Athenian philosopher who lived around 470 B.C. Was born the son of a sculptor and was trained as a sculptor himself.” In Haris Delić’s and Senad Bećirović’s article “Socratic Method as an Approach to Teaching,” the study describes dialogues as a pedagogical approach of teaching that encourages participants to seek deeper understanding of questioned concepts. As a supporting technique, the teacher doesn't provide students with necessary information. Instead, by analyzing and exploring given text, they look for information.” The above perspectives underscore the importance of Socratic Methods in school, which explains that teachers should not be the sole solution in solving student’s problems, rather they should animate them to think over the content critically and find their own path to answer the questions through critical investigations and thinking. This is especially true, as school in Liberia doesn’t provide students with a foundation in cultivating their knowledge; instead, teachers serve as the key provider of knowledge disposition.

Over time, the discourse surrounding voice has been associated with critical pedagogy through the work of many scholars of note, such as Pintrich, McKeachie, and Lin, who said that “the cultivation of an inquisitive mentality is more important than the specific information that students learn in the classroom.”  

121 Haris Delić and Senad Bećirović, “Socratic Method as an Approach to Teaching,” European Researcher 111, no. 10 (October 2016): 511.  
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309634848_Socratic_Method_as_an_Approach_to_Teaching  
122 Ibid., 512  
Access date November 22, 2019.
allow for the promotion of active rather than passive student participation."\textsuperscript{124} This approach of learning, therefore, is important because it “produce[s] better results than more passive, less engaging techniques.”\textsuperscript{125} These narratives offer important implications to the literature of the research’s aims of empowering under-served, poor, young children in Liberia, especially in the New Kru Town slum community. It is important to note that, the “Friend of Children International organization” will utilize Freire dialogic mode of liberation education practice as a pathway to help underprivileged youths the “have-nots” to learn how to read, to become resilient, think for themselves critically to succeed in school, to find a better place in the economy, and live in peace. One critical importance of Freire’s liberation education is that it allow the individuals to reflect his or her relationship to the world.\textsuperscript{126} This is true for underprivileged, slum-communities youth because this kind of educational practice will help them not only learn to read, but also use their own ingenuity to think critically with the goal of making their own judgment. In Freire’s liberation education, he believes that “problem-posing education, responds to the essence of consciousness, intentionality, rejects communiques and embodies communication”\textsuperscript{127} Also, Freire believes that “liberating education is an act of cognition, not transferals of information.”\textsuperscript{128}

One of the ways in which the underprivileged “have-nots” youth can empower themselves is by sharing their experiences, which can help them, as well as other individuals in the community, discover their independent selves. Likewise, Socrates adopts a similar ideology of learning process when he asserts in “actively engages students in the learning process,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{124} Peterson, “Teaching to Think,” 83.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{126} Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 66.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 67.
\end{flushleft}
utilizing guided questions in order to channel the thinking process of the student along a course
defined by the instructor.”129 The value of Socratic’s method is to provide students with a deeper
understanding of the theory behind the idea for their judgment.130 Despite the theoretical
complexities and inherent contentions surrounding the dialogic model of the learning process, it
has remained central to contemporary instructional process for students and teachers, and this
may be because dialogic model of learning provides a framework through which the
marginalized the “have-nots” will be offer critical insights on how to become resilient,
conscientiousness in learning, to achieve their goals. The use of dialogic model as a method of
leaning will enhances this study in the following ways. First, the dialogic model of learning will
reveal a clearer teaching process that will allow students to think critically and discover ways to
become creative. Second, it will provide students with skills they need to relate past occurrences
to current or future situations. “Third, a universal conceptualization allows students to develop
methodologies that translate to a vast assortment of situations that may be encountered.”131
According to Freire, problem-posing education is important because it played a vital role in
“creating students together, as well as the condition under which knowledge at the doxa is
superseded by the true knowledge, at the level of the logos.”132 In addition, using dialogic model
of learning can reveal a path for students to “apprehend the challenge as interrelated to other
problems within a total context, not as a theoretical question, the resulting in comprehension
tends to be increasingly critical and thus constantly less alienated.”133 Lastly, the use of dialogic
theory is essential because it provides students with the ability to respond to problems that evoke

129 Ibid., 84
130 Ibid.,
131 Ibid.,
132 Ibid., 68.
133 Ibid., 69.
brand new ways of thinking and following by a new way of insight; and in the process they can regard themselves as committed to the process of learning.134

In order to raise funds to help underserved young Liberian especially the “have nots” of the slum communities to become useful citizens, and live in peace, the Friend of the Children International Organization will obtain founding by establishing unique relationships with potential donors organization or individuals whose share interests in the organization mission statement, value, as well as individuals who want to make the difference in the community.

According to Connie Isaacson in her article, the “Fundamental of Fundraising,” it is important to synthesize a compelling and measurable fundraising plan because it is essential to ensure fundraising success.135 In addition, Connie explained that “creating an effective plan is important because it helps to identify what will be done, when it will be done, and who will do it.”136 The plan is also the goal of funds for each vehicle and the methods used in the implementation of the project.137 Therefore, in order to raise funds to support the startup of the organization, we propose to develop a plan that addresses the following key approaches which include, major gifts, grants, events, and mailing as well as face-to-face contact to pursuit donors for funding.138

This above approach in soliciting funding from our potential donors will be done in accordance to the priorities of the organization mission as well as the method that will be beneficial in return to the organization request for funding. In addition to the above-mentioned events, I have researched and identified potential funders to support the startup process and ongoing funding effort. Below is the list of potential funders:

134 Ibid., 
136 Ibid., 12.
137 Ibid., 
138 Ibid., 14.
## List of Potential Funders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Areas of Focus</th>
<th>Donation Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Kresge Foundation</td>
<td>Health, Environment, A&amp;C, Ed, HS, Comm Develop</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Century Foundation</td>
<td>A&amp;C, Ed, Civic Issues, Health &amp; HS</td>
<td>$500 - $100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eaton Charitable Fund</td>
<td>Ed, Health, HS, A&amp;C, Comm Improve</td>
<td>$100 - $200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerson Charitable Trust</td>
<td>Ed, Health, A&amp;C, Civic, Youth</td>
<td>$100 - $1,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fidelity Foundation</td>
<td>Comm Develop, SS, Health, Ed</td>
<td>$5,000 - $2,525,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harry &amp; Jeanette Weinberg Foundation</td>
<td>Human Needs, Youth &amp; Fam, Comm Support</td>
<td>$1,000 - $1,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Talbott Hillman Foundation</td>
<td>Ed, Comm Develop, Youth, Health, SS</td>
<td>$500 - $250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin Hood Foundation</td>
<td>Youth, Job &amp; Econ Security, Survival (Food Sec)</td>
<td>$100,000 - $200,000</td>
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<td>Ameriprise Financial Community Relations Program</td>
<td>Basic Needs, Comm Build, Volunteer Driven</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avery Dennison Corporate Contributions Program</td>
<td>Ed, Civic Affairs, Social Welfare</td>
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<td>Booth Ferris Foundation</td>
<td>Civic Affairs, Comm Develop, HS,</td>
<td>$50,000 - $200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>City National Corporate Giving Program</td>
<td>Ed, Health, Comm &amp; Econ Develop, Civic Aff, SS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entergy Charitable Foundation</td>
<td>Low-Income Initiatives, Literacy Grants</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluor Corporation Contributions</td>
<td>HS, Public &amp; Civic Affairs</td>
<td>$500 - $50,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program/Fluor Foundation</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>Focus Areas</td>
<td>Amount Range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Grid Community Giving Program</td>
<td>Comm Develop, Health, Ed, SS, Cult &amp; Civic Affairs</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oprah's Angel Network</td>
<td>Ed, Lead Develop, Comm Change, Basic Rights</td>
<td>$5,000 - $1,000,000</td>
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<td>The Annenberg Foundation</td>
<td>Ed, Youth, A&amp;C, Health, HS, Community</td>
<td>$100 - $8,000,000</td>
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<td>Chichester Dupont Foundation</td>
<td>Ed, Health, SS</td>
<td>$5,000 - $545,000</td>
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<td>Altman Foundation</td>
<td>Ed, Health, Strengthening Comm, A&amp;C</td>
<td>$5,000 - $300,000</td>
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<td>Morton K and Jane Blaustein Foundation</td>
<td>Health, Mental Health, Ed. Opportunity, Human Rights</td>
<td>$1,000 - $280,000</td>
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<td>International Foundation</td>
<td>Health, Education, Social Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>J.M. Kaplan Fund</td>
<td>Migrations Program</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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Section Six: Interview-Finding Results and Analysis of Primary and Secondary Sources

In this section, I collect, analyze, and organize the data, in order to present my interview findings and analysis of my primary and secondary research sources. During the process of transcribing the audio recording, I chose to listen carefully by taking notes, and I found this to be effective in the event of finding my interview results. First, I manually wrote down all the audio recordings, and then I began the process of collecting, analyzing, and organizing my data. To do this, I first checked my interview data to identify how it’s relevant to my theoretical framework and research questions. Second, I looked for similar themes between the interview participant response and my primary and secondary sources. Honestly, I discovered themes that emerged from the interviewee reports that were similar to my research findings and position.

Using education as a base, I constructed this study to examine the fabric of the education in Liberia, its ineffectiveness on the lives of young children, especially for underserved poor children who found it difficult and struggles to access quality education due to lack of available resources and educational materials. The resilience theory and Freire’s critical pedagogy of liberation education can offer an insightful knowledge and understanding base on how young people in Liberia can cope with the qualities of life and decisions they make to cope with adversity. On the other hand, I also noted other emerging themes such as the Civil War, poor educational supervision, and decision-making by educational stakeholders further served as a pathway to strengthen my research position. I also relied on primary and secondary sources to comprehend and understand the ineffectiveness of the educational circumstances in Liberia by using the qualitative interview and textual sources. The qualitative method was used as the key research tool. Implementing the qualitative research approach, a semi-structured interview was used to gather information from a vice-principal of a high school in Monrovia. The in-depth,
semi-structured personal interview offers and enhances flexibility that gives the interviewer the opportunity to observe the subject and the conditions in which he or she is responding, and, thus, questions can be repeated or explained in case they are not understood by the respondents. The one interview result and the analysis of the primary and secondary sources will be presented in my findings as we go further. As the interviewee elaborated on the fabric of the education system of Liberia, I took into consideration his personal experiences because of his current role as a vice-principal and teacher of junior and senior high school in Monrovia.

I conducted one interview as a means to discover insight between primary and secondary education in Liberia, and I also sought to discover whether there was a correlation between the interviewee reports and the primary and secondary sources to understand the nature of the current state of the education system in Liberia, as well as understand the youth’s ability to cope with such adverse situations. The interviewee elaborated his insight on the current state of primary and secondary education and its effects on the lives of youth in Liberia, especially underserved poor children in slum communities. Mr. J stated that, “the civil war is one of the major contributing factors that led to the decline of the education system in Liberia.” In addition, Mr. J says, “The fabric of the fourteen years of civil war contributed to the destruction of the quality and basic social infrastructure and led to the death of parents and trained teachers.” Mr. J also explains that the result of the civil war contributed to many youths lacking the opportunity to afford to attend reputable schools, or to attend school at all due to the lack of proper parental care and funding. In addition, Mr. J contends that the poor educational

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139 Mr., J, Interview by the author, Monrovia, Liberia, June 16, 2018.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
policies also create a loophole in the education system of Liberia. Mr. J explains that there are no set criteria as to who enters the classroom to teach, as well as salary structure and promotions are not based on merits but on favoritism. There is poor supervision of schools and, as such, schools do as they like and promote students as they wish. Therefore, students graduate without the competence to perform. Mr. J also recalled some memories of events that reflected cultural norms of the Liberian society. The interviewee’s expression showed some regrettable racial injustices that were implanted in the Liberian society, such as ethnic pride and the strength of character and will that precede accomplishment as well as investment in the Liberian educational system. This social reality of the descendants of black freed slaves from America operate a social system that is visible by a close set of organizations that function to contribute to their well-being and exclude other Liberians in the country. Mr. J highlighted that the exclusion of indigenous people in all social aspects of the Liberian society was also seen in the content of the Liberian educational curriculum.

In summaries, the results from the interview and the primary and secondary sources of this research project shared perceptions of the circumstance concerning the educational sector of Liberia. The role of the Civil War was present in the interview, primary and secondary research analysis. For instance, scholars such as Suku and Johnson who have devoted a significant amount of research in investigating the current state of Liberia’s educational system mentions that the Civil War as one of the major reasons behind the fragility of the educational system in Liberia. For example, Suku, another interesting result from the interview transcripts as well as the primary and secondary results, says that poor supervision, lack of accountability and

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143 Mr. J, Interview by the author.
144 Ibid.,
145 Ibid.,
effective policies among educational stakeholders are responsible for the lack of the poor educational disposition for the youth.

In this study, the interview and the primary and secondary sources uncovered that youth in Liberia, especially underserved poor children, found it difficult and struggled to go to school or not go to school at all due to poverty, lack of financial recourse and basic educational materials and the loss of their parents who died during the Civil leaving them to be orphan.

Findings and Analysis

Using education as a base, this research purpose is to examine the quality of education. I chose to interview individuals with experience within the educational system. As John Creswell, a renowned qualitative researcher asserts, “The researcher should strive to obtain qualified candidate(s) that will provide the most credible information to the study.”\textsuperscript{146} I thus chose my interviewee based on his experience, as he is currently serving as a secondary school administrator in a position to provide relevant information to my research questions. In addition, I selected the participant based on the following criteria: graduate from the University of Liberia with a concentration in biology and at present working as a school administrator and a high school teacher.

The in-depth, semi-structured personal interview offers and enhances flexibility that gives the interviewer the opportunity to observe the subject and the conditions in which he or she is responding, and, thus, questions can be repeated or explained in case the respondents do not understand them.\textsuperscript{147} I used the qualitative method as a key research approach. Using one

\textsuperscript{146} John Creswell, \textit{Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches} (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013), 54.

\textsuperscript{147} Roulston, \textit{Reflective Interviewing}, 2.
interview, I explored my claim that the civil war and poor structure and implementation strategies among other things are the factors hindering the educational system of Liberia.

Roulston points out that open-ended questions provide “broad parameters within which interviewees can formulate answers in their own words.” The first set of questions was meant to set up the interview process and solicit information that aimed at building a relationship between the interviewee and myself. Following the introductory questions were transition questions intended to understand the causes of the civil war, as well as its long-lasting effect on the Liberian educational system today. The participant in my interview voluntarily agreed to be interviewed, and I interviewed him by telephone using a set of interview questions. Although I asked the interviewee a series of open-ended questions, the participant was also allowed to expand on his ideas on the topic. My interview was conducted based on a guide of questions for both the interviewee and the respondent to use. In addition, I gave the respondent the opportunity to designate the location and time for the interview. The above arrangement then led to me asking my key research question, followed by closing questions. In order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding during the interview, I addressed all the interview questions in a most concise and clear manner.

In the questionnaire, I acknowledged to the respondent that there was no direct benefit to him from taking part in the interview, but that his participation would be meaningful and beneficiary in several ways. First, it will contribute to future research on how some young Liberians, especially underprivileged youth, cope with the social and economic challenges to access quality education as a disadvantaged group within the Liberian society. Second, this

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148 Creswell, Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, 54.
149 Mr. J, interview by the author.
information would be useful for researchers, policy makers, and educational stakeholders to address the pressing needs of attaining quality education for young people in Liberian society.

Third, the narrative on the status of the Liberian educational system can lend insight and shed light on why Liberian youth find it difficult to live productive lives and how some can learn to exercise strength and agency through resilience to succeed in their daily lives. Lastly, this will also encourage youth to advocate for a laboratory system of education and revolt against the traditional model of learning based on a robust banking system of education. Finally, I listened carefully to fully comprehend the participant’s responses. I then judged how to pose further probing questions.\textsuperscript{150} I also made notes during the interviews to elicit further discussion, clarification, and elaboration. To establish credibility with the participant, I posed meaningful questions based on my knowledge and understanding of the topic.\textsuperscript{151} The interview results with a Vice Principal show that the prolonged 14 years of civil war is one of the major factors hindering the current state of the educational system in Liberia. According to the respondent, the government of Liberia during the administration of Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s offered a free and compulsory education for primary and secondary public-school children across the country.

**Trust and Credibility**

Given the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee before the interview begins, the climate of trust continued throughout the conversation. Trustworthiness and credibility were strengthened by the relationship of professionalism between the interviewer and interviewee. To maintain trust and credibility within the conversation, the interviewer consistently used the core research questions and employed a strategy to enhance the accuracy of qualitative research described by Joseph Maxwell as “specific plausible alternatives and threats

\textsuperscript{150} Mr. J. interview by the author.
\textsuperscript{151} John W Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 56.
to your interpretations and explanation."\(^{152}\) Therefore, the data collected from the personal interview were cross-examined with the relevant primary documents from some key international donor organizations such as USAID and the World Bank, as well as the Liberian Ministry of Education. The second strategy used to ensure trust and credibility was that participant was required to express precise accounts, which I recorded verbatim in order to provide concrete evidence for my research findings. Moreover, participant feedback was reviewed and checked thoroughly to ensure the accuracy of my presentations.

**Analysis and Discussion of the Interview**

This section discusses the essential part of my methodology: recruitment methods of the interviewee and how I chose my interview participant. During this research interview, I ascertained that the respondent who interviewed for this study possessed special knowledge or ability about the research topic. For instance, during the interview process, the respondent highlighted several key points in the conversation when asked, “Do you think the civil war affected the current education system”? The respondent identified the civil war as one of the major contributing factors that led to the decline of the education system in Liberia. The fabric of the fourteen years of civil war contributed to the destruction of the quality and basic social infrastructure, led to the death of parents, and trained teachers. The respondent also explained that the result of the civil war contributed to many youths lacking the opportunity to afford to attend reputable schools, at all due to lack of proper parental care and funding.\(^{153}\)

Drawing on the assigned weight and value of an experience, the conversation held with the respondent evinced many forms of expression that show a profound capacity of care, deep

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\(^{153}\) Mr. J., interview by the author.
emotion, and reflection on the events of the war and the current situation of the quality of education. The respondent I interviewed showed a remarkable insight and experience that reflect the social context of the impact of the war on youths. During this research, the conversation with the respondent enhanced a flexible and unique cooperation that enabled us to reflect on our experiences and shape our perspective on the concern problem.

For instance, when asked, “Is education accessible to the youth in the research location”? the respondent said that access to quality education was extremely poor. The respondent explained that most schools that offer quality education were expensive. Since most Liberians are poor, they could not afford to send their children to these schools; instead, they send their children to low quality but affordable schools. Secondly, the respondent explained that the poor educational policies also create a loophole in the education system of Liberia. There are no set criteria as to who enters the classroom to teach. Salary structure and promotions are not based on merits but on favoritism. There is poor supervision of schools and, as such, schools do as they like and promote students as they wish to. Students, therefore, graduate without the competence to perform. Moreover, the interviewee recalled some memories of events that reflected cultural norms. The respondent’s expression showed some regrettable racial injustices often typical in Liberian society. These social realities of the descendants of black freed slaves from America establish a form of ethnicity, which operates within a closed social system that functions to contribute to their well-being and excluded others. The respondent highlighted that the exclusion of indigenous persons in all social aspects of the Liberian society were also seams in the fabric of the Liberian educational curriculum.

154 Mr. J, interview by the author.

155 Mr. J, interview by the author.
Teachers are among the most poorly paid professionals in Liberia. Although salary structure is based on qualifications, there is a huge disparity in salaries between public, private and religious (or parochial) schools. In addition, church institutions, which charge tuition fees, while private schools are owned and run by a variety of corporate and private individuals that also charge fees and are both for-profit and non-profit actors, operate faith-based or religious schools. Recent studies reveal that the monthly salaries for teachers in Liberia range from $140usd for a bachelor’s degree holder to $500usd per month for teachers who earn a master; however, the lowest paid teachers received less than $100usd per month for C certificate. Ultimately, teachers in Liberia are underpaid in an under-appreciated position, as I experienced as a former teacher in several schools in Liberia. Over time, schools that are owned and operate by individuals are only concerned about tuition fees collected from parents but are poorly managed and supervised. Since the founding of Liberia, Faith based mission schools have played a significant role in educating Liberians. These mission schools receive some financial support from church organizations or religious non-government organizations but are funded primarily through tuition and fees collection. The mission schools are organized into mini school systems in Liberia. Most schools are broadly managed by religious belief in Liberia and international representatives, especially from America and the United Kingdom.

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158 Ibid.
159 Ibid., 27.
As Siaplay and Werker note, over time “private” schools established in Liberia operate as business enterprises with profit motive as the main objective.\textsuperscript{160} These private schools have contributed immensely to teachers’ employment and have competed with public schools by hiring trained and qualified teachers and by providing smaller class sizes that are manageable.\textsuperscript{161} In the case of parents, the majority chooses to send their children to mission or private schools in search of a better education even though the fees are high compared to public schools.\textsuperscript{162} The Ministry of Education provides minor government subsidies each year, which help private and mission schools cover overhead costs as well as (according to the Ministry) maintain a tuition ceiling in order for parents to be able to afford the tuition.\textsuperscript{163} Almost all government resources and foreign aid resources are directed to public education. Anecdotal evidence from colleagues with private/mission school systems indicated that although government subsidies are helpful, the sobering effects of policies towards teachers and students might be working in the opposite direction. Higher government salaries for teachers make it harder for private/mission schools to compete for quality teachers, because the government of Liberia is unable to harness and strengthen private and public schools through the regulation of all school systems.

The above analysis reveals that most schools, especially private schools rely heavily on fees charged to parents in order to pay their teachers. With this condition of the education system, children whose parents are usually poor experienced difficulties to access quality education, and this can serve as barriers to develop and become a productive citizen. In other to prevent these difficulties, or at least reduce the barriers of access to quality education for

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
underprivileged, slum-community youth, as Masten states that “researchers appeal for an accelerated development of prevention programs that should target multiple risks that appear within almost every child’s life. Society, especially schools, should pay more attention to adding resources in a child's life that may effectively counterbalance high risk and strengthen protective factors for development.”

This research is important that so one can recognize and emphasize the potential of youth in Liberia, for exercising resilience in spite of their being situated within multiple risks of messing up on the opportunity for a better living due to the structures that operate to perpetuate inequality.

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Section Seven: Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendations

This research achieved its goals by using interview and textual sources together to explore necessary information about the problem of education in Liberia. I accept its limitations and shortcomings. The significant limitation of this research topic was my inability to conduct interviews with individual educational stakeholders within the New Kru Town community to understand the current educational problems. Although by and large, the results of this research cannot cover the entire educational system of Liberian society; nevertheless, the outcomes from this research are vital to educational stakeholders. As well, young children of Liberia will be affected, notably underprivileged children who have been deprived of the opportunity to access quality education and improve their living standards.

This study is important because it serves as a pathway to enlighten the minds of many youths to learn how to oppose an unjust social and political system in a given society, especially for Liberia. Furthermore, this study also serves as a platform to motivate young people because as individuals narrate their stories through this experience and adapt a resilient approach in their daily lives, they, too, can learn to adapt and emerge as agents for the motivational for social change in their communities. Markedly, the study discovered that the legacy of the civil war would continue to have an adverse impact on the social and economic development of the Liberian society, especially the educational sector.

Therefore, I recommend that the educational stakeholders, including the government of Liberia and its international partners, should implement a dialogical mode of learning practices within the educational system of the Liberian society. This will help enlighten young Liberians to think critically and be creative in order to live a productive lifestyle. I also recommend that the
Liberian government must reinvigorate the educational structure, policies, and implementation strategies to help empower young children to be able to compete in public examinations and prepare for higher education. Because of the ineffectiveness of the current state of the educational system, Liberian youths have been failing massively to improve their living standards, a condition that is delayed by lack of access to quality education. Ultimately, the recommendation of this research is based on my findings. Finally, this is based on the rationale that I am seeking funding to support for teachers as a way of invigorating the educational system of Liberia.

Conclusion

I utilized the interview and textual sources to collect relevant information to explore and address the concerned problem of education. The results show that despite the difficulties experienced by children in Liberia, especially underprivileged youth in accessing quality education, Liberian youth demonstrate resiliency and attend school as a pathway toward a better future. However, some are courageous and determined to thrive and find ways to cope despite their experiences with adverse, stressful, circumstance surrounding their daily lives that has delayed them from living a productive lifestyle. One critical insight drawn from this research is the way some young people in Liberia demonstrate resilience through perseverance and obtain education despite the difficulties they faced and stressful situation experience in achieving goal.

The Liberian government has made some effort to improve education. Despite this effort, access to quality education is still unobtainable for many young Liberians, especially those who are underprivileged. Because “impoverished” parents cannot afford to send their children to expensive schools, many of the children do not have the access to quality education to better themselves for the future. One critical insight that can be drawn from the finding is that the
current educational system lacks efficiency in its policies, supervision, and due respect for accountability and transparency, among other things. Moreover, the educational sectors lack a dialogical mode of learning practice that involves encouraging educational stakeholders and students’ parents in making their voices heard and being a part of the decision-making process.

Adopting Freire’s critical pedagogy of banking and laboratory system of education as well as the resilience framework provides an invaluable and a deeper insight into the way some youths manage to cope with this adverse system and survive. Furthermore, this research showcases why it is important that the Liberian educational system should utilize dialogical models of learning process as it has been successful in other educational systems. Based on my conclusion, one goal of this research paper is to acknowledge the contributions some Liberian scholars uncovered about the educational system of Liberia.
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Primary Sources


Interview by author with Mr. J., Monrovia, Liberia, June 16, 2018.

Hello. My name is Prince M. Massaquoi and I am a graduate student at East Tennessee State University (ETSU). I am in the Liberal Studies Department and my concentration is in Regional and Community Studies. I am conducting research for my cumulative research project, and the focus is on the access to quality education for youth from slum community in Liberia. I am determining to explore the fabric of the educational system in Liberia for youths and discover the difficulties some youths experienced to access education to become successful in spite of the challenges they faced. Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this unique research process. I appreciate your timely contribution. I have some questions written down to guide the interview but please feel free to share anything you think will be beneficial to this research. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes to an hour, depending on your elaboration on each question. Please feel free and comfortable, if there is anything concerning the interview process you cannot understand, you are free to ask. You may stop at any time you want to, and you can choose not to answer any question you are not comfortable with. If you need a rest at some point, please let me know and I will stop.

**Introductory Questions**
Based on research question, how does the civil war affect the Liberian education system?

**Questions**
What your job title?
Do you teach? If so, how long have you been in the classroom?

Where did you go to school?
How old where you doing the civil war?

**Question**
I am now going to ask you, your experience with the Liberia educational system. I want to solicit your view on the fabric of the civil war on the education.
**Key research question**

“Do you think the civil war affected the current education system? Is education accessible to the youth in the research location?

**Closing Questions**

What would be the solutions toward the problem of education in the future?