

EDUCATION AS A PANACEA TO SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In recent times, Nigeria's educational system has come under violent attacks such as kidnapping of students. The effect of these attacks has further exacerbated the fragile school system which is antithetical to sustainable and national development. Several measures have been implemented to tackle this menace but there are still frequent attacks being experienced in the school environs. If these incessant attacks are not pro-actively dealt with, it will portend a longer term danger to quality of labour force and human capital needed to drive a sustainable economy. Government has tried in many ways to contain the situation including increased budgetary allocation of funds to the security sector, to "ensure the security of lives and property". However, the extra budgetary expense on "security" has not succeeded in dousing the security challenges in the country and suggests that the frequent attacks on the school system should be securitized and placed on red-alert for the state actors to devote adequate attention and resources towards ameliorating this menace. The need for safety in schools, which include; security of life as a fundamental right, education as an instrument for effecting national development, safety as a basic human need and avoidance of loss of life and property cannot be over-emphasized. This paper identifies reform of the education system as a panacea to the lingering security challenges confronting the nation in the long-run. The paper also recommends mass employment provision by government for unemployed youth as a measure to address Nigeria's problem of insecurity.

Keywords: Education, National Security, Sustainable development, Youth Unemployment, Insecurity.

Introduction

No nation can achieve sustainable development in the face of widespread insecurity of lives and properties. Nigeria's political history has been daunted by various forms of violent insecurity challenges ranging from the civil war, election related mayhem, riots and protests, militancy, insurgency and herdsmen/farmer clashes. However, the rise of Boko-Haram sect created a new dimension to Nigeria's insecurity problems. The main tenet of this deadly group is that western education is evil and should be abhorred. The operations and activities of Boko-Haram sect against education came to limelight following the abduction of 276 students of Government Girls College, Chibok. This internationally well-publicized case of school kidnapping brought a new dimension to Nigeria's insecurity challenge as many secondary school attacks have been recorded thereafter from nefarious activities of bandits and terrorists (Nwosu, Joseph, Chukwuka & Okeke, 2019).

According to Akintunde and Musa (2016), insecure school environment affect the learning of children. Situations of insecurity triggers traumatic disorder and toxic stress that affect learning negatively. General school attendance and enrolment are equally affected as parents pull their children out of schools while in some extreme cases, insecurity has led to closure of schools. These attacks on schools usually lead to vandalization and outright destruction of school facilities which discourage the establishment of new schools. Consequently, government resources are depleted as funds meant for other developmental projects are channeled to tackling the aftermath of attacks. In the end, educational attainment

in terms of quality of graduates and manpower suffers which impinge on overall national development aspirations.

Education is designed purposely to assist individuals to develop their skills and abilities so as to fulfill their potential and to lead productive satisfying lives (Joshua, Ibieta, & Azuh, 2016). Education now shapes politics, culture, family, economy among others. As the society is dynamic, and constantly changing and growing, education must follow suit. In fact, changes most often are effected through the educational system of a country (Azikiwe, 2008). Educational system must change to meet the aspirations of individuals and those of their countries otherwise it becomes irrelevant. In the Nigerian context, experts at home and abroad have expressed grave concern about the incoherence or inadequacy of Nigeria's education system especially at the university level (Daramola, 2008). In order to reposition and achieve long term economic development, the Nigerian government created the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP). A core strategy in this plan is improvement in human capital. Following the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), government plans to invest in education to fill the skills gap in the economy by ensuring access to basic education for all, improve the quality of secondary and tertiary education, and encourage students to enroll in science and technology courses. However, the prevalence of school attacks in Nigeria reveals the dwindling capabilities of state actors to achieve sustainable development and national security (Okoli, 2013).

One of the key issues accentuating or aggravating unemployment in Nigeria is premised on the fact that, there seems to be a mismatched between the school curricula and job requirements in both private and public sector. This position is in line with Daramola (2008) who called for a review of curricula and pedagogy owing to the limited successes associated with them. He contended that Nigerian universities curricula are inadequate, lacks quality, and as such limited the chances of graduates in getting employment with public and private employers. It is important to note that, unemployment, especially among youth has implications on Nigeria's national security. Youth within the age bracket of 18-45 quite frequently get involved in various crimes constituting insecurity. For instance, Joshua et al. (2016) posit that most of the people paraded by law enforcement agencies belonging to criminal groups are within the age bracket mentioned before. The most disturbing aspect is the fact that, some of those involved in the various crimes are educated. They are involved in urban conflicts, militancy, sectarian violence, crimes, terrorism brought about by joblessness. This scenario necessitates the urgent need for education reform to enhance employability of Nigerian school leavers and graduates. Unemployment leading to insecurity has two major dimensions, the uneducated youths who are jobless and educated youths who are also jobless; the two categories constitute threat to national security. The study examines the role of education in solving insecurity. For analytical purposes, the work is segmented in the following order; section one is introduction, section two is the literature review, section three clarifies between national security and insecurity, section four dwells on education as a panacea in solving insecurity in Nigeria, while section five concludes the paper and proffers recommendations.

Literature review

There are varied definitions of the concept of education. It is seen as a race course, the transmission of what is worthwhile from generation to generation, and "the various ways in which a society transmits knowledge, including factual information and occupational skills, as well as cultural norms and values, to its members (Joshua et al., 2016). Education also involves formal instruction under the direction of specially trained teachers (Azikiwe, 2008). Education is also seen as a process by which individuals are assisted formally through proper direction and guidance to develop their capacities not only for their own benefit but for the society at

large (Okeke, 2003). Suffice to say that the essence of education is to develop individuals so that they can become effective and efficient in what they do and also contribute to the advancement of the society where they live. Orikpe (2013) avers that education plays a critical role in changing the behavioral patterns of citizens to the desired direction. Education is geared towards developing the individuals for them to live effectively and efficiently in the society, as well as; contribute to its advancement and progress (Azubike, 2013). Hence, through education the behaviour patterns of the citizens could be changed in the desired direction. In other words, with sound education people will start to understand and appreciate one another better and try to restore the dignity of man. Azubike (2013) further stressed that we have to recognize the role education plays in equipping individuals with requisite knowledge and skills for survival and societal progress. It is meaningless to talk of development in the absence of national security. In other words, insecurity in a nation is a threat to development. There is therefore, a nexus between national security and development. In a state of insecurity, development is as elusive as a mirage.

According to Todaro and Smith (2012), sustainability refers to meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations. In the United Nations classical definition, a development path is sustainable on the condition that the stock of overall capital assets remains constant or rises over time. Even though the essence of sustainability is mainly on environmental capital, it also include other types of capital such as manufactured capital (machines, factories, roads) and human capital (knowledge, experience, skills). A development is therefore, sustainable if the needs of the present are met without jeopardizing the ability of the future generation to meet theirs. The overall capital stock of an economy belongs to all the generations and to destroy that indiscriminately penalizes both present and future generations. This implies that sustainable development should keep going on through preservation, improvement, innovation and investment in the capital stock of which education and human capital development is key (Nwosu et al., 2019). Youth unemployment refers to the share of the labour force ages 15-24 without work but available for and seeking employment. Youth unemployment in Nigeria declined to 19.61% in the fourth quarter of 2021 from 19.67% in 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics, NBS report 2021).

Concepts of National Security and Insecurity

Iredia (2011) defined national security as the ability of a State to overcome any form of its challenges no matter what the challenge is. He averred that national security is wider than military might, defense or law enforcement and pointed out other rather basic dimensions like jobs, water and food security. It is appropriate therefore, to state at this juncture that a national security policy would be of no use to the unemployed and hungry citizens that constitute the majority of the population in a poor country like ours. To lay credence to the all inclusive nature of the meaning of national security, the former American President Barack Obama in 2010 canvassed an all-encompassing world view in his own definition of America's national security interests which include, "a strong, innovative and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity".

Similarly, Abubakar (2005) cited in Azubike (2013) averred that recent international debates have raised the need to see security in the broader sense as "the struggle to secure the most basic necessities of life such as food, fuel, medicine and shelter". This broader view of security from the perspective of human physiological needs is important for the attainment of physical and national security and overall peace and development, as social unrest arising from the absence of such basic human security can indeed lead to security problems and conflicts. Apart from the socio-economic security challenges, Abubakar (2005) cited in Azubike (2013) identified some of the major security challenges confronting the nation to include political and

electioneering conflicts, ethno-religious crises, terrorism, banditry, ethnic militias, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality and organized crimes. Following the postulation of hierarchy of needs by Abraham Maslow, the lower needs of man like food, shelter and security must be met before other higher needs like education or intellectual/cognitive needs (Akintunde, 2015). The inability to satisfy the need for security may cause stress in individuals and hinder them from pursuing higher level needs. On a general note, security can be seen as the state of safety, freedom from danger and protection from physical harm (Nwosu et al., 2019). By nature, human beings thrive in security and are instinctively driven by the need to maximize available resources to ensure their physical, physiological and psychological well-being. This implies that security is not only limited to protection from physical harm. Security also involves existence of environmental factors that instill peace of mind in an individual in order to empower him/her to function optimally in the society.

Conversely, insecurity is the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection (Beland, 2005 cited in Nwosu et al., 2019). In Nigeria, insecurity which is the breach of peace and security either historical, religions, ethno-regional, social, economical and political that have contributed to recurring conflicts, is but a trauma incapacitating government to execute development agenda including delivery of quality education. According to Joshua et al. (2016) insecurity implies a state of vulnerability to attacks, danger or threats to a people, their properties, cherished values and the inability of the nation to protect its citizenry. Alemika cited in Joshua et al. (2016) postulated that insecurity can be classified into several dimensions. The most significant dimensions are: a) Physical insecurity- violent personal and property crimes, b) Public security- violent conflicts, insurgency and terrorism, c) Economic insecurity- poverty, unemployment, d) Social insecurity- illiteracy, ignorance, diseases or illness, malnutrition; water borne disease, discrimination and exclusion, e) Human right violations- denial of fundamental rights by state and non-state actors in different states, f) Political insecurity- denial of good and social democratic governance. The dimensions of security as highlighted above are interwoven and cannot be treated in strict isolation as explicated by Annan (1998) that: "Today we know that "security" means far more than absence of conflict. We know that lasting peace requires a broader vision encompassing areas such as education, health, democracy and human rights, protection against environmental degradation and the proliferation of deadly weapons. We know that we cannot be secure amidst starvation, that we cannot build peace without alleviating poverty, and that we cannot build freedom on the foundations of injustice. These pillars of what we now understand as the people-cantered concept of human security are inter-related and mutually reinforcing". In the Nigerian context, internal security particularly from 2007 till date seems to be elusive. Some of the indicators of insecurity in Nigeria include; ethno-religious conflicts, violence, kidnapping, terrorism among others. Insecurity has taken different dimensions in the various regions in Nigeria.

Education as a panacea of solving Insecurity in Nigeria

Education and security can influence each other positively or negatively depending on the context. This is necessarily so because it enables individuals, groups, countries and human race to explore, appreciate, understand and develop their physical and social environments for the satisfaction of their needs. An educated person has broad view of issues as against narrow and parochial outlook. Nwosu et al. (2019) posit that education makes people to be tolerant of other people's religion, belief, culture, limitations and promote social harmony and security. In fact, education (not just passing through the four walls of the school) system produces tolerant and civil citizens who are able to understand and live with people from different ethnic, economic, religious and cultural backgrounds and other forms of identities. A country that

bequeaths the right type of education to its citizens makes it difficult for such citizens to turn against their father land (Orikpe, 2013). In fact, it is meaningless to talk of security in the absence of the right type of education.

It is therefore, not a surprise that Radda (2013) opines that education, when well imparted and utilized, has the potency of promoting national security. This is because it is mostly uneducated jobless and educated jobless youths that are easily attracted to crimes, thereby, constituting insecurity in a country. While Western education that is not geared towards self-reliance may be dangerous as far as developing countries are concerned, lack of western education or low education is even more dangerous. Low education often translates to absence of competitive skill, adequate income, exclusion from participating in vital political and economic and social organizations and relations; lack of access to adequate food and nutrition, housing, health care and efficient public emergency and safety services-all which are element on human security. Youths who are educated have hope of better future than youths who are not educated and failed to learn any craft. Children or youths with low education are easily recruited as thugs, insurgents and terrorists through indoctrination. Suffice to say that lack of education itself is insecurity; inadequate education also constitutes a problem to national security. Condoleezza Rice, former Secretary of State of the United States of America posited that quality education of a nation is a direct function of a country's national security (Joshua et al., 2016). This relationship springs from the role education plays in providing the knowledge base for technological training. In other words, education and national security are inexorably linked together.

The introduction of Vocational and Entrepreneurship programmes into the curriculum at the various levels of education in Nigeria is a welcome innovation that goes a long way to strengthening the popular liberal education. What is required by the government at various levels now is to adequately provide the needed human and material resources to make these programmes effective and functional. It is no longer news that liberal education alone has failed to equip recipients / youths with requisite skills and attitudes for leading a productive life. It is also no news that graduates of our institutions of higher learning have been populating the crime world due to their inability to secure meaningful employment upon graduation. This scenario calls for the intensification of the emphasis on Vocational and Entrepreneurial education to equip graduates with occupational survival skills - to be able to identify and even create and exploit investment opportunities that abound in the society. The present global economic crises and rising waves of unemployment have greatly emphasized the need for functional entrepreneurship and vocational education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has identified different national security challenges that threaten the very existence of the nation. The country cannot afford to be indifferent and non-committal to these issues of national security challenges. In response, the government has continued to allocate the lion share of our nation's budget to security. The extra-budgetary expense on "security" has not succeeded in dousing the security challenges in the country. There are security threats posed by natural disasters e.g. flooding, desertification etc; and from youth unemployment, hunger and filthy environment. There is no doubt that the security situation in the country calls for extraordinary measures and transformation. The education option comes in handy for the desired transformation. It may take a long time and huge resources to achieve but the end is certainly going to justify the means. Nigerians should perceive the education option as a new way to reduce the sophistication of crimes and violence.

Sequel to the revelations and implications of this discourse, the following recommendations become imperative.

- i. Stakeholders in the education industry should form a more lasting synergy to guarantee adequate funding of the system. There is need for a review of our education curriculum to include critical subjects that are necessary for development of informed and well rounded citizens. There is no doubt that a good knowledge of certain subjects such as our national history and civics will help in the development of more socially aware youths, truly literate and educated citizens who understand and appreciate the nation's peculiar challenges and can situate themselves within the search for solutions to the problems. There is the need to urgently reform the nation's education system with a view to making it more qualitative and responsive to emerging global issues as well as to the current national economic reform agenda. The restructuring should aim to achieve increased depth in content, incorporation of ICT in the curriculum, strengthening the entrepreneurial education component of the programme, and removing areas that are not very important in achieving the desired goals.
- ii. Youth unemployment should be addressed through creation of data bases that can furnish economic planners strategic options in employment creation, Government - private partnership should evolve a strategy for re-awakening most of our moribund industries to create employment opportunities for youths.
- iii. There is the need to diversify the economy. In other words, government should focus on agriculture and also give soft loans to unemployed youth, assist with the necessary farm inputs and manpower needed. There is also the need to strengthen university-industry collaboration. This can be done by bringing in experts from the industrial sector to make input in the curricular in such a way that will reflect the needs of the industry. Such experts should also be involved in teaching on part-time basis at higher levels of education

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