

Security Education at the Primary Level as a Panacea to National Insecurity and Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria as a nation is besieged with several national issues such as insecurity of life and property, kidnapping, robbery, assassination etc. when we think of insecurity, we think of soldiers. But they are not the only ones facing violence and death. Tragically children and schools are too often on the front line as well. No wonder, then, that half of all out-of-school children live in fragile or conflicted affected areas in Nigeria. This problem has hampered government effort towards sustainable national development. In view of the above socio-economic condition, this paper tries to examine education as a tool for tackling national insecurity, its challenges and the way forward.

Keywords: Security Education, Primary Level, National Insecurity, and Development

Introduction

Education is a vital means through which individuals and national socio-economic aspiration of a country can be actualised. Education is very essential to the realization of sustainable national growth and development and the achievement of national security. Therefore, if human capacity must be developed for the kind of productivity that will impact positively on our socio-economic development, the path to transverse is the education track. In engaging with the issue of education as a remedy for national insecurity, the conception of education as a process rather than as a tool will do us a whole world of good. Therefore to conceive education as an instrument meant to be deployed in achieving certain practical ends is to conclude that education is all about physical development of people. Education of that construct will more often than not limit the capacity of those given to it.

Section 14 (1) of chapter 2, of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria captures the importance of security when it states that security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. Seen this way, security is a social contract between the state and the citizens, in which the former is expected to protect, defend and provide for the latter in the public area.

Education, in itself, is meant to be encompassing, that is, it must involve, the physical/material, moral/spiritual and emotional/psychological part of the human person. It is only those humans whose make up are properly developed that can engender security and contribute immensely to overall national development.

The missing link

Sadly, the Nigeria state today is bedevilled by pockets of insecurity and its progress is hampered by a myriad of developmental hiccups because of the continual erosion in the quality and standard of its educational system on one hand, and the unresponsiveness of its educational system to current realities on the other hand (Ayodele & Genyi, 2011). Our educational system had been crippled by successive educational administrators on our national space to the extent that what seems to matter is the acquisition of paper certificate (The Nation Newspaper, December 2015). The full development of an individual which is the key aim of any educational adventure had been jettison. This had adversely affected every level of our education (Nnamani & Oyibe, 2016).

The poor state of our primary education level was further corroborated when the former president, Dr Goodluck Ebere Jonathan, indicted some unnamed state governors in the north-eastern part of the country over the spate of insecurity in the zone. He said the unnamed governors, who turn around to blame the government at the centre, failed in their responsibility of providing basic primary and secondary education for the children (Okuyodo, 2015). This he said had given rise to an army of unemployed and unemployable youths that are now ready tool in the hands of miscreants who feed and arm them to kill innocent citizens (Punch March 30, 2014).

In like vein, the former Minister of Education, Mallam Ibrahim Shekaura, posits that the Federal Government was unable to attain the 26% budget to education as recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) because of the challenges of insecurity. The author noted that huge amount of resource that would have being injected into the development of education and other sectors of the economy is being used to prosecute war against insurgency (Nigeria Tribune 22, January, 2015).

The Curriculum Perspective

Sani (2013) described curriculum as the educational experiences designed purposely for certain students within a specific time in order to accomplish the set objectives. Curriculum is fundamental to education. It serves as an instrument for guided instruction. It entails organised and intended interactions, which involve instructors, learners, and learning resources in the school or in other appropriate instructional settings. Thus, curriculum is a means through which societal values are translated by the educational institutions into tangible and memorable attestation (Ofojebe, 2014). Therefore, curriculum portrays and transmits to the learners what the society considers worthwhile.

In line with the global trend, Nigeria school curriculum was restructured in 2012, to reflect the needs, challenges and aspiration of the society (Obioma, 2012). Thus in the light of the feedback on the implementation of the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) received and the contemporary global and national concerns, the Nigerian government revised the 9-year BEC in 2012 in line the global best practices (Obioma, 2012). Security education was incorporated to form part of the BEC subjects called religion and national values (NERDC, 2013).

Concept of Security

SECURITY: security according to Yusuf and Babatunde (2009) is the condition which enhances the ability of government, its agencies and its citizens to function without hindrances. National security in the broad sense implies the threat to life, property and socio-economic wellbeing of the people. A proper understanding of security is important for an adequate explanation of the remote causes of breach of peace and security, whether historical, religious, civil, ethnic, economic, social, political etc.

It is important to state that contemporary thinking about national security has changed and has become more encompassing involving social, political, economic and other forms of security calculation, culminating in the concern for human security and improvement in the quality of the people.

Importance of Security Education to National Development.

Education is the key to development and environmental sustainability in any nation. To maintain a long lasting culture of peace among citizens for environmental sustainability, there is need to provide commensurate security education that will target at inculcating into the individuals the right spirit, awareness and consciousness to protect their environment. In essence this must fully be integrated at the early stages of life. (i.e at basic education level) to enable both children and youths imbibe the culture of being security minded.

Security education must also address the prevention all forms of security threats from the interpersonal level to the societal and global level.

National security has been defined to include not only safety devices implored by government for the safety of lives and property in the country but it also includes developmental strategies put forward to actualize effective social, political, economic, technological reforms that will bring about improvement in the quality of life of the people. To this extent security can play a vital or pivotal role in ensuring that the nation attains her national security. A starting point perhaps is the reality that majority of Nigerians are poor and are ravaged by hunger and starvation, religious disunity, ethnicity and political divides.

A cursory look at the primary school curriculum will convince people of the need for security education to be tailored towards ensuring good citizenship education in Nigeria, which would help to promote peace, co-operation, security and national pride. It is a common knowledge that our society (Nigeria) today is being plagued by social vices or evils like excessive profiteering, embezzlement, thrift, statism, arms struggles by the youths and other irresponsible behaviours. Security education can help greatly to educate the youths on the importance of peace and security in our dear nation.

No nation is self-sufficient or can produce all her needs. It is therefore necessary to understand the relationships existing between one society and another. Various topics concerning safety and national security are designed to produce good citizens that will promote national and international security.

Security Education should be made to address the issues that are today confronting our nation. These issues include terrorism, armed robbery, hostage taking, suicide bombing, cybercrimes etc.

The findings corroborates with Ebigbo (2003) who asserted that the Core Child Abuse and Neglect in Nigeria are suffered by children, youth and environments and could only be prevented through adequate training and retraining of social sciences teachers on how to propagate security education through effective delivery.

Security should be every bodies business and should be seen as such. The earlier the children are introduced into this business of security the better it will be for the individual, the school, the government and the society at large; and the less the costs of security campaigns, costs of loss of life and property, costs of disruption of school activities due to security breaches, costs of governance and so on.

Given our present situation, there is urgent need to inculcate security consciousness into the children so that when they become adults it would be part of them. It is important to catch the students young, expose them to security education early, build in them security consciousness and watch them take serious interest in their own security as they grow and sojourn through life. It is also mind-blowing for one to observe that some pupils in the primary level of education do not know road signs, making it difficult for them to interpret it when they cross the road; some do not know how to relate with strangers; what to do with unfamiliar objects that could be harmful or injurious. How to communicate dangerous or life threatening situations or handle simple personal security issues, even how to protect their properties like books, writing implements and so on.

Security is no longer a higher level need as postulated by Abraham H. Maslow in his Hierarchy of Needs' Theory. Security is the fundamental right of everyone. According to the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person". Security is everyone's business. Security is a fundamental need for individuals, communities, businesses and governments. Security of life and freedom from harms of all kinds are fundamental rights of all people. Children deserve to understand at the earliest age what potentially could lead to crime, violence and breakdown of law and order as well as human rights abuses. They should be taught how to avoid unlawful and/or abusive behaviours; and to seek non-violent measures to resolve problems.

Children by their nature are exposed to different kinds of activities in school such as sports, swimming, play, quarrel and fight. Children are also exposed to various objects in the school. Some of these objects are harmful, some are not. Recently , terrorists have targeted and attacked schools as was the case of several bombing of schools in Maiduguri by Boko Haram.

So many activities go on in the school that involves the children. Therefore, they deserve to be closely monitored. Unfortunately, the teachers in the primary schools that are supposed to watch over these children lack basic knowledge of security. This invariable could be interpreted as the blind leading the blind. Some do not know what constitute security threats and opportunity of victimizations or criminalization that need to be identified and eliminated. While others lack the basic knowledge of security rules and regulations necessary to keep the school environment safe and secure for pupils, staff, visitors and the general public.

At home, these children also engage in activities ranging from house chores to answering telephone calls, ushering visitors into the house and manning the residence in the

absence of adults. They deserve basic security education to equip them for participation in their own security both at School and at home.

The inclusion of security education in the primary school curriculum would make whole lot of differences. The pupils will get to know what security is all about; why they should be aware of their surroundings; know their neighbours, friends, aunties and uncles and what they say or do that could lead to security breach and how to report same and to whom; and adhere to simple security rules and regulations; what crime prevention and loss prevention are; types of adversaries and risks/threats; target hardening and basic prevention measures necessary to contain them would also be known and social decay would be solved. They would grow to know primary security procedures and imbibed security tenets which would have become part of them when they start working as it would be applied at home and at work and while traveling.

It is glaring that the introduction of security education into their curriculum would go a long way to addressing Nigeria's security challenges. Governments at all levels should see the need of introducing security education into primary schools so as to build the citizenry's security awareness and check rising cases of victimization and criminalization in the country.

Way forward

Our educational system needs a coordinated surgical restructuring to not only empower our children to respond positively to developmental challenges but to also achieve full personality development. This restructuring must cut across all levels of education and must be comprehensively organised to lead us out of the woods. To achieve the above objective government efforts should be channelled towards;

- The restructuring should be geared towards addressing the manifest imbalance observable in different parts of this country. Without this corrective measure, we would continue to experience the loop-sided form of development where one part of the country aim and work for development while some others reverse or delay the quest for development. For instance, there is no reason why the children and the youths in parts of the northern part of the country should not have the same quality of education as their mates in the other parts of the country.
- In addition, restructuring of our educational system must be one that makes it possible for youths to develop their natural abilities to the highest extent feasible. If the youths are properly trained to be creative and self-reliant, insecurity and unemployment triggers will be considerably minimal and manageable.
- New reforms and reviews in the basic education curriculum which should be highly propagated by effective planning and implementation.
- There should be adequate planning and funding of security education in our basic education curriculum by government and relevant stakeholders.
- Learners should be exposed to security awareness programs. Participatory learning on security education must be highly promoted and effective teaching methodologies utilized as well.

Conclusion

The inability of the educational stakeholders in Nigeria to effectively implement the teaching of security education in Nigeria has seriously hampered

national development. Therefore government and educational stakeholders must adopt a new approach towards ensuring that security education is given the desired attention as this is the only way of nipping insecurity at the bud. Government effort towards fighting insecurity can only be complimented through educational reforms aimed at bridging the educational gabs. The problem of mass illiteracy in some part Nigeria and the politics of underdevelopment had contributed to the birth of insurgency.

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