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Issues and Pragmatic Challenges for Education and Terrorism in the 21st Century: The Way Forward

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Abstract

This study examined issues and pragmatic challenges for education and terrorism in the 21st century: The way forward. This article seeks to prioritise education and security (issues) and their relationships through various disciplinary perspectives in the context of the Nigerian “war on terrorism” after various attacks on the Northern States. However, it focuses only on Northern part of the nation. It examines issues, perspectives or definitions of “banditry, “terrorism” or “security” or suffering and tragedy among others. It stresses security through critical pedagogy and comparative perspectives while highlighting future research possibilities. The paper concluded that some of the security problems confronting us as nation are socio-economic agitation, ethno-religious crises, organized crimes and so on. And it recommends among others that education should be prioritized and targets children who are least likely to receive an education have access and complete quality education, within a safe learning environment, gaining the skills and knowledge for lifelong learning. Government should create an enabling environment for education by improving the quality of education, increasing demand for education, and humanitarian assistance.

Introduction

This article seeks to prioritise education and security issues and their relationships through various disciplinary perspectives in the context of the Nigerian “war on terrorism” after various attacks on the Northern States. However, it focuses only on Northern part of the nation. It examines issues, perspectives or definitions of “banditry “terrorism” or “security” or suffering

and tragedy among others. It stresses security through critical pedagogy and comparative perspectives while highlighting future research possibilities. The reality is that no country can be politically stable, economically robust and socially secured and cohesive if the citizens are not empowered with knowledge, appropriate skills and the right values to sustain themselves and contribute meaningfully to the progress of the country. Nasser¹ positioned himself in that direction that “even though primary education is officially free and compulsory, about 10.5 million of the country’s children aged 5-14 years are out of school. Only 61 percent of 6-11 year-olds regularly attend primary school and only 35.6 percent of children aged 36-59 months receive early childhood education.” In the north of the country, the picture is even bleaker, with a net attendance rate of 53 percent. Getting out-of-school children back into education poses a massive challenge. Ensuring educational provision in predominantly rural areas and the impact of insurgency in the northeast present significant challenges.

Since the attainment of statehood in 1914 till date, Nigeria has been engulfed in different ethno-religious and political crisis resulting in substantial casualties. New Survey Documents Global Repression² observed that “prior to the year 2000, several lives and properties were lost to ethno-religious crisis.” To support this submission, Amnesty International³ pointed out that “2000 era has witnessed other forms of violent confrontations; the most devastating has been terrorism, perpetrated by the Islamic group, Fulani herdsmen, bandits and IPOB. Successive Nigerian administrations, since 2009, have had to deal with the menace of insecurity. In north-eastern and north-western states, 29 percent and 35 percent of Muslim children, respectively, receive Qur’anic education, which does not include basic skills such as literacy and numeracy. The government considers children attending such schools to be officially out-of-school. In north-eastern Nigeria, 2.8 million children are in need of education-in-emergencies support in three conflict-affected States (Borno, Yobe, Adamawa).

It is with the same spirit that Emmanuel, Danmagaji and Timothy⁴ stressed that “education provides experts and specialists in various fields who stay and work for the benefit of the nation. It produces people who will make responsible citizens and have a better commitment to the development of the nation; and help to provide the needed manpower in all sectors of the economy.” That is to say education has a significant impact on society’s development, this is even more pragmatic since the educational system is open to political, economic, and social systems. Therefore, it is necessary to develop the educational system which adopts modernity, knowledge, progress and technology which aim at tackling the challenges at hand. In this vein, Emmanuel, Danmagaji and Timothy⁵ added that “the urgent need for educational development was raised based on sound strategic planning to confront the challenges such as illiteracy, political instability, corruption, ineffective governance, terrorism and so on”

But security concept and policies raise many new dilemmas for governments, as well as unintended consequences. For example, Nigeria under President Mohammadu Buhari, The Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed, says the Federal Government is winning the war against terrorism in the North-east zone of the country. The minister attributed the successes recorded to the various morale boosting efforts of the Federal Government in addition to acquisition of new military hardware. The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in talking about ‘winning-war-against-terrorism’ Mohammed⁶ reports that “the Federal

Government has taken delivery of 10 Super Tucano fighter jets, with additional two expected by the end of October, 2021”

Why Protecting Education Would Prevent Terrorism

From the foregoing, AKowe⁷ re-iterates that “education is the key that unlocks human potential”. The implication of this is that, for children living in the most disadvantaged and marginalized communities; it provides hope for a better future.” But today, in hotspots across the world, education is under threat, with potentially serious consequences for all of us. Without education, the youngstars will face a future of thwarted ambitions and broken dreams. They will lack the skills to gain meaningful employment and, out of anger and frustration, some of them will turn to extremism and violence. Nasser⁸ stated that “the sad fact is that terrorism appears to give a twisted sense of purpose and belonging to the desperate and the hopeless.” And in communities of the marginalized and disadvantaged, terrorism can spread like a virus.

Nigeria and elsewhere around the world have been bombed and burned. Teachers have been murdered and students have been recruited as child soldiers. The victims of these terrible tragedies are now coming of age. What will become of these children when they reach adulthood? What chance do they have of living peaceful and productive lives? How will they resist the dark voices calling them to embrace violence and extremism? Education gives young people the resilience and the critical skills they need to reject hate and violence. It also gives them the most important tool they will need to negotiate their way through a complex and changing world: a rational and prepared mind.

Issues and Pragmatic Challenges for Education and Terrorism in the 21st Century

Education is an essential element in reconstruction or aid programs to help create long-term security and stability in new or reformed states. The crises educators respond to are often results of local terror or civil and international war, requiring rapid responses from local vigilante group and aid agencies working parallel to (or in tension with) Nigerian militaries. But such issues raise particular “learning” challenges for governments and humanitarian agencies in how best to evaluate success, or in appropriate civil–military relations.

Tribalism, ethnicity, nepotism and sectionalism reinforced ethnic divisions leading war of nerves in Nigeria. But it is often not clear how one distinguishes between “terrorism,” ethnic or criminal violence, or civil and international war with concepts or activities used differently by accused or accuser, alleged or real. And while wars may officially end, violence or interethnic conflicts, nepotism and so on that fueled them may not. Terrorism and security concerns are linked to broader challenges such as community building, democratization, conflict mediation or resolution, preventing war and building or sustaining civil society or regional and international peace generally.

Few would doubt education’s importance in shaping individual lives and its role in transmitting culture or molding beliefs and behavior. But there is still much we do not understand about how or why herders/farmers clashes, kidnapping/banditry occurs under specific circumstances or education’s role in mitigating and preventing personal or group clashes. Relationships between individual, banditry, and school based kidnapping in Nigeria are rarely examined with respect to international trends or relationships. For example, what relevance do schools

kidnapping prevention or moral education, multicultural, or peace studies or exchange programmes in Nigeria have on approaching the problem of kidnapping/banditry, herder farmer clashes and so on? Has there been any substantive progress over the past few years? Are these failed projects? Or is there simply more to do? If so what and how? Does Nigeria's "war on terrorism" or its interpretation by other nations help or hinder kidnapping/banditry, herders/farmers clashes prevention? How can objectives, progress, learning processes and cause–effect relationships better be defined and measured?

Herman and O'Sullivan⁹ contends that "the literature on terrorism in Nigeria has grown due to increased incidents of banditry, kidnapping, herders/farmers clashes or other threats including dramatic and escalating instances of "school-kidnapping" represented by very public bloody massacres of innocent people." Explanations abound: Personal/psychological, social, economic, religious, ethnic, political and other factors can play a role but need to be disaggregated and examined in particular cases. Moreover, studies ought to include insights based on decades of research on the origins of aggression and violent behavior generally, among children or youth in schools particularly, and should incorporate findings of criminology and social psychology. Curricular, administrative or policy responses to be effective need to base on research, so far poorly or insufficiently done, or in not easily accessible or well-coordinated sources. Studies of aggression point to other issues needing closer investigation. Violent behavior may be learned in families, schools or in social and religious groups, then institutionalized among adults-translated into behaviors, government policies, international disputes or military actions and war. Violence may be "normalized" or "systemic" through administrative, institutional, military training, media, cultural, family and gender or ethnic biased means. Violent aggression among youth in its most extreme form, homicide, may be the result of harm done to them, whether child abuse, neglect or media exposure encouraging violence as a means for problem-solving.

But new questions might be asked. For example, what are the actual or possible effects of a more densely populated powerful zone dominating or forcing another zone, or some of its peoples to adopt certain customs over others? Or is it possible to learn from domestic studies on violence and violent crime, especially in Nigerian States? Umobi¹⁰ stated that:

The Nigerian constitution in section 42 guarantees all Nigerians including women, the right from discrimination on basis of sex. In sec 34, it guarantees every citizen the right to dignity of human person. While subsection (a) goes further to forbid torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, subsection (b) forbids the subjection of anybody to slavery or servitude. p. 21

The above statement as captured in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on Violence is a useful starting point. It's warned about more widespread of Violence in extreme form of aggression, such as assault, rape or murder. It is the application of brutal force to the person of another in a situation which it is absolutely uncalled for, where it occurs within the privacy of the home, it becomes domestic violence. Violence has many causes including frustration, exposure to violent media, violence in the home or neighborhood and a tendency to see other people's action as hostile even when they are not. Certain situations also increase the risk of aggression e.g. drinking, insults and other provocations. Also, environmental factors

like heat and overcrowding also increase the risk of aggression. ...Yet violence continues unabated and this has been blamed on the loopholes in our laws, some of which undermine the provisions for equality in the constitution. Furthermore. Ose¹¹ sees Violence as the “intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group of community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological mal-development or deprivation.”

In Nigeria if problems of poverty, nepotism, ethnicity, religious bigotry and economic injustices were not better addressed. Using the word “terror” to describe local fear and intimidation in Nigeria or other cities might be better connected to discussions of international “terrorism” with parallel causes or solutions. Part of the problems was that violence arose from failures to address needs of the abused, unemployed, educationally denied, many exercising their frustration, anger and power through gangs and criminal behavior.

What can we learn from related violence prevention research either related to schools or human security more broadly, not just in the northern Nigeria but internationally? What are the implications for the “war on terrorism?” What does research on bullying say about what others can learn about impacts of police brutality and military force or threats? One issue particularly deserving further analysis is the argument that some “get tough” approaches fail to create safe environments while coercive strategies interrupt learning resulting in resistance and mistrust. Afrol News¹² added that “in one case about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child—can make a positive difference in mitigating kidnapping/banditry.” Such efforts can improve self-esteem, how children view or support rights of others, and create a climate less conducive to bullying while encouraging greater acceptance of minorities. What does this say about the most powerful individual in Nigeria refusing to adhere to many international Conventions, including those supporting educational or children’s rights, or the lack of accountability of its political and military leaders when rights are transgressed? Moreover, researchers argued that the arrogantly coercive approach the Buhari administration took military onslaught against kidnapping, banditry and freedom fighters in Nigeria is beginning to yield total peace and stability in all parts of the country as some may claim. This unsubstantiated claim seems to (with or without international approval) demonstrated to children that aggressive violence, or threats of it through military action, was a legitimate (even most appropriate) approach to resolving problems, whether on school-grounds, in families or international affairs.

The Way Forward

- 1) More scholarly analysis, comparative and case study work including field evaluations are needed to assess specific concepts or types of implementation involving education.
- 2) Education should be prioritised and targets children who are least likely to receive an education have access and complete quality education, within a safe learning environment, gaining the skills and knowledge for lifelong learning.
- 3) Government should create an enabling environment for education by improving the quality of education, increasing demand for education, and humanitarian assistance.
- 4) Teachers should have core knowledge and competencies to use proven teaching methodologies to deliver appropriate quality education.

- 5) Parents and communities should have improved knowledge and commitment to contribute to enrolling children at the right age in quality learning in safe and protective school environments.
- 6) The Nigerian government should collaborate with traditional rulers in Nigeria and other stakeholders to ensure that all harmful and traditional practices are uprooted. This could be advanced through dialoguing with the traditional rulers who are the custodians of our culture; they should be made to outlaw all oppressive customary practices in their domain.
- 7) Re-orientation of Nigerian law enforcement agents should be sensitized on human rights implications of gendered human right abuses. The government should make them more sensitive to gender rights violation complaints.
- 8) The school administrators should draw up new strategies peculiar to their situation in dealing with insecurity threats. This is because" there seems to be ghost terrorists who jump security trap.

Conclusion

Based on the issues raised in this article, it could be concluded that some of the security problems confronting us as Nation are socio-economic agitation, ethno-religious crises, organized crimes and so on. Factors associated to fear of unknown and marginalization are to hinder the adequate management of these threats. Generally, Nigerians are ready to work, if skillfully empowered on the new mechanism for managing these threats. This will help them to develop the security mind- set. To make Nigeria more globally placed/constituted and effective partnership with other nations properly organized. The efforts of our security agencies are urgently needed in this regard. We need to do all we can to ensure that young men and women in the most disadvantaged and marginalized communities are not denied the opportunity to get an education. We must do this for our children, and also for ourselves. If we want to live in a peaceful world, free of the terrorist threat, also we need to do more to inoculate our children against extremism.

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