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EDUCATING CHILDREN AMIDST THE CHALLENGES OF INSECURITY IN THE COUNTRY

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Abstract

Insecurity is an impediment to learning. This paper focuses on educating children amidst the challenges of insecurity in the country. The impact of security challenges on the child's learning includes stressful studies, poor school attendance, vandalization of school buildings and production of half-baked graduates. Consequently, parents tend to withdraw their children and wards from schools while some affected students resolve on their own to put an abrupt end to their pursuit of education. Strategies for educating children amidst the insecurity challenges in the country include: positive mind-set, being security-conscious, counseling, provision of security tips and gadgets/equipment as well as community and media sensitization.

Introduction

Education is an essential right which permits each person to receive instruction and to blossom socially. The right to an education is vital for the economic, social and cultural development of all societies. Education entails that its subjects acquire a variety of knowledge. It begins with the acquisition of elementary knowledge – that is literacy – on the part of the youngest member of society. At this stage, children learn to read and write. Education also consists of a form of learning that is necessary for the development of one's personality and identity, as well as physical and intellectual capabilities. Education permits notably, the transmission of common principles to new generations and the conservation and perpetration of social values. The importance of education in the life of any child can never be over emphasized, because it is the light that shows the way by removing the darkness of ignorance. The greatest favour one can do to himself is to get education and help to educate our children amidst the challenges of insecurity in the country.

According to Ubong K.(2016:15),insecurity is defined as "the state of fear or anxiety, stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection". It refers to lack or inadequate freedom from danger. Due to security challenges or insecurity in Nigeria, numerous children currently have no access to schools in part of the North, particularly in the Northeast schools have been closed down for security reasons.

Presently, the safety of the school child is of primary concern to stakeholders in Nigeria. This is because school insecurity is becoming a nagging problem sweeping across the nation. Parents are worried about their children and the world's protection in the face of terrorists' attack in Nigeria, especially in the Northern part. A terrorist group known as Boko Haram has been on rampage, attacking and bombing public places including schools. They kidnap adults, women, girls, school children and teachers. Majority of the 276 Chibok school girls kidnapped by the Boko Haram insurgents in 2014 were yet to be found (Uzochukwu, 2015). Education has been severely disrupted in the Northern part of Nigeria, especially with the regular murder and abduction of innocent students. Such incidents helped in creating fear in the minds of students, teachers and parents; causing withdrawal

of students from schools or outright closure of schools for long periods. Akintunde, O (2015).

Also, in the different parts of the middle-belt and the North, religious crisis had erupted leading to violent attacks that hindered smooth learning by students in schools. Many Christian students had been withdrawn from Mission Schools located within Muslim dominated areas in Jos (and vice versa) as a result of series of religious crises. The few Christian students remaining in such schools often carry out their academic activities with hidden fear of the unknown and sudden actions. Examples are the mission schools located in Nassarawa area of Jos, where many lives were lost as a result of bombing because of the ethno-religious conflict over the farmland and chieftaincy issues in the land between Hausas and Fulanis.

In other parts of Nigeria, other forms of environmental insecurity abound. These include kidnappings, violent attacks and cultism. Kidnapping is growing at an alarming rate in Nigeria (Uzochukwu, 2015). Adults' children, teachers and students are kidnapped for days and ransom demanded. Vanguard News Paper (2015, October 16) reported the rescue of three kidnapped Kogi Polytechnic students by police men in Lokoja. The kidnappers asked for 20 Million Naira ransom. Also, Iheamnachor (2015) reported that five (5) secondary school teachers were abducted at gun-point from a school in Rivers State and the abductors demanded 25 Million Naira ransom for the release of the teachers. The visit of the gun-men left the people in the area in total fear and tension.

Educating children depends on a secured learning environment that will necessitate emotional stability. According to Dibia and Obi (2012), the academic success of students depends largely on their emotional stability. When students feel unsafe, stressful and fearful, the results are poor school attendance, outright withdrawal from schools, lack of concentration in class work and unstable psychological wellbeing. The need to overcome these security challenges by the Nigerian child for effective learning becomes paramount. It is against these backdrops that this paper focuses on educating children amidst the challenges of insecurity in Nigeria. The focus is on the Nigerian primary school child's education.

Concept of Security
Security from Wikipedia Dictionary is the degree of resistance to or protection from harm, it applies to any vulnerable or valuable asset, such as a person, dwelling, community, items, nation or organizations. Security provides a form of protection where a separation is created between the assets and the threat. One of the most important and widespread aspects of security is national security. National security is a concept that a government, along with its parliaments, should protect the state and its citizens against all kind of national crises through a variety of power protections, such as political power, diplomacy, economic power, military might, and so on.

Generally, security implies safety, freedom from danger and protection from physical harm. Human beings are instinctively driven to maximize available resources in ensuring their physical, physiological and psychological wellbeing. Security is not limited to protection from physical harm, but also involves existence of environmental factors that instill peace of mind in an individual in order to perform his/her function effectively in the society.

Concept of Insecurity

Insecurity is concerned with feelings of uncertainty, dangers or threats to life. According to Hassan, M. (2014:18)"it is a negative feeling involving fear, anxiety, uncertainty and injustice, among others". When an individual does not have control over a situation but has to rely on the cooperation of others that cannot be guaranteed, the result may be frustration or insecurity. Insecurity is a threat to education. Prevailing peace or conflict within communities around the schools often has ripple effects on the teaching and learning activities of such schools.

Insecurity according to Farlex, (2013:31) is the "ability of not been sure, certain or doubtful of a situation". It can also be when one is inadequately guarded or protected or becoming unsafe. Insecurity is also a state of being subject to danger or injury. Eme (2011) described insecurity as a breach of peace and security whether historical, religious, ethno regional, civil, social, economic and political crisis have contributed to recurring conflicts, which Nigeria has witnessed over the years resulting in war and destruction as well as loss of lives and properties.

Eme (2011) listed the following as the challenges of insecurity in Nigeria
(i)   Urbanization process (population shift from rural to urban areas)
(ii)   Poverty (the conflict in Nigeria contributes largely to poverty and poverty also leading to insecurity)
(iii)   Electoral frauds (election characterized by conflict and violence)
(iv)   Poor management of the national economy
(v)   Bad roads with pot holes
(vi)   Boko Haram and Jos crisis
(vii)   Insecurity induced by those entrusted with the responsibility of securing lives.
        Other sources of insecurity include:
(i)   The judiciary
(ii)   State of our health institutions
(iii)   Maritime Security (piracy, illegal, fishing and oil theft)
(iv)   Niger Delta Militancy
(v)   Armed robbery
(vi)   Kidnapping
(vii)   Porous borders
(viii) Youth unemployment and forestall change: 3 (15)
        Some Root Causes of Insecurity Challenges

One of the major causes of insecurity is the establishment of more educational institutions resulting in mass grandaunts all over the country, of which most of them are unemployed. Nwadiator (2011) observed that about 40 percent of Nigerians who are mostly youths are not gainfully employed. This could be the root cause of youth militant in Nigeria. According to Dembo and Mustapha, O. (2012:12)"insecurity is caused by three (among others) major factors. Namely: Illiteracy, unemployment and disregard for traditional security measures, inadequacies in the security agencies, modern communication equipments, sophisticated arms and ammunition allowances and salaries of these security agencies are hardly paid on time; their welfare is nothing to write home about".

Ways of Educating Children Amidst Insecurity Challenges in the Country: To educate the Nigerian children amidst the insecurity challenges, the students, the school authority and governments has the following role to play which are:

(a)   On the Part of Students, the students should be trained to always:

-     Have a Positive Mind set

Having a positive mind-set is critical in coping with environmental insecurity. The Nigerian school child should be determined to survive and forge ahead in spite of all odds. The learner should make good use of the limited time at his/her disposal to study effectively. As an adage says, "Every problem has an expiry date". Maintaining a positive outlook of life will help to give hope for a better future. It will help the school child to still pursue great academic heights in spite of insecurity.

-     Be Security Conscious

Coping with security challenges demand that learners should be sensitive to happenings around and within the school. Learners should avoid walking alone in darkness, avoid picking "attractive" wrist watch, phones, i-pad etc on the ground; report suspicious or strange individuals, events appearances and objects to the school authorities.

-     Seek for Counseling

The learner should seek counseling from the school counsellors on coping with specific security challenge. Counselling will help to calm troubled or anxious minds; those dejected and confused will also receive rays of hope and guidance on career choices, thereby making progress in their academic pursuits.

-     Be Self-Developed

The Nigerian school child in crisis prone area needs to develop himself/herself, by making use of the time in-between closure of school to become ICT complaint. This can enable him to get internet or online resources that will aid his academic pursuits while at home.

(b)   **The Role of the School, the school administrators should as much as possible be able to:**

-     Create Safety Plans

School Administrators and teachers should help to create safe educating environment for effective learning to take place. The school establishes and implements safety plans and prevents programs that address insecurity. Security guards should be stationed at strategic places for surveillance and for checking peoples.

-     Teach Self-Protection

Teachers should teach students. "Self-protection" techniques like moving far away from suspected suicide-bombers or terrorists carrying explosives when sighted and avoiding rushing to "see" things or snapping pictures at bomb-blast scenes.

-     Provide Security Tips

Teachers and administrators should sensitize students on security measures or provide security tips to learners. For instance, a valuable security tip is any strange object or person should be reported to the school authorities.

- Sensitize the community
The school can reach out to the neighbouring communities to enhance peace and security by organizing peace talks and empowering youths through vocational skills training to take their minds off violence, to prevent idleness and make them responsible members of the society. Enlightenment should be given on the dangers of harbouring terrorists or people of questionable character.
- Create Emergency Exit Doors
Large doors in classes, halls and staff-room should be provided in schools to pave away for emergency exit of teachers and students in time of crises.

(c)   The Role of the Governments, the government should be able to:
- Take a Proactive Measures
Government at Federal and State levels should take proactive measures to prevent insecurity. Security should be beefed up around schools and adequate protection provided for staff and students. Police stations and checkpoints should be established and military operation should maintain vigilance around schools. Incessant wars should be waged against terrorists paralyze their activities and protect lives and properties of patriotic citizens.

- Reconstruct the Vandalized Schools
Government can help refurnish vandalized schools and rebuild burnt schools for academic activities to continue. Furniture and other infrastructural facilities should also be provided.
- Give Special Allowances
Government should provide special allowances for newly recruited teachers to attract more qualified teachers to schools in troubled areas.
- Provide Security Equipment
Functional cameras and gadgets should be located in different places within schools to capture movements and faces.
- Give A Prompt Response to Emergency Security Calls
The security operatives should be on red alert and ready for any emergency call that require their expertise. The vehicles to use and other gadget should be kept ready for prompt response. These will help save many lives and strengthen learners in coping with security challenges.
- Use Media Sensitization
Government should embark on sensitization of youths on the danger of insecurity through the media. Civil society groups, traditional and religious institutions should also provide sensitization for member through the media and other meetings.

Impact of Insecurity on Nigeria Child's Education
Insecurity challenges, if not taken care of will result to the following problems;

Stressful Studies
Security challenges trigger traumatic disorder and toxic stress that affect learning negatively stressful conditions make children to experience neurobiological changes (Patterson, 2008). Insecurity engenders fear in students making them to study in an atmosphere of stress. The fear of being attacked at any time causes lack of confidence too.

Students' thinking, creative processes, memory and attention are hampered with. Fear, anxiety and frustrations do not bring out the best in students.

Poor School Attendance

In the face of security threats in Nigeria, parents consider pulling their children out of schools. Many students have been displaced and kept out of school (Gustafson-Wright & Smith, 2014; Nwachukwu and Kyari (2015). Students may miss school for days as a result of security challenges. The girl-child is also negatively affected. She is kept at home for a long time or given out for early marriage.

Closure of Schools

Some schools are shut down as a result of security challenges. Government had to close down many secondary schools in crises prone areas for several months. This is the case of Borno State where schools were shut-down in major towns as a result of insurgency (Ameh, 2015).

Vandalization of School Facilities

School buildings and facilities are destroyed during insurgency or crisis. Many secondary schools have been burnt down by insurgents. Making school facilities to become inadequate.

Non-Establishment of New Schools

The child's education is affected in that he/she has limited number of schools to choose from. Government and private owners are unable to open new schools. A child that has flare for technical training may not get such a school to attend as proprietors are scared of establishing new schools in crises-prone areas.

Production of Half-Baked Graduates

Some schools are not closed down by government but end up churning out half-baked graduates as a result of insecurity. Schools are not able to spend stipulated number of months per term. Schools in unsafe areas lack adequate qualified teachers. As such, students are not properly taught.

Conclusion

The paper discussed the education of children amidst the insecurity challenges in Nigeria. The role of the children, teachers, Administrators, parents and government and been articulated such as security consciousness, positive mindset, seeking for counseling, teachers being consistent in promoting morality and ethical value while imparting knowledge on children, showing a good example to the children, organizing seminars, workshop and conferences, parents inculcating moral habits and behaviour that can promote ethical value to tolerance, peace and love for the neighborhood. Conclusively the government should endeavour to tackle the problem of selfishness among the government parastatals and other security challenges such as robbery, rape, kidnapping, vandalization of properties and terrorism among others. As it has been pointed out, security is no more only the business of the government other stake holders must be involved, to ensure a steady education of a Nigerian child.

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