Education and Security: Exploring Areas of Collaboration between Schools and Security Agencies in Nigeria

Gulesh, James Obadiah[1], Mallam Al-Hassan S. Yakmut[2], Aledare, Shola Emmanuel[3]

[1]Department of Political Science, Federal University of Lafia, Lafia, Nigeria
[2]Department of International Law and Jurisprudence, University of Jos, Jos, Nigeria
[3]Institute of Security and Strategic Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria

Abstract: **Widespread insecurity in Nigeria predisposes schools and institutions of learning to constant attacks by terrorists, kidnappers and bandits. This endangers life and learning infrastructure thereby affecting school enrolment, psychological and mental wellbeing of students, guardians and teachers while exposing them to financial extortion. Predicated upon the country's overstretched security structures and apparatuses, this paper examines the interplay between education and security for the purpose of identifying ways of collaboration between schools and security agencies to mitigate the tides of insecurity. The paper is expository in nature such that content analysis is used. Thus, Structural Functionalist theory is adopted as a framework of analysis. It is identified that political, social and professional factors are likely to undermine synergy that will stem the tides of criminality perpetrated against students and schools. The paper recommended among other things, government and stakeholders within Nigeria's education and security systems should emphasise and facilitate rapid linkage between the two sectors to exploit their potentials and strengthen the needed interrelationship between them under a defined framework.**

Keywords: **Education & Security.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is an important aspect of human society that has link with all sectors and facets of life. Many developed societies rode on education to achieve prosperity, stability and sustainable development. Security on the other hand, guarantees peaceful atmosphere for the conduct of all human activities, including impartation of knowledge which is the primary purpose of education.

Recently, Nigeria has experienced bridge in security that has direct bearings on its education sector. The most unfortunate, is the fact that it is more perverse in the northern region which is the most educationally disadvantaged part of the country with about 80% out-of-school children (Owonikoko, 2021). To add to this problem, the resources that would have been channelled towards development and improving education are not allocated to security.

From the rising wave of terrorism that swept the north-east, to the kidnappings and banditry taking place in the northwest and spreading across other states of the Federation, Nigeria is now left with the dilemma of stabilising the entire nation and protecting it citizenry from the hands of the evil elements. Unlike other crises that limit to economy and politics, the current security challenge touches the fabric of the Nigerian society and its future generation (students and pupils). Schools and academic institutions have become soft targets, not only for the purpose of vandalising infrastructure, but commoditising human beings for exchange for ransom and use as human shield (Agerholm, 2016).

Insecurity in Nigerian schools and institutions of learning results from external incursion by terrorists, kidnappers and bandits thereby leaving management, parents and guardians helpless. With the existing gap in the security architecture, intervention by security forces and agencies has been weak to detect, deter and destroy threats. Worse of it all, prior information and threats of attacks always premeditate invasions and meet with minimal resistance. Confronted with these challenges, the fundamental questions to be asked are: How did Nigeria get to this point? Why are schools and institutions of learning soft targets of attacks? What is the responsibility of education stakeholders-policymakers, school managements and security agencies in protecting school students and learning infrastructure? How and when would this menace end? Inspired by these questions, this paper explores ways that synergy between school managements and security agencies can help address insecurity relating to kidnapping, banditry and other criminal activities against students, teachers and learning institutions in Nigeria.

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Education

Friday (2014) defined education as the acquisition of knowledge of faculty and the training of skills towards making the individuals become relevant to himself and to the society to which he belongs. According to Joshua, Ibietan and Azuh (2016) education is 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. It plays a critical role in changing the behavioural patterns of citizens to the desired direction.

John (2020) conceptualised education as the development of the mind for the betterment of the individual and the society. It is the process of self-realization. It creates selfless individuals to the society. It is not necessary for education to produce altruists as assert by the definition. The type of education introduced in Africa produced rapacious elites whose priority is not the development of the society but rather self-enrichment that heighten socioeconomic and political tensions and impacted negatively on the security.

Education is the harmonious and progressive development of all the innate powers and faculties of man- physical, intellectual and moral. It is the development of good moral character. Education is the process of living through a continuous reconstruction of experiences. It is the development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him to control his environment and fulfil his possibilities (Patra, 2021).

Education is the exposure to facts and realities of life and existence of mankind and all other things known and unknown. It is the transfer of knowledge for the purpose of human development and dignity of existence.

Security

Joshua et'al (2016) defined security as a condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger. It also means the defence and protection of values acquired. They went further to explain that security has to do with freedom from danger or threat to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values, legitimate interests and enhance the well being of its people. The definition overlooked prevention from attack as being and important aspect of security.

Perhaps Audu, Lukeman and Mohammed (2014) are right to have conceived security as any mechanism devised to alleviate the most serious threats that prevent people from pursuing their cherished values. Adding voice to this, Akin (2008) conceived security as the situation that exists as a result of the establishment of measures for the protection of persons, information and property against hostile persons, influences and actions. It is the existence of conditions within which people in a society can go about their normal daily activities without any threats to their lives or properties. Ogunleye, Adewale, Alese and Ogunde (2011) asserted that security embraces all measures designed to protect and safeguard the citizenry and the resources of individuals, groups, businesses and the nation against sabotage or violent occurrence.

Šulović (2020) conceptualized security from a context specific, as a process of social construction of threats which includes securitizing actor (mostly political elite), who declares certain matter as urgent and a posing threat for the survival of the referent object, that, once accepted with the audience, legitimizes the use of extraordinary measures for neutralization of the threat. This very conceptualization could be applied specifically within the Nigeria's education system in the light of the present threats. To this effect, security is the deployment and utilisation of all human and material resources to predict, prevent, protect and withstand any form of threat against lives, private and public establishments towards advancing the course of mankind and the society at large.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Structural Functionalist theory is a multidisciplinary approach attributed to the works of Emile Durkheim, Gabriel Almond, David Mitrany among others. The thrust of the theory is anchored on the premise that society is made up of many institutions or structures that perform different functions but work harmoniously to support the whole system. Dysfunction in one structure or institution can lead to malfunction in another such that will result to general system failure (Omonijo, Obiorah, Oliver, Uche, Anyaegbunam, Shaibu & Ogunwa, 2018). Structural Functionalism is relevant in explaining the interdependency between institutions of social systems.

Failure in the Nigerian security architect has adversely affected the education system given rise to infiltration of criminals operating as kidnappers, bandits and terrorists into schools and institutions of learning. Lack of synergy between the Nigerian educational and security system has further aggravated the situation making schools helpless and more vulnerable to attacks without much resistance and response from relevant security agencies.

The failure of structural functionalism theory to go beyond institutional analysis of social phenomenon like insecurity, undermines its relevance in understanding the gap in Nigeria's security system that makes schools susceptible to attacks.

IV. SECURITY THREATS TO EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: FACTS AND REALITIES

Insecurity is not new to Nigeria. However, it becomes more alarming due to its reoccurrence within the education system in the recent time. Insecurity in schools that affects safety of life and property spread across all parts of the country such that it raises question on the primary responsibility of government. This is happening against the background of low school enrolment and widespread illiteracy in addition to the need to develop the education sector. As noted by Owonikoko (2021), there are 13.5million out-of-school children in Nigeria, with 30% drop-out pupils while only 54% proceed to junior secondary schools. This can be blamed to early marriage among the girl-child, widespread poverty, child labour and religious practices, while insecurity takes the lion share.

For instance, available facts revealed in the year 2021, a total of 800 students in secondary schools and tertiary institutions have been victims of kidnappings and numerous coordinated terrorists' and bandits' attacks. Before now, one of the most popular abductions news was the kidnap of 276 girls from Government Girls' Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State by

the Boko Haram terrorist group in 2014 that attracted wild condemnation locally and internationally. The menace of insecurity that threatens lives of students and public in Nigeria has become a night rainfall. In Lagos State, on 29th February, 2016 gunmen attacked Babington Macaulay Junior Seminary and went away with 3 girls. In the same state and year, on 6th October, Igbonla Model College, Epe was attacked and the Vice Principal, alongside a teacher and 4 pupils were abducted.

Going forward to 2020, on 11th December, 344 male students of Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, Katsina State were abducted from their hostels. A fortnight later, on 20th December, Islamiyya School, Mahuta, Kaduna State was invaded and 80 pupils taken into captivity.

In 2021 alone, on 17th February, 27 students from Government Secondary School, Kagara, Nigeri State were abducted. Barely a week later, on 26th February, in Zamfara State, 279 girls of Government Secondary School, Jangebe were kidnapped. On 11th March in Kaduna State, the Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation came under attack with 39 students taken into hostage by gunmen. In the same state, Greenfield University was under siege and 23 students abducted. Similar attack took place at the Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State on 24th April, where many students were kidnapped (Owonikoko, 2021).

The worse of it all, not all the kidnapped victims returned safely, as many lost their lives while others were injured and remained traumatised. Monies going into billions have been paid by families, school authorities and government as ransom (Campbell, 2021). Odeniyi, Ojiude and Tolu-Kolawole (2021) put this figure for the five separate kidnappings that took place in North-West Nigeria since November, 2020 at $2.4million. The implication of these is that it affects the perception of parents and students towards school enrolment, particularly boarding schools.

V. CHALLENGES OF NIGERIAN SECURITY STRUCTURE AND COLLABORATION

The Nigerian security architect is bedevilled with numerous constraints that hamper effective performance of the institution, personnel and agencies, evident in the inability to stem the tides of increased criminality against persons and critical assets. These constraints can be viewed from many perspectives which include: political, social and professional standpoints.

Political

According to the Nigeria-South Africa Chambers of Commerce (2021) report, lack of institutional capacity leading to government failure defines the corrosion or breakdown of institutional infrastructures. The foundations of the institutional framework in Nigeria are very shaky and have provoked deterioration of state governance and democratic accountability, thus, paralyzing the existing set of constraints including the formal and legitimate rules nested in the hierarchy of social order. The state of insecurity in Nigeria is greatly a function of government failure or can be linked to government failure. This is manifested by the incapacity of the government to deliver public services and to provide basic needs for the masses. The lack of basic necessities by the people in Nigeria has created a pool of frustrated people who are ignited easily by any event to be violent. The point to be made is that Nigeria has the resources to provide for the needs of its people, but corruption in public offices at all levels has made it impossible for officeholders to focus on the provision of basic needs for the people Nigerian situation as a 'Paradox of Plenty.

The Nigeria's federal structure concentrates power for internal security on the centre with the state governments having less control on the Nigeria armed forces – the military, police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps that are exclusively under the operational and financial control of the Federal Government. Meanwhile, most schools – secondary and tertiary are owned by the state government with only but a few being under the control of the Federal Government. Given to this arrangement where two different tiers of government are in separately control of the security and education sectors, collaboration becomes problematic. No wonder, there has been intensified agitation for state police to enable the state governments have control over the security apparatus for effective coordination, control and deployment.

Social

Social factors are major setbacks to fight against insecurity in Nigeria that are likely to affect collaboration between security agencies and schools. As it is, personnel from both sides – schools and security agencies are influenced by ethnic, religious, or communal sentiment such that they are prompt to compromise while their allegiance remain in doubt. In the area of prevention of attacks and protection of life and property, they are likely to share sensitive information that can leak intelligence report and lead to sabotage. Radicalism, extremism and fanaticism are also factors that can frustrate collaboration.

Professional

Dearth of qualified manpower for deployment in relation to the widespread level of security threats is a big dilemma within the Nigeria security system. With the growing rate of insurgency and terrorist activities, banditry, kidnapping and herdsmen/farmers crisis across the country, the Nigerian military that is made up of 124,000 personnel and the Nigeria Police Force comprising 291,685 active officers serving at home and abroad are overstretched for deployment across key flashpoints (Akinwale, 2018). Although they are being complimented by sister agencies like the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigerian Correctional Service during taskforce operations, however their numerical strength does not commensurate the level of threats as it is below the accepted ratio when compared with the country's population. Unfortunately, the quality of training

received by the personnel of these formations and the sophistication of their equipment is not enough to boost their effectiveness and make their presence felt across all trouble areas and soft targets like schools. The combination of these factors and several others undermines the tendency for effective collaboration. This is in addition to widespread cases of compromise and complacency that the armed forces have been alleged for, as a result of poor remuneration, welfare and motivation (Ibrahim & Bala, 2018).

VI. DEFINING AREAS OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND SECURITY AGENCIES

The growing security threat to education in Nigeria negatively impact and adversely affect the learning environment. The fear associated with insecurity influences decision-making for enrolment and choice of schools by parents, guardians and students. This is done not on the basis of standard, quality and value for money but security assurance and concerns. To douse down any impression such may lead to, the following areas can be exploited to mitigate the situation. They can be divided into theoretical and practical areas.

Theoretical Areas of Collaboration

The functionalist theorisation explains the symbiotic relationship existing among institutions. In the case of education and security in Nigeria, the complimentary roles of the sectors are very critical to finding solutions to the crisis. This can be summarised and put into the equation:

$$Ed \; x \; Secu - Collabo = Threat$$

$$Ed \; x \; Secu + Collabo = Education - security$$

The first equation denotes, when education is combined with the existing security arrangement without defined areas of collaboration will produce security threat. While the second equation denotes, when education is combined with the existing security arrangement with defined areas of collaboration will facilitate adequate security for improved education.

In achieving the second equation the following areas can be exploited:

i. Integrating security studies into the Nigerian educational curriculum. Learning about security structure and practice in Nigeria will help equip students with the theoretical knowledge of operations of security agencies such that it can be applied during distress. It will increase consciousness on threats, prevention, information gathering and sharing as well as self-defence. It will reawaken consciousness for royalty and patriotism and help produce good citizens with arouse passion for security.
ii. Creating awareness on warning signs and alert system with regards to threats.
iii. Creating awareness on Deradicalisation/Anti-extremism and Counter-terrorism to disabuse the

minds of students and teachers on having sympathy and soft spots for crime and insurgency.
iv. Creating psychological centres in schools for dealing with trauma arising from exposure to threats and support for security agencies in combating insecurity in schools and outside.

Policy/Practical Areas of Collaboration

i. Reviewing the existing National Security Policy to prioritise protection of schools and learning centres with huge human and material resources allocated for such purpose.
ii. Creation and deployment of special units under the various agencies on protection of schools and learning centres.
iii. Reintroduction of Boys/Girls Scouts and Man 'O' War and making them compulsory for the purpose of self-defence and learning military techniques and antics.
iv. Provision of security technology for use by schools and security agencies.
v. Provision of conducive environment and support for operations of security agencies.
vi. Ensuring a good working relationship by facilitating routine interaction between schools and security agencies.
vii. Seeking professional advice of security agencies in locating schools, provision of security equipment, facilities and infrastructure. Thus, security approval must be granted to this effect.
viii. Critically reviewing the agitation for state police and how best to serve in the protection of schools.

Exploiting all these among others can facilitate the synergy between education and security in Nigeria.

VII. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

Government and stakeholders within Nigeria's education and security should emphasise and facilitate rapid linkage between the two sectors in order to exploit their potentials and strengthen the needed interrelationship. In doing so, there should be a defined framework for eliminating the political, social and professional factors capable of undermining the needed cooperation between education and security. Government should work towards improving the socio-economic and political environment that breeds crime and inequality resulting to violent against individuals, private and public assets and infrastructure. This can be achieved through strong will, commitment and cooperation among various individuals and groups.

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