

EFFECT OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY ON THE NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

Myriad of problems have bedeviled the Nigerian education system in the past. However, of most alarming negative impact is the upsurge of violence targeted at the education system presently. The Boko Haram debacle, which primarily culminated in unbridled attacks on educational installations, personnel and students in its determination to eradicate 'western education', has generated unprecedented public uproar both locally and internationally. Yet, the sect's resolve to eradicate propagation of western education has continued unabatedly through mindless killing and kidnapping of students and personnel of the education system, as well as wanton destruction of educational facilities. This has created palpable fear and apprehension in the minds of educational practitioners and students, especially in northern Nigeria, making many of them to abandon their jobs and even the entire region. It is against this backdrop, that this study attempts to investigate the effects of Boko Haram insurgency on the Nigerian education system. It was discovered among other revelations that the incidence of Boko Haram menace is rooted in many complex factors which are related to religion, politics, economy, ethnicity among other factors. The researcher therefore suggests that urgent proactive measures should be addressed against Boko Haram insurgency which has defied military solution. It was further suggested, among other things, that: mass re-orientation of the polity should be immediately embarked upon to promote western education especially in the northern region; educational practitioners should be adequately compensated as incentive for their retention in the education system; and adequate security measures should also be provided in Nigerian schools to forestall attacks and kidnapping of students and personnel as well as to deter gratuitous destruction of school facilities.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Insurgency, Education system

Nigeria is a country in the Western part of Africa credited with having a population of about 174 million people, covering geographical space of 923,768km² which is divided into 36 states. Nigeria is a heterogeneous entity, with more than 250 ethnic groups, dominated by the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo tribes. Besides the ethnic coloration of Nigeria, her people practice two major religions, namely Christianity and Islam, which have also been the cause of intermittent strife in the country over the years. The country was colonized by Britain and she gained independence from the British government in 1960. (Wikipedia, 2014). She is one of the foremost African countries and plays a significant role in West Africa, especially through her involvement in Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) activities. (Adebakin, 2012).

Nigeria's economy was initially dominated by agriculture until the discovery of crude oil in 1973, oil then became the major source of income to the country. A combination of Nigeria's population size and huge income makes her a potential economic force in Africa. Indeed she is referred to as the Giant of Africa. Nigeria's Gross Domestic product actually rose to about 500 billion dollars in 2014, making her the 26th largest economy in the world and the first largest economy in Africa. Nigeria also has many other solid mineral deposits which are presently under exploited.

Since the inception of Nigeria as a sovereign state, she has suffered many civil unrests and insurgences which at different times threatened the continued existence of the nation as a united, sovereign entity. The Eastern Region, under the leadership of Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu declared secession from Nigeria to form the independent state of Biafra. This culminated in the Nigerian civil war which lasted for thirty months, between 6th July 1967 and January 1970, claiming between 1 and 3 million lives (Wikipedia, 2014). Since then, other civil unrests have manifested, spearheaded by different militant groups, which were mostly based on ethnic and religious sentiments, such as Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Niger Delta Peoples' Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of the Nigeria Delta (MEND), Bakassi Boys, Oodua People's Congress (OPC) and Boko Haram (Adebakin, 2012).

However, the arrival of the Boko Haram sect which metamorphosed, from being an innocuous political machine, to further the ambition of a group of Northern politicians, (Adetoro, 2012), into the most savage militant group in the annals of Nigerian history, with its unconventional strategies of haphazard devastating attacks on peoples, institutions and facilities, portends grave repercussions for the continued harmonious existence of Nigeria as a united nation. The advent of the ruinous sect and its nefarious activities has witnessed untold hardship, alienation, death, wanton destruction of property, owned by both government and private individuals, and threatens to snuff out western education as it exists presently in the country (Adetoro, 2012; and Ogbonnaya & Ehigiamusoe, 2013).

Boko haram is otherwise known as the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda 'Awati Wal-Jihad. (Eme & Ibieta, 2012; Ogbonnaya & Ehigiamusoe, 2013; Okoli & Iortyer 2014; and Wikipedia, 2014). In Hausa Language, Boko Haram means western education is a "sacrilege" or "forbidden". It was founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, as a Muslim sect that intends to abolish secular system of government and establish Sharia law in Nigeria (Eme & Ibieta, 2012). It is an offshoot of a radical Islamic youth group which worshipped at the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri, in the 1990s.

Yusuf was a charismatic leader and cleric who travelled through the Northern part of Nigeria to preach Islamic tenets. By his translation of the Holy Quran, he was of the view that certain part of western education is contrary to the dictates of the Quran. Yusuf was also critical of government which he perceived as being deceptive and insincere. (Crisis Group, 2014). The foregoing scenario eventually paved the way for the transformation of an apparently harmless organization into a killing machine. However, the extra-judicial killing of Yusuf by security forces compelled his followers to declare an all-out war on the Nigerian society, leading to incessant kidnapping, killing, wanton

Effect Of Boko Haram Insurgency On The Nigerian Education System

destruction of properties which has created palpable fear in the heart of Nigerians in different parts of the country, especially the north, where Boko Haram attacks are most frequent.

Many theories abound on the origin of Boko haram insurgence which was considered to have various colourations that include politics, social imbalance, religious bias, economic imbalance/poverty.

Religious Angle to Boko Harama

The Jama'atul Ahlis Sunna LiddaAwati Wal-Jihad, which means People Committed to the Propagation of the prophet's Teachings and Jihad was formed in 2000, at the onset, to propagate the teachings of the Holy Quran. Its leader, Mohammed Yusuf was a popular Islamic scholar and leader of the youth wing of Ahl-Sunnah, a salati group. The salatis dwell on the teaching of the founding fathers of Islam, which include the prophet Mohammed and the first four caliphs of the ancient Arabian Community. The group clamoured for total islamization of Nigeria and adoption of Sharia law (Adetoro, 2012; Eme & Ibieta, 2012 and Crisis Group, 2014). Suleiman (2011) also reported that a statement credited to the sect on April 24 2011, identifies as its main objective, the abolition of democracy and the institutionalization of Sharia law.

The group is known to have connections with the Al-Qaeda and a number of other jihadist groups which have imparted terrorist skills to Boko Haram, making them more dangerous than earlier Islamic extremist movements, for example the Maitatsine. Gradually, the sects brazen confrontations with the police over civil disturbances increased, for instance, Crisis Group, (2014) reported that:

In December 2003, the group, then called the Nigerian Taliban, attacked Kanamma, looted the police arsenal and burned down the station and some government buildings. A smaller faction then proceeded to Dapchi, where it attacked the police station and carted away additional arms; Babangida town, where it burned down the local government secretariat and a government lodge; and Damaturu, where it stormed a police station, took guns and killed an officer. It was stopped on its way by a police checkpoint, and fighting left two police and three sect members dead. (P. 9)

In the mean time, members of the sect pushed Yusuf to adopt more violent approaches to proselytize Nigeria, especially the north, through aggression. Initially this was resisted by Yusuf although infractions by members of the sect increased, pitching them against the authority, Yusuf still managed to seek political solution to most problems.

It is worthy, of note that the religious diversity of Nigeria is such that the country's population is dominated by two major religious groups, namely the Christians, who account for 48 percent of total population and Muslims, who account for 50 percent of total population. The struggle therefore by Islamic extremists to foist their own religion on other citizens who have their own religious beliefs could not be easily won through gentle persuasion. Many churches and Christians have felt the brunt of Boko haram attacks more than other religious groups.

Another factor from the religious viewpoint which contributed to the climax of violent activities by the Boko Haram is its affiliation with sister Islamic extremist groups, which uses unconventional methods, such as terror, to compel people of opposite religious beliefs to accept Islam. Nossiter, (2012) posits that the United Nations (UN) report linked Boko Haram with AL Qaeda Islamic Movement (AQIM) in the Maghreb. The report further stated that AQIM members from Nigeria and Chad were trained in Al Qaeda camps in Mali in 2011. . Similarly, Mohammed & Toni (2014) also reported a kind of synchronized co-ordination between the Boko Haram, AQIM and Somalia's Al-Shabaab as the groups focused on creating fear in the United States and her allies, through coordinated bomb attacks all over the world. This could be the reason why the United Nation's building was bombed in Abuja.

Poverty/Economic Angle to Boko Haram

The leadership of Boko Haram, from its inception, criticized corruption which was the cause of harsh economic conditions and high rate of unemployment among youths (Okoli & Iortyer, 2004). This creates a scenario in which majority of the polity wallow in abject poverty while the few members of the ruling class bask in splendor. Such leads to restiveness among youths who blame society for their woes. Nchi (2013) opined that:

Poverty and Ignorance are fertilizers for insurgency anywhere and in any age. When they combine and cloak themselves in religious, ethnic or other partisan robes, they become ready incendiary for the most brutal and reckless of violence. (P. 20).

In spite of her oil earnings, Nigeria is considered a poor nation, in fact, she is ranked one of the 20 poorest nations of the world by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, 2007) as quoted by Kester (2012) because her wealth has been mismanaged over the years. Nigeria's staggering population size also makes per capita income, an index of richness of a country, alarmingly low.

A higher prevalence of poverty exists in the north than in other parts of the country, as shown by statistics provided by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) which Omoh (2012) quoted. The figure revealed that there has been systematic worsening of the poverty level of Nigerians where 17.1 million people out of a total population of 65 million people were deemed poor in 1980, while in 1992, 39.2 million out of 91.5 million people were considered poor. Whereas by 2010, 112.47 million people out of a total population of 150 million people, were poor. The foregoing situation compelled Adetoro (2012) to conclude that "it may not be far from the truth to say that Boko haram" insurgency has been aggravated by systemic worsening and intolerable level of poverty in Nigeria.

Ethnicity as Dimension of Boko Haram Insurgency

From the amalgamation of Nigeria up to independence and the period of self governance, the Nigerian state has witnessed tumultuous struggle for power by different geo-political zones of the country. This has generated arguments and counter-arguments on the right of different ethnic groups

Effect Of Boko Haram Insurgency On The Nigerian Education System

to rule the country at one time or the other. It was widely believed that the northern bloc of the nation has enjoyed hegemonic control of power in the first thirty nine years of Nigeria's existence as a sovereign nation. However, with the election of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the president of the nation, for two terms in office, the south western part, consisting of mainly the Yoruba tribe seemed pacified. However, the South-South region represented by Dr Goodluck Jonathan as the incumbent president also believes it deserves the legitimate right to lead Nigeria for eight years. It is believed in some quarters that the present Boko Haram debacle is aimed at making Nigeria ungovernable for President Jonathan, as boasted by one of his opposition at the last presidential polls.

Political Dimension of Boko Haram Insurgency

The Boko Haram founder, Mohammed Yusuf, was known to be an ally of Ali Modu Sheriff, a wealthy politician from Borno state who purportedly used the Boko Haram movement to gain political power while also promising to implement Sharia and appoint members of the sect into key government offices (Isaac, 2012). Eventually, after gaining control of machinery of government, allegedly with the full support of Boko Haram which unleashed terror on the opposition, it is widely believed by Boko Haram members that they were jettisoned by the ruling class who reneged on most of its promises made earlier to the sect (Crisis Group, 2014). While the romance between Boko Haram and the new Governor of Borno state lasted, the group was lavishly funded. However with time, the relationship became frosty, leading to the resignation of Boko Haram's nominee in the cabinet of Ali Modu Sheriff.

The relationship further worsened and Mohammed Yusuf began to criticize the government of Ali Modu Sheriff in his preaching. Members of his sect were increasingly arrested for breaching the law until he was eventually arrested and killed extra-judicially. This spurred the spate of ceaseless mindless attacks on the institutions of government and its agents by the Boko Haram sect.

Effect of Boko Haram Insurgency on Education

1. Poor Funding of Education

The ripple effects of Boko Haram insurgency has led to a situation in which expenditure on education has increasingly dwindled over the years. This is occasioned by the pressing need to allocate more funds to security, to the detriment of other sectors of the economy, education inclusive. Federal Government's allocation of funds to Education in recent years attests to this fact as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Federal Allocation to Education between 1999 and 2010

S/N	Years	Allocation (billion	Percentage
1.	1999	23.0	11.2
2	2000	44.2	8.3
3	2001	39.9	7.0
4	2002	100.2	5.1
5	2003	64.8	11.8
6	2004	72.2	7.8
7	2005	92.6	8.3
8	2006	166.6	8.7
9	2007	137.5	6.1
10	2008	210.0	13.0
11	2009	183.4	7.2
12	2010	249.1	6.4

Source: Olatoye Olawale, 2010:3

(In 2011, less than 8 percent of the budget was allocated to education. This still falls short of the United Nations prescription of 26 percent). Table 1 shows the abysmally low government spending on education, which is considered as the most dynamic factor that stimulates all round development of a nation. The high rate of illiteracy in the country is worsened by government's lack of commitment to adequately fund education. Whereas a country like Ghana committed 31 percent of her budget in 2013 to Education, Nigeria's spending on education in 2013 was a meager 8 percent of the total budget (Vanguard, 24th July 2013.). In the current fiscal year, education enjoys 10.7 percent of the total budget. This is still very low compared to the United Nation's prescription.

2. Loss of Trained Personnel

Another fall-out from the ceaseless attacks on the government institutions, including education, is the loss of trained teachers who are either maimed, killed or prefer to give schools a wide berth as a result of the indiscriminate attacks on them by Boko Haram operatives, who attack schools at random. Many Nigerians have had to cross into Cameroon and Chad republic to escape the wrath of the sect and enjoy relative peace (Okoli & Iortyer, 2014).

3. Poor academic Performance

Academic activities are disrupted intermittently as a result of sporadic attacks on educational facilities. Government has had to shut down schools in order to forestall sudden attacks on them by Boko Haram insurgents. The Boko Haram attacks also culminate in poor student's performance because learning is characterized by threat in the school environment of the north, whereas it is an accomplished fact that learning thrives mostly in an environment devoid of threat. Etebu & James (2011) asserts that "any society characterized by any form of violence will not be conducive for any social interaction in form of teaching and learning". Similarly it has been noted that the threat of

Effect Of Boko Haram Insurgency On The Nigerian Education System

insecurity will constitute negative reinforcement due to the obvious fact that teaching and learning cannot occur successfully in an environment characterized by threat (Campbell, 2008).

4. Destruction of School Facilities

Bombing and shooting by Boko Haram insurgents destroy school facilities which are grossly inadequate in the first instance due to poor funding by government. This portends grave consequences for effective teaching and learning which becomes hampered by inadequacy of educational facilities.

Conclusion

The unabated attacks by the Boko Haram sect has occasioned untold hardship on Nigerian people especially in the northern region of the country. It has also succeeded in destabilizing economic, social, political, religious and cultural lives of the people. In short the intractable problem has led to the categorization of Nigeria as a failing state. Government effort so far to solve the problem through military containment has proved abortive. The sect has in fact succeeded in decimating Nigerian Police and the Armed Forces through its bombing spree of military facilities and armed personnel deployed to tackle the sect. Although government spokesmen claim that the war on terror is gradually being won, the nation waits with bated breath to enjoy the peace that goes along with victory over Boko Haram.

Recommendations

Based on colossal losses suffered by the Nigerian military and police in the hands of Boko Haram insurgents, it is evident that the military approach has failed therefore government should adopt other proactive measures aimed at providing a lasting solution to the Boko Haram debacle. It is in the light of the foregoing that the following suggestions become pertinent.

- a. Effort should be geared towards re-orientation of the masses, especially in the northern part of Nigeria on the importance of education as an instrument for national development,
- b. The almajiri education component of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme should be adequately funded and properly monitored to ensure the successful delivery of education which can have profound effect on the lives of almajiris who are easily manipulated and turned into weapons by the rich people of the north to fight their selfish cause.
- c. Federal Government should adopt policies which lead to creation of jobs to assuage the feelings of disaffected youths who get easily tempted to fight against institutions as a result of their frustrations.
- d. Teachers, especially in the northern parts of the country should be given incentives, such as special allowances to continue to compensate them for untold hardship they suffer as a result of Boko Haram insurgency. This will ensure a high rate of retention of teachers in the school system.
- e. The Federal government should ensure that educational facilities are adequately secured, especially in the northern states, to forestall attacks on the school which claim the lives of pupils and their teachers alike, while also leading to wanton destruction of school facilities.

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Effect Of Boko Haram Insurgency On The Nigerian Education System

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