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Refocusing University Education for Peace and National Security

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Abstract

Education has been defined as a process by which individuals are assisted formally through proper direction and guidance to develop their capacities for their own benefit and that of the society. It is geared towards developing the individuals for them to live effectively and efficiently in the society and to contribute to its advancement. Hence, through education the behaviour patterns of the citizens could be changed in the desired direction. This paper expected to critically examine how University Education for Peace and National Security will be refocused; with particular emphasis on community and political insecurity. Amongst others, it was recommended that the University body should partner with the security agencies for intelligence gathering and opening of more colleges or universities for the armed forces. Also, while promoting peace and conflict studies in universities, quality education for industrial relevance and skills empowerment should be the focus.

Successful educational reforms have always followed a pattern in which there is a clear recognition of the *goal* of the reforms. This goal is usually a solution to the gap discovered from a sincere evaluation of an already existing educational programme. Thus, it would be a useless academic venture to attempt to refocus university education for whatever reason, without first stating the original focus of university education, the challenges bedeviling the system and then recommending an improved plan to help the system solve emerging problems such as peace and national security (Omolewa, 2007). According to the new National Policy on Education which contains the blueprint, goals, standards and requirement for quality education; Education is defined:

as an investment for economic, social, and political development; a tool of empowerment; an effective means for developing the full capacities and potentials of human resources; as well as the development of a competent workforce; and as a veritable means of developing sound intelligent learning societies (Federal Republic of Nigeria - FRN, 2007: p.9).

It can be inferred from the definition, that the ultimate goal of education is for human capital development which translates to societal development, nation building and economic growth. The above definition captured the essence of university education few years after Nigeria independence. It was a situation where companies and public establishments were hunting for graduates to give jobs, employers went to universities and National Youth Service Corps(NYSC) orientation camps to seek for employees. This was so, because the movement from school to job was virtually automatic (National Board for Technical education, NBTE, 2011). Here, a graduate was a skilled workman trained to be either employable or self-employed. With this robust university system, the country experienced unprecedented growth and development before corruption and nepotism within the ruling class and tribal sentiments forced the nation into civil war.

Today, it is very pathetic that the story line has changed as there is a disconnection between the world of learning and the world of work. Now, each job that appears in the labour market is pursued by many old and new unemployed individuals and even highly politicized because of the growing population. In some cases, the few who get a job are trained to acquire special skills before they can go ahead with the new job. Ajibade (2009) asserts that there is a big gulf between what the school offers and the demand of employers. We now have an exponential growth in the number of universities (about 84 public universities and 68 private universities) with the university graduates, without a corresponding increase in economic growth and development. It has become a situation of ‘academic inflation, where degrees worth nothing. Also, Alemika (2015) stated that low academic standards, inefficient and unaccountable administration, widespread indiscipline and misconducts that erode traditional values, processes and practices undermine the ability of the universities to contribute to

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knowledge, policies, decisions and actions that aid development and security of the country and global competitiveness. Moreso, the university society has become a hub of social vices ranging from examination malpractices, cultism and criminality, sexual harassment, prostitution, negligence of duty, unserious attitude of students and so on. Other issues such as poor funding, bad infrastructure, political interference, incessant strike by teaching and non-teaching university staff and many more have all contributed to the wreck in the education system. (Alemika, 2015).

Consequently, for university education to serve any purpose, it has to be reformed or refocused in terms of its current operation before it can be recommended for solving a complex problem like peace and national security. More so, the issue of peace and insecurity in Nigeria has become a recurrent phrase to nationals and foreigners who know the country. In the words of Orikpe (2013), Nigeria is today plagued with social disorder, insecurity, poverty, illiteracy, balance of payment deficit, poor health statistics, ethnic and religious conflicts, corruption, social crimes, criminality and political crises. All these mean that we are very insecure in terms of human well being. The problems, individually and collectively constitute threats to the peace, security and development of the country. This implies that Nigeria is plagued by all seven dimensions of human insecurity as proposed by United Nations and cited by Ikwumelu, Oyibe and Eluu (2016); the dimensions of human security include; economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political. However, the high budgetary allocation on security is yet to douse the multifaceted security challenges of the country and thus, this paper will attempt to address specific security concerns such as community and political insecurity by recommending a refocused university education.

Concept of National Security

Security is a necessary precondition for the development of human beings and society; and thus, it is the most basic need of human being and the society (Alemika, 2015). The significance of security as the precondition for the survival of the Nigerian people and nation is well stated in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provided in section 14 (1) (b), which states that “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government.” The primary focus of every government is the security of lives and property.

Even, President Muhammadu Buhari in his 2015 presidential inaugural speech affirmed this fact when he stated “I wish to assure the international community of our readiness to cooperate and help combat threats of cross border terrorism, sea piracy, financial crime, cyber-crime, spread of communicable diseases and other challenges of the 21st century. At home we face enormous challenges such as: Insecurity, pervasive corruption, unending fuel and power shortages and we are going to tackle them head on, we must not succumb to helplessness and defeatism, we can fix our problems.”

However, the extent to which these promises are fulfilled, becomes another campaign point for the opposition party.

Nevertheless, the issue of security now tops the charts of national and international summits with developed countries tightening their security apparatus and preventing security threats. While, developing countries in Africa are still trying to curb the many security challenges facing them, and collaborating with foreign nations for intelligence to fight terrorism and end civil wars. National security according to Iredia as cited in Joshua, Ibietan and Azuh (2016) simply mean, the capacity of a state to overcome challenges confronting her. He added that national security is not limited to military might, defence or law enforcement; it covers basic dimensions like job, water and food security. Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) added 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. National security is also seen as a state or condition in which most cherished values of a country and the people are permanently protected and continuously enhanced (Radda, 2013). From the various explanations of security above it can be deduced that insecurity implies a state of vulnerability to attacks, danger or threats to a people, their properties, cherished values and the inability of the nation to protect its citizenry.

However, Audu, Lukeman and Mohammed (2014) averred that there appears to be shift from viewing security in state-centric perspective to a broader view that places emphasis on individuals, in which national security also encapsulates human security, human right and national development. A broader world view of national security focuses on human security, which Hubert cited in Ikwumelu, Oyibe and Eluu (2016) is defined as implying safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats; it is a condition or state of being characterized by freedom of their safety or even their lives. It entails taking preventive measures to reduce vulnerabilities, minimizing risks and taking remedial actions where prevention fails. This is not to say that security of the state is not important but rather the security of the state should be geared towards the security of human persons not of the regime in place. Also, Human security is conceived as the summation of seven distinct dimensions of security namely, economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political (Ikwumelu, Oyibe & Eluu, 2016). This is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Types of Human Insecurities and Possible Root Causes

TYPE OF INSECURITY	ROOT CAUSES
Economic insecurity	Persistent poverty, unemployment, lack of access to credit and other economic opportunities
Food insecurity	Hunger, famine, sudden rise in food prices
Health insecurity	Epidemics, malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of access to basic health care

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Environmental insecurity	Environmental degradation, resource depletion, natural disasters
Personal insecurity	Physical violence in all its forms, human trafficking, child labour
Community insecurity	Inter-ethnic, religious and other identity-based tensions, crime, terrorism
Political insecurity	Political repression, human rights violations, lack of rule of law and justice

Source: United Nations (2016). www.un.org/humansecurity

The dimensions of security as highlighted above are interwoven and cannot be treated in strict isolation as explicated by Anan in Joshua, Ibietan and Azuh (2016) that, today we know that “security” means far more than absence of conflict. We know that lasting peace requires a broader vision encompassing areas such as education, health, democracy and human rights, protection against environmental degradation and the proliferation of deadly weapons. We know that we cannot be secure amidst starvation, that we cannot build peace without alleviating poverty, and that we cannot build freedom on the foundations of injustice. These pillars of what we now understand as the people-centered concept of human security are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Therefore, the paper attempt to address community and political dimensions of human security.

In addition, it must be stated the process to restore peace and national security in any country cannot be achieved if the educational system is not explored to pass on values and ideas that engender peace and unity.

Refocusing University Education for Peace and Security University Education

University education is simply the education at the tertiary level of learning. It is where the highest form of learning occurs, which is geared towards meeting societal needs. The university is a community of scholars and students engaged in a complex task of learning, to which humanity looks up for overall human progress (Robert-Okah & Worlu, 2013). This definition tells us that human progress (proffering solution to man’s problems) is one major preoccupation of the university.

On the otherhand, Okeke as cited in Orikpe (2013) defined education “as a process by which individuals are assisted formally through proper direction and guidance to develop their capacities for their own benefit and that of the society.” He added that education is geared towards developing the individuals for them to live effectively and efficiently in the society and to contribute to its advancement. Hence, through education the behaviour patterns of the citizens could be changed in the desired direction. In other words, with sound education people will start to understand and

appreciate one another better and try to restore the dignity of man. Hence, we have to recognize the role education plays in equipping individuals with requisite knowledge and skills for survival and societal progress. Oyibe and Oketa (2012) added that “education is a social process whereby the individual acquires skills and knowledge for successful living in a society”. Ogoh as cited in Ikwumelu, Oyibe and Eluu (2016) viewed education as the acquisition of knowledge for the benefit of the individual and society. It is a powerful phenomenon that influences man’s behaviours from day one to the last day. It also emphasizes knowledge, understanding and overall development of an individual and the society. Based on this development, the goals of education as stated in the National Policy of Education as cited in Ezeh (2017) are:

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation
4. A great and dynamic economy
5. A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.
- 6.

Education is a veritable tool for social change, national integration and development. It is important to underscore that education is employed to shape politics, culture, family, economy among others. As the society is dynamic, and constantly changing and growing, education must follow suit. However, these noble goals of education cannot be achieved under a system plagued with several problems.

Why Refocus University Education?

The need to refocus education stems from the many challenges that affect the Nigerian university system and hinder it from serving expected roles in promoting national security and development. According to Alemika (2015) some of the factors that have negatively impacted on university education in the country include:

1. Political interference in the running of universities.
2. Inadequate allocation and inefficient management of resources for effective teaching, learning, research, publication and community service;
3. Politics and emphasis on the appointment of indigenes as vice-chancellors and other principal officers above the criteria of merit, integrity, and academic excellence;
4. Lengthy duration of postgraduate programmes. Recently, the National University Commission (NUC) prescribed a minimum of two years’ duration for a master degree in Nigerian universities, at a time when most European countries, especially the United Kingdom now offer master degrees lasting 9 months or 12 months.
5. Corruption and nepotism in appointment and promotion of staff as well as admission and assessment of students at the tertiary levels. Also, egregious

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- discrimination during admission of students in favour of indigenes of states in which universities are located.
6. Impunity, flagrant violations of the university laws and rules; exercise of arbitrary powers and usurpation of powers of statutory committees and boards by university principal officers, especially the vice-chancellors;
 7. Non-adherence to policy guidelines such as admission quota for each programme resulting in excessive admissions and burden on infrastructure and personnel that erode quality and professionalism – Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and NUC appear incapable or unwilling to exercise their oversight functions in this respect;
 8. Loss of universalistic and cosmopolitan character of the university in terms of staff recruitment and student admission due to poor funding and inappropriate policies, practices and poor conditions of service.
 9. Poor conditions of service in relation to remuneration, research facilities and opportunities; conference attendance in Nigeria and overseas; training of junior academic staff, access to information technology.
 10. Lack of professionalism in the work of many lecturers; inappropriate financial and sexual relationships between students and lecturers;
 11. Many universities in the country serve more as sanctuary for political, ethnic and religious miscreants, many of who are at the helms of affairs, whose decisions and conducts threaten national unity, security and development.
 12. Proliferation of ethnic and religious groups among staff and students of universities on the campuses;
 13. Coercion of lecturers to award undeserved grades by persons in authority and students in cults.
 14. Plagiarism by lecturers and students; falsification of research activities, data and findings by lecturers and students in tertiary educational institutions;
 15. Awards of grades and class of degrees that are incongruent with knowledge and performance of students, especially by private universities, as marketing strategies to attract students.

These conditions are just a sample of factors that erode the standard, competitiveness, and integrity of the Nigerian education system, and its capacity to contribute to the development and security of Nigeria. In many instances, the problems identified above trigger or aggravate insecurity and low human capital development.

Refocusing University Education

Firstly, the word “refocusing” means to change or adjust the focus of something, in an attempt to make it clearer. For instance, if you refocus a camera, you adjust it again to make the image clearer and better. The word refocus could also mean to change the emphasis or direction of something. This implies to concentrate attention or efforts on something different (an alternative) from the old approach or set of ideas

used. Therefore, to ‘refocus university education’ means to change, adjust or reposition the emphasis or direction of learning from what it is; to a different approach that will lead to the attainment of worthwhile goals, such that they will enhance peace and progress. Thinking in the direction of the concept to ‘refocus university education’; it means that the current education system lacks what it takes to address the problems it is sought to solve (insecurity concerns of the nation) and thus, must be adjusted or changed in terms of approach and content to meet the present needs of the society it serves.

Nigerian university system needs to contribute to the security and development of Nigeria. To enable it make significant contribution to national development, solidarity and security, the following reforms and measures are required and recommended as stated by Alemika (2015):

1. Functional tertiary education, especially, universities grounded in the universal values, standards, and goals will make critical contributions to the solution of the country’s security objectives and challenges.
2. Universities should observe traditional values of universities – relevance, responsiveness, cosmopolitanism, excellence, academic freedom, collegiality, humility, trustworthiness and unrelenting search for improved dignity to humanity.
3. Relevant, functional and globally competitive education system paying particular attention to improving quality of education at the primary and secondary school levels as input into tertiary education should be developed and sustained by the governments at all levels.
4. Introduce a post-secondary practical oriented technical and vocational education lasting between 6 and 18 months to absorb secondary school leavers into critical competencies required for national security and economic development.
5. University curricula and researches should reflect national development and security needs and aspirations while satisfying the highest global standards.
6. Drastic reduction in class sizes to ensure quality and appropriate learning and teaching environment. University undergraduate classes in science and technology should be pegged at 50-60 students, and classes in arts, humanities and social sciences should be pegged in 80-100 students;
7. Oversight agencies for education institutions at all levels should be reorganized for efficiency and prevention of impunity in relation to the violations of national constitutional provisions and educational policies by school and university authorities.
8. Collaboration between the universities and security agencies in the areas of information sharing, training and research should be strengthened;

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9. Universities should establish and maintain efficient security services and infrastructure on their campuses and promote effective collaboration between campus security officials and the security agencies in their communities;

Refocused University Education: A panacea for Community and Political Insecurity in Nigeria:

Security is a very complex issue and cannot be completely addressed by sheer political will alone, even the increased budget on security has not significantly reduced the incidence of crime in our nation. Crimes continue to breed in different forms. Security is complicated in nature- it is difficult to understand it without focusing on humans which is the main object of security. It is no wonder that security from a broader view places emphasis on individuals, in which national security also encapsulates human security, human right and national development.

Nigeria is a unique nation with her own security challenges, it is a country suffering more from political repression, corruption, lack of rule of law and injustice, religious, ethnic tensions as well as ignorance of the masses. These are the real chains that have confined Nigeria- a country rich in human and mineral resources to a third world country (though addressed as the giant of Africa). Therefore, if the country is liberated from these social/community and political insecurity the other dimensions of human security (economic, food, health, environmental, personal) will fall into shape. To alleviate the situation, the country must adopt the right kind of education which transforms people to developed nations. For the purpose of emphasis, Community insecurity involves: Inter-ethnic, religious and other identity-based tensions, crime, terrorism. While, Political insecurity deals with political repression, human rights violations, lack of rule of law as well as injustice (United Nations, 2016).

In answering the question, how can education promote security? Alemika (2015) opines that many conflicts arise from ignorance and manipulation of ethnic and religious identities. Education, not mere schooling, produces tolerant and civil citizens who are able to understand and live with people from different economic, religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and other forms of identities. Lack of education therefore is itself insecurity and is a source of vulnerability to other forms of insecurity. A country with poor standard of education as is the case in contemporary Nigeria will lack citizens that can produce or manage competencies and resources required for developing and sustaining relevant and strong or capable institutions and leaders for development, democratic governance and national security. There is a high correlation between education and security, civilization and development. Education empowers individuals and liberates citizens from ignorance, prejudice, bias, superstition, and manipulation by people who claim to have superior knowledge. An educated person has a broad view of issues instead of narrow and parochial outlook. He or she is tolerant of other people's religion, belief, culture and limitations and promotes social harmony and

security. Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the truth from false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction (Alemika, 2015).

To achieve this, Orikpe (2013) averred that there is need for a total overhaul of the curriculum at all levels of education with a view to providing its recipients with broad based education in the development of the mind, soul and body; and in comprehending the environment, development of appropriate attitudes, skills, abilities and competences to co-exist with and contribute to the development of the society. This calls for asynergy between liberal education, vocational and entrepreneurship education. In this vein, the educational system must change to meet the aspirations of individuals and those of their countries otherwise it becomes irrelevant.

Consequently, the university as a citadel of learning, with the onus proffering solution to every day human problems through research can do the following, as a way to curb the menace of insecurity;

1. Promotion of peace and security studies. Courses in Nigeria history should be reintroduced in schools with emphasis on unity.
2. Harmonizing the minds of educated citizens on equality of humans in societal disorder (Kalu & Saleh, 2012).
3. Sanitizing the minds of students on avoiding being used by politicians in achieving their selfish aims and discouraging all forms of cult violence.
4. Academic excellence and scholarship should be promoted in universities through reward system of automatic employment and oversea scholarship.
5. Refine the university system from all forms of corruption, bribery, nepotism and other vices. This includes admitting students based on merit only and sanctioning corrupt lecturers that participate in electoral offences as returning officers. This will make the system a microcosm of peaceful and secure community.
6. University body should partner with the security agencies for intelligence gathering and opening of more colleges or universities for the armed forces.
7. Promoting vocational and entrepreneurial education for industrial relevance and skills empowerment.
8. Teaching of Nation building approaches and intervention to help curb and prevent security challenges. There should be no intervention without strategic nation building approach(Smith & Shrimpton, 2011).

Conclusion

The level of development of education is said to determine the level of development of a nation's economy. The attempt of using university education to address issues of peace and national security would mean that the schools are to be refocused by offering a different kind of education that should be richer in peace and conflict management studies as well as promote relevant work skills to meet the demand of the industries. Also, in dealing with the broad issue of human security, the

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university community would outline various strategies in sanitizing all forms of corruption, bribery and nepotism for it to have the moral justification to take on the depraved issue of insecurity with all its crooked root causes. Thus, the university system must be a microcosm of a peaceful and secure community. This is because a body that is a product of a corrupt system ‘cannot give what it does not have.’ The point here, is that the university must be deliberate, serious and sincere in curbing the present challenge of peace and insecurity situations ravaging the nation. And this should begin from her own community of scholars, students and administrative staff.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations are made:

- Promotion of peace and security studies. Courses in Nigeria history should be reintroduced in schools with emphasis on unity.
- Promoting quality education for industrial relevance and skills empowerment.
- A supportive and receptive government, relatively free from corruption and leading the change. This should include the political commitment for the long haul.
- Qualified consultants from educational institutions and universities should be involved in the drawing up of relevant syllabi for the various security agencies to meet the evolving approaches of combating crime.
- University education should inculcate a security consciousness and awareness culture among the citizenry.

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