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Nigerian Security Challenges and the Plight of Students and Teachers in Institution of Learning in Nigeria

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Abstract

The recent threats to life and property experienced in Nigeria and so many other countries of the world has assumed an alarming dimension that calls to fight against it has become necessary. It is against this background that this paper examines security challenges in Nigeria and their consequences on educational institutions. The paper also critically examining the concept of national security and outlining and discussing briefly various security challenges common to Nigeria as a nation. The paper further prescribes various ways forward as it x-rays different forms in which such challenges have affected educational institutions. The paper recommends among others proscription of any form of terrorist act and imposition of consequences on sponsors and members of any sect that threaten the peace of the nation and the security of its citizens.

In recent time, Nigeria as a nation and educational institutions had witnessed a myriad of security challenges. These challenges pose no little threats to the safety of life, property and the very corporate existence of the nation Nigeria. The security of the nation entails the safety of all components of the nation including all institutions that make up the nation. Institutions such as the police, governmental agencies, worship

centres, embassies, educational centres and even the classrooms have continuously been threatened by the state of insecurity of the nation.

From the beginning, the importance of security was enunciated in the Nigerian constitution of 1999 section 14 (2) (b) which states inter alia; the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. This implies that government as an institution is vested with the responsibility of security of lives and properties of the entire populace. Invariably the welfare of Nigerians including all institutions, places and settings is vested in the purview of government. Be that as it may, no Nigerian has rested on his oars when security issues or concerns are raised. Just as the NTA Port Harcourt will always present in their pre-news advert, your eyes are as good as the eagles' be security conscious, each individual is the best and first security operative for himself before government who is saddled with the responsibility of security of lives, properties and welfare of all citizenry.

Definition of Security

Security as Dasuki (2013) puts it, is defined as absence of insecurity as a result of actions of law enforcement agencies. He further stressed that security was understood to be the job of the defense force of the national frontiers and of the police inside the country. Such perception sums up security to be equal to a system of law and order maintenance. However, he emphasized that the dynamics of our society has since altered that configuration of security to now include consideration for societally generated crises such as riots, demonstrations, secret cult-related criminal acts, terrorism, drug-trafficking, intra and inter ethnic strife, religious intolerance, advanced fee fraud, antigovernment campaigns, armed robberies, hijack, kidnapping and a host of others that threaten lives and properties and indeed the peace and tranquility of man and society. This now portrays security currently as everybody's business, and a business in which everybody has a role to play and a stake to protect. The essence of a country's security is therefore pointed toward the honest concern with the wellbeing, welfare and interest of all citizens, and the preservation of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity against external aggression. Former American secretary of defense, Robert Mc Namara had earlier married security and development together when he stated inter alia: security is development and development is security. This holds that development cannot take place where security is threatened.

This does not imply that countries all over the world where development takes place are free of security threats. However, the security challenges countries face gradually become part of the country's history and so, on a daily basis countries contend explicably with whatever security threats faced by them as not to deter their continuous development. Security suggests the establishment of proactive and defensive measures to safeguard all persons, properties and materials. Generally, the

security interest of any nation should include but not limited to safety of life and properties, economic, physiological social and mental well-being and even the mere freedom to pursue the attainment of legitimate objectives without hindrance. So national security will mean all things done to eliminate distractions and abuses of safety so as to create an environment free, safe and convenient enough to attract investments, developments and growth.

Security Challenges in Nigeria

All countries of the world have different security challenges. However since countries must develop, each country must strive vehemently to contend with its own security challenges so as not to be left behind in the face of development or growth. The security challenges in Nigeria are myriads in nature and range from simple civil disturbance or communal clashes between neighbouring communities to very large scale disturbance that may threaten the cooperate existence of the country or directed towards the citizenry or organs of government or institutions set up for the well-being of the state or nation. Some of the security challenges in Nigeria that are relevant to this study include terrorism, Niger Delta Militancy, kidnapping, illegal oil bunkering, electric cable/pipeline vandalism, armed robbery, youth unemployment, climate change, the HIV scourge, corruption, porous borders , nepotism, economy of affection etc.

Ojo (1999) had lamented that the hungry and thirsty underdogs in Nigeria no longer need food, clothing or shelter as they have survived want and hunger, but are now consciously looking for those whom they perceived kept them hungry and thirsty. So the earlier pursuit for food, cloth and shelter might have been milder, much appealing and only looking for expecting crumbs and bones from their master's table. However, from the early 1990's upward with corruption liberalized, every Nigerian, big and small needs job, a house, education, luxury, medi-care, family and the best of life. Apart from the truth that land is a fixed factor of production, the demand for land is increasing by the day. This has led to inter village, inter city, interstate and inter regional migration, all of which are becoming intolerant, provoking, unaccommodating and suspicious in nature. Tensions from inter ethnic hatred and poverty induced and compelling neighbourliness quite often break up into wars and crises of higher magnitude. Conflicts resulting from these crossbreeds may end up in setting up of panels, commissions, tribunals or in courts with white papers not being released or even when released not implemented.

The most recent insurgence in Nigeria, the religious based Islamic fundamentalists the Jurma'at Abhis Sumah Ladha Averatih-wal Juhaid commonly referred to as Boko Haram in the street, is the harbinger of terrorism in Nigeria. This sect predominantly based in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria has been responsible for

several threats to life and property in Nigeria. The Boko Haram sect had impacted so negatively on the peace and security of Nigeria harassing business interest and painting black the image of Nigeria even in international fora. Boko Haram insurgency had been a critical menace to all in Nigeria including the very patronizers of the sect as they are involved in suicide bombing and targeting of government investments and worship centers for destruction.

Boko Haram claimed responsibility for ugly outings and incidences like bombing of the Mogadishu Barrack in Abuja in December 2010, the police Headquarters Abuja in June 2011, UN House Abuja in August 2011, Catholic church Suleijah and several other facilities and institutions. The insurgency had taken siege of Bornu State as a whole threatening and destroying both lives and properties. This led to continuous closure and resumption of the University of Maiduguri in recent time. The Boko Haram sect has spread to other states in the North Eastern Nigeria in a magnitude that had posed threats even to governance. This must have informed the recent clamp down of the Federal Government on some states in North Eastern Nigeria where emergency rule has been declared. Very recently, the Boko Haram sect was declared by the Federal Government of Nigeria as a terrorist group and severe penalties put in place for any one who sponsors or found to be associated in any manner with the sect or its operations.

Even if this sect is most pronounced today, it started since June 2009, when the sect led by Ustaz Mohammed invaded Bornu State and killed over 650 people mainly Ibos who, the Hausas suspected have dominated their business zones, markets, economies and territory. Even when intelligent report reached the then president, Musa Yar-Adua nothing was done to scuttle further occurrence. The far reaching and dastardly consequences of the Boko Haram crusade occurred on the early hours of Sunday July 26, 2009, in Bauchi, spread to Bornu and Kano on Monday July 27, 2009 and on the first count left 157 persons dead (Guardian Tuesday July 28, 2009, p1).

It is believe that the master plan of the Boko Haram is to exterminate Christians, kill all secular security personnel and compel government to install Muslims in all offices, ministries, departments, agencies and parastatals and proclaim Islam as the official national religion. It is sad to remember the deaths of Pastor George Orjih of GoodNews Church, Rev. Sabo Yakubu and Chukwunonye Agumbah (both of Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) in the presence of over 300 Christian captives who were latter on slaughtered in ram-like manners and bathed in their own blood. Sadly, too Christiana Toyin Oluwasosin, a teacher from Abeokuta was dragged out of her classroom with chalk in her hand in Government Secondary School Gandu and brutally murdered on March 27, 2007 in Gombe. In Kano, the sect killed at random any person of the Igbo extraction. Gideon Akalaka was taken from the police custody and

slaughtered, head hoisted on a pole and danced around with exemplifies as reported by Naagbanto (2009).

The desire of every Nigeria not to feed on the crumbs again led to the operations of the hitherto proscribed Niger Delta Militancy. Activities of this group led to a colossal loss in oil revenue as their activities were targeted mainly at oil installations in the Niger Delta. The agitations of the group were basically for the Nigeria government to plough back into the Niger Delta, some of the revenues accrued from the oil milled from the area for over a period of five decades now. The prompt reaction of the Federal Government under late Musa Yar-Adua granting amnesty to members of the militant group who laid down their arms was a stitch in time. The duo illegal bunkering and pipeline vandalization had also dealt a decisive blow to the Nigerian economy. Youths with their cohorts and probably external collaborators are involved in pipeline vandalization to let oil out to be stolen- bunkering. Most pipeline vandals are oil thieves who operate illegal refineries and are deeply involved in crude and refined oil products robbery. These vandals and thieves have improved on their sophistications the more the government planned devices to check their operations. In the bush and at streams and watersides pipeline vandalization is a hobby. Vandals may specialize in breaking different sizes of pipes conveying petroleum products letting oil loose to be fetched, mined, loaded in waiting tankers and carried on Nigeria roads or channeled through our water-ways where paid government security agents keep surveillance, and carted away on daily basis without any interrogation. Out of the bush on the highway and down the villages and cities pipeline vandals and oil thieves are further involved in hostage taking or kidnapping. Kidnappers ask for ransom to set free their victims and this has posed greater threats to security especially in Eastern Nigeria where staff of the oil industry are resident. These hostage takers are sure of where the money gotten from the sale of their oil are and so in order not to feed on crumbs from the king's table, again they ask for heavy amounts of money in exchange for the lives of their victims.

Porous borders, armed robbery and youth unemployment have devastating consequences on the security of Nigeria. With the flexibility of our borders and no dependable security outfits arms, weapons and ammunitions flow into the country with no interception. Politicians and the easy-get-rich equip their "boys" as "thugs" with these weapons. It is common now to see any person taking up arms and driving on the Nigerian roads without being interrogated. When thuggery is not required, the arms are used for robbery and latter shielded for thuggery. Youths must feed and also live well, so despite no job or gainful and personable employment, they must appear cooperate and drive the most recent cars in towns. Youths must employ themselves by doing whatever is available and so the recent elongation of the queues of unemployed graduate as observed by Uche and Kpee (2007) is another security threat to Nigeria as a nation. The recent crave for entrepreneurship for youths is a wrong prescription for an

ailment that the cure is known. Until jobs are made available to the teeming youth population, vices such as armed robbery, kidnapping pipeline vandalism and illegal bunkering may remain with us.

The recent global warming and climate change saga reported by Madumere-Obike, Kaegon and Kpee (2010) had occasioned natural disasters like flooding, and eruption of volcanic peaks on the plateau with their devastating consequences. About October 2012 floods devastated every nook and cranny in Nigeria. Large volumes of water equivalent to those of Noah's days that defiled expertise in swimming settled all over the surface of the earth in Nigeria. Most of the waters were inhabited by biting and stinking venomous snakes that killed a sizeable number of the victims of the flood saga. The most recent 'sandy' storm disaster in the United States and the massive flooding of many parts of the globe including Nigeria and more especially the towns below the Benue are very urgent reminders that climate change and its attendant consequences are serious security threats to the existence of a country like Nigeria.

Security Challenges: the Way Forward

All hopes however is not lost for Nigeria in the light of the security challenges enumerated above. Thinking out of the box, Nigeria needs to look back at its security challenges and address them with sincere political will. Some of the approaches to this include a reliable census, public enlightenment, retouching the security agencies and job creation. If Nigeria must solve its security challenges, then there must be available accurate and reliable data of everybody found in the geographical setting called Nigeria. This will have to do with an accurate census that will provide information about the composition of Nigeria. Census that will reveal age, identity, status, qualification, employment, sex, state and Local Government of origin as to separate the employed from the unemployed. If a correct and reliable data base is in place, security challenges can be addressed even with the simple press of a button. The situation where every Nigerian influences census figures for whatever reasons is the crux of security challenges in Nigeria. The absence of a reliable data bank affects planning (Kpee, 2006) and even provision of social amenities for the populace. Once we know our number, we know our member and then we have started solving our security challenges.

The security agencies in Nigeria need re-orientation and possibly re-organization. Security agents are professionals with code of conduct and ethics. If security agencies look inward and re-appraise themselves, adjustments will be made in pattern of recruitments and enlistments into security agencies, the training and retraining of security agents for certification will be enhanced.

Job creation in an economy where the compensation for certificates is employment is one of the safest approaches to eliminating security threats in Nigeria. Youths, the vulnerable group are always full of energy and the desire to explore hence they are not expected to be left idle. If graduates churned out from the educational institutions at any level are gainfully employed, and so can fend for themselves and their families, few of the populace will be involved in armed robbery, pipeline vandalism and oil bunkering, kidnapping, smuggling and even Boko Haram and militancy.

Security Challenges and Educational Institutions in Nigeria

The security challenges so far x-rayed in this document affect all components of the society including public institutions like schools, churches and various places where people gather for different purposes. Security challenges have bearing with safety of life and property. Teaching and learning demand for an environment that is serene and devoid of acrimony or rancor. Abraham Maslow in Ukeje, Okorie and Nwagbana (1992), a clinical psychologist at the wake of the 20th century proposed what is today referred to as Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. Maslow had proposed that human beings are guided by needs and wants which are rather complex but ordered in a hierarchy of prepondency. In this proposal, Maslow arranged the needs in order of priority in an ascending manner as illustrated below.

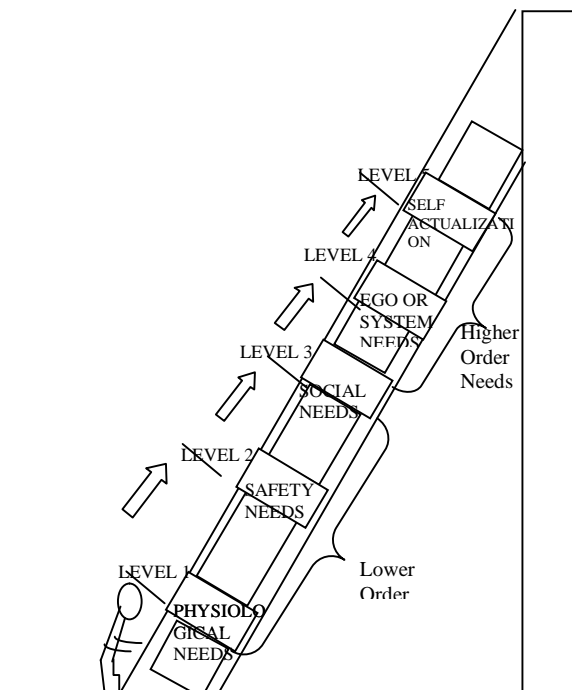


Fig.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Ladder as Presented by the Authors

Maslow had classified all needs in a hierarchy and simply separated the needs as lower order needs and higher order needs. Maslow called the first of the lower needs- the first rung of the ladder, physiological needs. He emphasized that these are basic needs that individuals strive always to satisfy and unless they are satisfied other needs are not demanded. The physiological needs are so important that they can be referred simply to as biological drives or needs of the body. Such needs include hunger, thirst, air, sex, touch, etc. The biological systems of the body crave for these daily even when they are suppressed they emerge again after a short while. Maslow postulated that once the physiological needs have been satisfied, the next need that surfaces is safety needs. Safety or security needs embrace a gamut of needs ranging from protection against danger, harm or threat and noise to protection from fear, anxiety, chaos disorderliness, attack, relocation, war, crime etc. safety or security needs call for orderliness, law, limit and extent of freedom.

Teachers crave for safe and violent free classrooms for effective teaching. Teachers from homes where the peace is threatened and family ties broken may not function well in school because of the carryover effect of the home distractions and abuse. Effective teaching is promised in classrooms where noise and threats by students and even fellow teachers are minimal or absent. The guarantee of safety and protection boost teachers morale in school as they carry out the delicate job of pedagogy. Teachers are rest assured that their security is guaranteed and then protection assured. Possible occasion where teachers safety is threatened include students riot, conduct of public examination, school labour period, inter house sports and other school competitions, violent attack on the school by the community or individuals, the threat by employer where job security is not guaranteed and incessant check on the activities of the teacher. Once the security of the school is threatened, teachers become apprehensive, and this may lead to loss of memory and hence inability to deliver as effective as possible. Teachers in such environment may be confused and unable to distinguish between things.

Students on the other hand shun security challenges and look up to their school to be a model and asprimus inter pares in its locality. Students' security problems as Kpee (2002) puts it, may emanate from their homes- homes that are broken or with turbulent parents. Home environments characterized by discord, mistrust, nagging, confusion, noise and other threatening conditions build insecurity into the mentality of the child. Such child may liken the school to his home and feel insecure in school on the suspicion that whatever he does will not be appreciated by any person. They hold the feelings that any mistake they make in school would immediately attract negative consequences and so, except they are convinced that they can make mistakes without attracting immediate punitive sanctions.

Students, like their teachers, need a stress-free conducive environment devoid of acrimony and rancor. They need an environment that is safe and devoid of threats of any kind. Learning is a very demanding and serious activity and so it calls for an environment that the child can concentrate in without distractions and other vices that can suddenly pull attention from the golden fleece. The security challenges in Nigeria had dealt devastatingly on institutions of learning. Normal academic calendars of schools in areas threatened by the banned terrorist group Boko Haram had been distorted. The University of Maiduguri had been shut down and re-opened several times at the wake of the disturbances in Borno State. Innocent students had been trapped in the web and their lives lost on the altar of their pursuit of the golden flees. Academic activities at all levels of education have been negatively battered in states where the insurgence hold sway. For instance the West African Senior certificate Examination (WASSCE) for May/June 2013 could not hold in some states of the North Eastern Nigeria as in other states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and other countries of the sub region because of the activities of the insurgent group.

There are cases where the entire school plant is destroyed and innocent staff and students killed in cold blood. Invariably, the educational growth of these affected areas must diminish as other parts of the country may not wait for these states to catch up with them. This will further widen the gap in education between the north and the southern part of Nigeria, and how long will a particular region in Nigeria remain educationally less advantaged, remain a question to be answered. Threats, wars, crimes, insecurity and absence of safety to lives, properties and welfare of the people remain a hub in the wheel of the academic growth of any nation.

Conclusion

Security has been conceived as every body's business. The best security any man has therefore is the man himself before government who from time immemorial has been saddled with the responsibility of providing security for life and property of the citizenry. Security affects development adversely but countries of the world including Nigeria had continuously contended with its security challenges so as to enhance its continuous growth and development. Security threats and absence of safety needs, and non protection of lives and property create very hostile environment for educational attainment as no effective teaching and learning can take place in an environment filled with threats of insecurity, wars, rumours, crises, communal crises and other insignificant but powerful tools and devices of insecurity.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made from this study;

1. The Nigerian government should develop strong political will toward curbing activities that constitute threats to lives and properties.

2. State of emergencies should be declared in any state with persistent internal insecurity and threats to lives and properties.
3. Political office holders should be relieved of their offices during emergency rule in state with repeated persistent internal insecurity.
4. Public enlightenment campaign and advocacy should be carried out in order to sensitize the populace of brotherliness and the essence of peaceful co-existence.
5. Facilities of the state and federal government should be withdrawn from states or locations that are vulnerable to security threats and insecurity of lives and properties.
6. Sponsors, collaborators and any group or person that pose security threats to the state or federal government should be punished in the same ways government punishes members of the sect or group.

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