

Mass Literacy as a Tool for Curbing Security Challenges in Nigeria

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Abstract

The need for access to education in Nigeria is becoming indispensable due to increase in population and security challenges in the country in recent times. Access to education is making Nigeria available in all who desires it without any constraints. National security becomes easier if citizens have access to education as this will reduce the available tool for individuals to take part in criminal activities because most of their time will be spent in schooling. Cases of political violence, ethnic and communal clashes, economic quest, abduction and terrorism in Nigeria are as a result of inaccessibility of some of citizens to education and the need for them to service and cope in highly competitive society where they find themselves. The trend of security in Nigeria suggests that there is need for general overhaul in educational policies and its accessibilities as this will guarantee national development and security. It was therefore recommended that there is need for government policy makers, educational administrators/managers and curriculum planners to repackaged educational policies by reducing all barriers that prevents youth especially the less privileged from having access to educational opportunities.

Keywords: *National security, Terrorism, Violence*

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Background to the Study

Concept of National Security and Security in Nigeria

I wish to suggest that the term security means various things to various persons, group, group situations – firstly, security may be taken as a state of well-being, characterized by freedom from danger, risk, lack, uncertainty, etc. indeed, a state of safety whether personal, organizational or national. Secondly, security may be seen as freedom from care, anxiety, or doubt, indeed, a situation of well founded confidence.

Thirdly, security can also mean something that guards or makes safe, creates protection and assures defence. From a fourth angle security may imply freedom from financial cares, from want or poverty in any form; and, it may be interpreted to imply precautions taken to guard against crimes, attack, fear, terror, sabotage, espionage etc.

Historically, security issues are as old as human existence and have remained of paramount concern throughout human history. Every age, era or epoch of human existence has contended with its unique security concerns. The early man was challenged by security from the threats of wild animals, the hostility of the firmament and weather, and creature that moves on the threat (real or imaginary) of any other being national security is a broad concept that encompasses all possible threats to life, including threats to public safety, governance, economic well being, social welfare, and the environment. Ige (2006) defines national security as the ability of the state to maintain laws and order and protect fundamental human right in the country. Augustine, Ifeanyi and Lucy (2012) define it as the ability of the country to protect and defend the interest of core values of the country against internal and external attacks. National security requires proactive management by the state and its security agents and institutions.

Cases of security threats in Nigeria

Anybody who has lived in this country for the past few years can attest to the lack of peace and harmonious coexistence which have characterized our society. With every new regime, there appear to be new social problems. Not too long ago, the democratic dispensation was greeted with the madness of the Sharia crises, then came a period of rampant kidnappings that begun from expatriates and then became a lucrative business for those who saw it as a quick means of acquiring wealth, next came a sudden yearn for bombs as the easiest means of expressing grievances, the April 16th, 2011 presidential elections that were acclaimed even by the international community as free and fair, rather than leave us with sweet memories, has become a very dark part of the Nigerian history. This is because of the mayhem that ravaged northern Nigeria and was responsible for loss of lives and property as never witnessed in Nigeria since the civil war. The most feared name in Nigeria today is that whose pronunciation is itself a “haram”. States likes Plateau and Borno that were known for peace and which made great contributions toward the development of the Nigerian economy through tourism are avoided like the plague. The insecurity of lives and property spares no one not even our security forces or the international community appears to be safe. So much of criminal acts under the guise of religious rights will need serious and mature handling when we look at those issues the first impulse is to blame the government for not doing enough to boost the security in the country. While this may not be completely wrong, we need to ask ourselves whether restraining those

responsible for these atrocities is the solution to the problem. Will keeping enough military and para-military personnel in every nook and cranny of the country heal the bitterness and resentment that eats deep at the heart of many Nigerian? Will enough security forces quench the dissatisfaction that many Nigerians feel about the stark dichotomy between wealth and poverty in the country, where the take-home of members of the legislature in all tiers of government is runs in several millions of naira every month, and yet to approve and pay a minimum wage of eighteen thousand (N18,000.00) has proven too difficult to implement? Education is the engine-room of any nation-building. The gap between the take-home of classroom teachers and the political class is unjustifiable. Will all the security forces in the country change the fact that 70% of Nigerian youths, many of whom are graduates, are unemployed and, since an idle mind is the devil's workshop, these unfortunate Nigerians are available to be manipulated by people, with selfish motives to create trouble and confusion as a cover for their nefarious activities?

The simple truth is that the cure to Nigeria's problems lies in the heart of every good citizen who loves Nigeria and wishes Nigeria well without ethnic or religious bias. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, will only give us a society of blind and toothless people", says Mahatma Ghandi. We must all learn to let go of wrong committed against us and think of a way forward. We must learn to keep religious and tribal sentiments aside and think for Nigeria. Our country has experienced major setbacks due to religious and tribal hatred and intolerance. This will not stop until we see sincerity, peace, unity and purpose for the common good as the only way forward for us. Let us realize that we all have one common goal; the preservation of our country for posterity. Our greed, selfishness, pride and prejudice, working against Nigeria as a nation, must be checked if our country is to make progress. There is no time and no place to be happy on the globe but now and here in our own country. Let us make our country a better place. That peace and unity are the keys to better Nigeria, because they are built on sincerity and purpose for the common good of all Nigerians.

There is hope for Nigeria, in spite of the succession of failed political leadership and our own individual and collective failings as a people. There is hope for Nigeria, inspite of our many socio political and ethno-religious conflicts and in spite of other self-inflicted maladies. There is hope for Nigeria, in spite of the menace of mass murderers that camouflage as religious crusaders in our midst. There is hope for Nigeria, because we are a believing people who cry to the Lord or Allah on a daily basis. Nigeria is not heading for destruction or disintegration. No. We serve a God of Miracles. Let us have full hope for the emergence of a better Nigeria.

Furthermore, since independence, Nigeria has had its share of security threats. There had been political conflicts among political parties notably, operatives wet (burn people and roast them alive) in the south-west, inter ethnic conflicts in the northern part of the country which eventually culminated into the civil war from 1967-1970 (Ijaya, 2004). Since the end of the war, Nigeria has never been completely free from politically motivated violence. There had also been several coups" General Murtala's July, 1975, Buhari's (December, 1983), Babangida's (August, 1985), Abacha's (November, 1993) and Brigadier Oskar's (April, 1990) during the intermittent democratic trials, peace remained elusive. The nation's policy is usually

unnecessarily heated up by the politicians due to personality clashes, intra-or inter-party rivalry especially for second term bid. Notable ones include the violence that followed the June 12, 1993 annulment of an election considered the most credible in the history of elections in Nigeria, the violent conflicts between rival political parties and rival groups within each party in different parts of the country. In the present day democratic dispensation, new dimensions have been added to the political violence making the political terrain more dangerous and fearsome than ever before, that is the danger posed by political god-fatherism, kidnapping and assassinations. A cursory look at Table 1 shows a catalogue of politically related assassinations in Nigeria between 1999 and 2012.

Table 1: Some Political Related Assassination in Nigeria (1999 – 2012)

S/NO	VICTIM	STATUS	YEAR
1.	Chief Bola Ige	Attorney General of the federation	December, 2001
2.	Barnabas Igwe and his wife	Chairman, for Nigerian Bar Association, Anambra	September, 2002
3.	Harry Marshall	National Vice Chairman for the South-South zone of All Nigeria People Party (ANPP).	March, 2003
4.	Engr. Funsho Collins	Gubernatorial candidate of PDP in Lagos	July, 2006
5.	Dr. Ayodeji, Aramola	Gubernatorial candidates of PPC in Ekiti State.	August, 2006.
6.	Dipo Dina	Gubernatorial candidate of ACD, Ogun State	January, 2010
7.	Senator Danby	Serving Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.	July, 2012
8.	Honourable Gyang aFulani	The Majority leader of Plateau State House of Assembly	July, 2012

Source: Compiled by Authors.

Indeed, incessant political violence in Nigeria could be attributed to over-zealousness and desperation by political gladiators to convectors or remain in office at all cost. At present, politicians are already strategizing for the control and retention of power come 2019. Consequently, inter and intra-political party conflicts have become rife in which politicians are deploying large resources, changing the rules and legislators of the political game, distorting laws and employing violence and political assassination to settle political scores. Party meeting campaigns and conventions have become mere threats where dangerous weapons like guns and cutlasses are freely displayed and used to rig elections, harass and intimidate the electorates.

Over the past decade Nigeria has been plagued by frequent political instability. This political instability has generated negative effects on the education had been in crisis for many years, the situation has recently been made worse by frequent demonstrations staged by students, incessant strike by the academic and other members of staff in the education industry (Tebobo,

2000). Much of the difficulty lies in the fact that the sector is poorly funded (Okeke, 2008). This resulted in shortage of material and human resources needed to make education accessible, lack of qualified teachers, brain drain from educational institutions, few instructional inputs/materials, shortage of classrooms, and a host of other problems.

Economic quest is another security threat as a result of fighting for economic reasons. At times, it is tailored along ethnic lines, for example the Lagos State Abattoir clash of 16th and 17th October, 2000 which involved Hausa-Fulani (the majority among cattle dealers) and the Yorubas (the majority among cattle butchers). The clash was said to be a follow-up of ethnic clashes between the two tribes in Mile 12 Market, Ketu, Sagamu and Kano. Umeje (2011) reported similar cases in other places like the Yoruba farmers versus Fulani herdsmen in Oke-Osun, Oyo State. Environmental degradation and the failure of the Federal Government to deal effectively with the issues at stake are the factors responsible for the volatile nature of the conflicts in the Niger Delta.

Although by no means limited to oil in the Niger Delta, the most prevalent campaign about the link between resources and conflict focuses on oil and the Delta region. It is however true that other types of resource driven conflicts have received less attention in the debate. Assets such as grazing and farming and water resource, have tended to give rise to horizontal conflicts that involve communities across the geo-political zones (Eme, 2011). Table 2 shows some record of cases of abduction for economic quest between 2002 – 2004.

Tables 2: Police Record of some cases of Abduction and Kidnapping in the Niger Delta Region for Economic Quest

DATE	ACTOR	OIL SERVING CO.	MILITANT GROUP STATE	DEMAND	OUTCOME
April, 2002	Abduction of 10 workers	Shell	Militant youth gang, Ijaw, Bayelsa.	N3.1million ransom	Resulted from failure to yield to alleged frivolous demand.
June/July, 2003	Kidnap of staff	Oil servicing and Co. Working for shell.	Ijaw youth militants, Delta State	N25.4m ransom	State Government intervention/negotiated release after 14 days.
November, 2003	Kidnap of 9 Crew and 4 military escorts of oil barges.		Ijaw militants	Ransom/ other demands	Released 2 days later after threat by State Government/Security Agencies.
November, 2003	Kidnap of 14 workers	Chevron	Ijaw militant youths, Bayelsa	Ransom	Intervention of State Government.
	Kidnap of 19 oil workers	Nobel Drilling	Ijaw militant Delta State	Ransom	Intervention of State Government
	Kidnap of 7 workers	Bredero Shaw oil servicing Co.	Ijaw militant youth, Delta State	\$5m ransom	State Government intervention/ negotiation.
April, 2004	Murder of 7 workers and military personnel.	Chevron	Militant youths along Benin River Area, Delta State	-	-

Source: Ikelegbe (2005).

The state neglect of people of Niger Delta region despite the economic gains of the country from the area set the stage for violent acts of kidnapping hostage taking and hijacking of crude oil vessels. This is characterized by widespread poverty because about 70% of the Nigerian population live below the poverty line (Awoyemi, 2012), this might have increase in recent years when so many graduates have been turned out without jobs in every part of the country, Niger Delta inclusive.

Terrorism can be in form of kidnapping, armed robbery, violence and social vices. It is the use of illegal cohesion to suppress/overpower individual for selfish economic interest. Terrorism has been variously described as a tactic and a strategy, a crime and a holy duty, a justified reaction to oppression and an inexcusable abomination. Obviously, a lot of definitions of terrorism depend in whose point of view is being represented. Wilkinson (2006) in description suggested that terrorism can be distinguished from other forms of violence in the following way:

1. It is premeditated and designed to create a climate of extreme fear.
2. It is directed at a wider target than the immediate victims.
3. It violates the norms regulating disputes, protest and dissent.
4. It is used primarily, though not extensively to influence the political behaviour of governments, communities or specific social groups.

In recent years, Nigeria has become a theatre of genocide, bloodshed and insecurity due to the carnage activities of terrorist groups. Terrorists of various groups and camps unleash havoc on the Nigerian populace. Though numerous but the most noticeable and deadly is the Boko Haram sect (anti-western education group). It is apparent from the agitations of these groups that economic deprivation, marginalization, frustration and desperation experienced by the greater population of Nigerians is the underlying cause of terrorism in Nigeria. In other words terrorism in Nigeria is a latent friction of prolonged failure of the Nigerian state to deliver purposeful and good governance. The situation in Nigeria where government officials and public office holders loot public funds for their personal benefits. The greater percentage of the citizenry especially the youths are denied access to education, employment and good health. Consequently, these youths are therefore affected socially, psychologically and economically. Frustrations, dejection and hope lessens remain a day to day occurrence in their lives (Awoyemi, 2012). Those who denied access to qualitative education can be easily brainwashed and indoctrinated with false doctrines and co-opted into illegal societies and activities (Zunve, Ingyoroko and Akuva, 2013).

With the incessant Boko Haram bombing in the northern part of the country, Nigeria indeed joined other isolated countries that carried that revolting tag of being referred to as terrorist states. Unarguably, Boko Haram has recorded the highest volatile terrorist attacks in the history of Nigeria as evident in table 3.

Table 3: Records of Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria from 2009 to 2012.

Date	State	Location of Attack	Impact
July 27, 2009	Yobe	Attack on Potiskum, Yobe State, Divisional Police Headquarters.	4 people killed.
March, 2010	Plateau	Another sect operation in the northern part of Jos.	300 people killed.
October, 2010	Abuja	Explosions near the Eagle Square, Abuja	12 people killed and many injured.
December 24, 2010	Plateau	A buomb attack in Barkin Ladi, Jos.	8 people killed.
December 31, 2010	Abuja	Explosions of Magadishe Mammy market, Abuja.	10 people killed.
January 21, 2011	Borno	Attack on Borno State Governorship	7 people killed
March 2, 2011	Kaduna	Boko Haram killed two police men attached to the resident of Mustapha Sandamu, of Rigaga	2 people killed.
March 30, 2011	Yobe	Bomb planted by Boko Haram, Damaturu exploded and injured a police officer	1 injured.
April 8, 2011	Niger	Bomb at INEC office, Suleja	8 people killed.
April 26, 2011	Bauchi	Army Barracks in Bauchi bombed.	3 people killed and many injured.
May 29, 2011	Abuja, Bauchi and Zaria	Multiple bombing in different locations in northern Nigeria.	13 people killed and 40 injured.
June 7, 2011	Borno	Series of bomb blasts occurred in Maiduguri.	7 killed and many vehicles damaged.
June 16, 2011	Abuja and Borno	Nigerian Police Headquarters, Abuja, bombed by a suspected suicide bomber. A bomb blast also occurred at Damboa town, Maiduguri.	7 police men killed and 2 security men.
June 20, 2011	Katsina	Book Haram stormed Kankara Police station in Kastina state.	7 policemen killed and 2 security men.
July 9, 2011	Borno and Niger	A clash between Boko Haram and the Military in Maiduguri, Borno State, also in Suleja, Niger State, a bomb was targeted at a church.	35 killed and many injured.
July 12, 2011	Borno	Boko Haram threw an explosive device on a moving military patrol vehicle.	5 people killed.
July 15, 2011	Borno	Explosion in Maiduguri	5 people injured.
July 25, 2011	Borno	Bomb explosion near the palace of traditional ruler in Maiduguri	8 people killed.
August 26, 2011	Abuja	A suicide bomber drove into the United Nations building in Abuja.	A25 people killed and 60 injured.
September 12, 2011	Bauchi	A bomb attack on a Police station in Misace.	7 people]killed
September 17, 2011	Borno	Brother in-law of Mohammed Yusuf the slain leader of Boko Haram, Babakura Fugu, shot dead in front of his house in Maiduguri by 2 members of the sect two days after he was visited by former President Olusegun Obasanjo.	1 person killed.

October 3, 2011	Borno	Book Haram attacked Baga market in Maiduguri.	3 people killed.
November 4, 2011	Yobe	Attack by Boko Haram in Damaturu	150 people killed.
November 27, 2011	Yobe	Attack in Geidman	7 people killed.
December 24, 2011	Plateau	Bombing in Jos	80 people killed.
December 25, 2011	Niger	Christmas day bombing in Madalla	50 people killed.
January 6, 2012	Adamawa	Christ Apostolic Church was attacked and Igbo people were also killed in Mubi in the some state.	37 people killed.
January 20, 2012	Kano	Multiple attacks in Kano	250 people killed.
January 26, 2012	Kano	The Sabon Gari of Kano state witnessed another explosion, which caused another pondemouriuon in the state	Some luxury buses damaged.
February 7, 2012	Aaakano	A bomb blast in Kano Market and military barracks.	5 people killed.
April 8, 2012	Kaduna	Easter day church bombing	38 people killed.
June 17, 2012	Kogi	Multiple attacks on churches	12 people killed and 80 injured.
August 7, 2012	Kogi	Deeper Life Church	19 people killed.

Source: Adapted from Authors.

The role of education in ensuring national security cannot be under estimated. Education installs morals, ethics and epistemic values in individuals so that they can be completely fit (both in mind and character) and useful to contribute meaningfully to the development of communities where the find themselves (Oludeyi, 2013).

This in no small measure contributes to national security. Education thus, is perceived as lubricant in the wheel of nation. Researchers have concluded that educated and safe environment have the ability to contribute significantly to economic growth of the nation (Becker, 1964, Schultz, 1960 in Oludeyi, 2013). Human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build socio-economic and political organizations, and carry forward national projects for development. Apparently, a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people through education and utilize them effectively in the national economy characterized by people with various discipline behaviours such as hire killing, robbery and abduction. Qualitative human resources, education and youth orientation is sine-qua-non to national security and nation building, it emancipates and empowers people to achieve economic and social freedom (Yesufu, 2000), thereby installing or inculcating in them the spirit of unity and sense of allegiance to the nation.

Access to education can facilitate the process of enthroning and cascading ethical values into the people thereby promoting the spirit of community unity and collective responsibility. Osabuohien and Ogunrinola (2007) acknowledged that education enhances political and health seeking behaviours among people. Similarly, Lochner and Moretti (2004) demonstrate that years invested in education generate incentives greater than the private returns enjoyed by the individuals. In line with this, access to education is expected to improve in the people the spirit of social recognitions and equality, reduce feelings of frustration, aggression and intension to count crime and thus, access to education becomes one of the most powerful

instruments for achieving people's loyalty towards their country and enable rapid social reform and peaceful co-existence.

In contrast, ill-trained mind is no doubt a threat to national security and nation building. Oludeyi (2013) asserts that when students feel deprived of educational opportunities, the absence of a friendly face or guiding hand often leads to disengagement and disillusionment. Instead of a degree, they end up with debilitating debt that leaves them worse off than ever. Therefore, national integration, insecurity, terrorism and political thuggery, among other become parasite that truncates the seeds of national security. Unfortunately, it is a scenario that describes Nigerian democratic stability as a likely impossible mission.

Conclusion

Access to education remains an issue at all levels of education in Nigeria. It has not been fully met in Nigerian society where social mobility depends more on academic achievement than anything else. The issue of access to education has been manipulated by various regimes as a source of political power and in seeking political support. Such activity has opened up opportunities for malpractices that now open deep in the system.

Recommendations

The current trend of terrorism in Nigeria shows that there is need for a complete overhaul in educational policies, systems and its access. This is because time spent in schooling, irrespective of educational attainment, significantly decreases the time available for individuals to participate in criminal activities. Therefore, access to education must always remain top priorities of every responsible government and should remain part of management governance agenda. There is thus, need for establishing educational institutions that will recognize and cater for such underserved socio-economic class and stratification among Nigerian youth. Educational or literacy programme with global standards needed for youth re-orientation, behavioral modification and reformation as well as capacity building need therefore be established in Nigeria.

Access to and attainment of educational qualifications is therefore necessary if Nigerian especially the youth is to become agent of progressive possible change in the country. Hence, there is need for government, policy makers, educational administrators/managers and curriculum planner to re-sharpen and repackage educational priorities by removing all barriers that prevents youth, especially the less privileged, from having access to educational opportunities. The initiative must constitute the foundation of every nation development priority. This is so because access to education guarantees development and security which are two sides of the same coin. Therefore, development challenges demand an atmosphere of peace and tranquility.

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