

SECURITY CHALLENGES AND COMPLIANCE TO SAFE SCHOOL INITIATIVE BY PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examined the security challenges and compliance to safe school initiative by public secondary schools in northeast Nigeria. Major discussions were drawn around security challenges in Nigerian schools, school security, security interventions in schools and security standards in schools. The sources of information were majorly secondary data in the areas of the subject of discuss. The observation revealed that security measures does not guarantee there will be no crime or violence in the school environments but could assist in checkmating them. The paper concludes that security issues have become a major challenge in our educational institutions, hence the introduction of safe school security standards and the need for full compliance to provide conducive school system where students can be safe, free from hazards, and other possible disruption is paramount. It was therefore recommended that public secondary school authorities in northeast Nigeria should build strong security synergy with host communities to tackle any security challenge that may arise before it becomes uncontrollable.

Introduction

Security is the first basic necessity of human beings and the society which entails absence of harm, danger, fear or any type or aspect of one's or groups or nations activities as they operate freely (eket, 2019). Safe learning environment enables adequate delivery of essential skills, knowledge, values as well as the attainment of the overall educational objectives. Teaching and learning are also achieved where teachers teach and students learn in an environment free from attack, shock, fear and terror. Unfortunately, the state of insecurity in Nigerian secondary schools has become an issue of major concern to governments, parents, students and many education stakeholders. Many schools that are supposed to be the stronghold of learning are being attacked, teachers and student being kidnapped and some killed on learning ground. Nearly 50,000 school children have been displaced by Boko Haram, Bandits and kidnappers, creating fears in the hearts of teachers and students to attend schools even where attacks have not been reported. This has created anxiety, worry and uncertainty in the life of many students,

teachers and parents such that their security has become a challenge that cannot be ignored due to its consequences on the society. Under this precarious circumstance, the safety and security of school managers, teachers and students and the communities where schools are located are no longer guaranteed. As a result of this, attending schools by the school managers, teachers, students and their parents/guidance becomes traumatic.

Statistics shows that 2,295 teachers have been killed and 19,000 others displaced in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States between 2009 to 2018, 1,500 schools were reported to have been destroyed from 2014 to 2018, with over 1,280 casualties among teachers and students (Adesulu,2019). These attacks were occasioned by the ideologies of Boko Haram terrorist that western education is forbidden. Many other notable schools in southwest Nigeria particularly in Lagos and Ogun States were also attacked and teachers and students were kidnapped with some of them losing their lives.

Insecured school environment affects learning of children, it triggers traumatic disorder and toxic stress that affect students' learning negatively (Akintunde and Musa 2016). Similarly, school attendance and enrolment are equally affected as parents pull their children out of schools while in some extreme cases, insecurity has led to the closure of schools such as observed in Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and other States where attacks have been targeted at schools (Ameh,2015). In recognition of the importance of education and the consequences which attacks on schools could have on the society, the government in collaboration with Global Business Coalition for Education (GBC-Education) introduced the safe school initiative targeted at providing a safe education environment as well as protecting the right of the Nigerian child to learn. The Safe Schools Initiative provided a programmatic response for the protection of schools and prevention of future attacks on schools. The Safe Schools Initiative involves mainly a combination of school-based interventions and community interventions to protect schools and all institution of learning. The Initiative was first implemented in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states and later expanded to others states of the federation. The security measures recommended for school protection under this initiative include; School-level security intervention, this entails the provision of boundary walls or installation of barbed wire around the schools, provision of armed guard(s) in collaboration with law enforcement agencies which may include the military or state-assisted paramilitary or private hired security.

The training of staff as school safety officers was also recommended in the initiative such that the staff will have the skills on evacuation of students and communication with security officials and local authorities should a school come under attack. The second security approach of the Safe School Initiative (SSI) is the community-based intervention which encompasses; Community Education Committees and Teacher-Student-Parent Defence Units. In this approach it is

expected that communities have specialized knowledge about their particular context and conflict dynamics, and may even know the individuals involved, they may be the best suited to devising practical solutions for protecting education from attack and could help intervening for schools as peaceful environment. It is against this background, that this paper assessed the security challenges and compliance to safe school initiative by public secondary schools in Northeast Nigeria.

Security Challenges in Nigerian Schools

Schools are quiet and serene environments where teaching and learning take place. It is a place where the future human capital of the society are formed and developed. It could also be referred to a place where children and adolescents have their initial education and academic learning. School is, indeed, the place where a child receives his/her first formal education. The initial stages of life of an individual are spent in a school. A child, usually, enters school at the age of six in public schools and stays there till the age of seventeen or eighteen. This means that each person begins his/her school-life at early childhood and ends it at late adolescence. Thus, the time spent by an individual in school is known to be the most critical phase of human development. The main aim of a school is to provide education and train students for academic achievement and build their intellectual ability. The environment outside the school premises is completely different from what it is inside. A school is known for its protectiveness and discipline. An individual spends so much of his/her early as well as critical life in school that it can become difficult for him/her when he/she passes out of school and steps into the unpredictable and somewhat unsafe environment that exists outside the school. This gives an indication that apart from focusing on academic achievement, schools should also give a lot of attention to the social and emotional competence of students in order to make them cope and adjust to the stressful life and deal with varied life situations once they move out of school and enter to face the unpredictable world (Saif, 2008).

Unfortunately, the rise of Boko Haram sect in Nigeria whose philosophy was that western education is evil and should not be practised made the schools in Nigeria an endangered environment. To express their aversion to western education which is the crux of formal education and human development, they (Boko Haram) launched attack on Government Girls College, Chibok and abducted 276 students and subsequently repeated the attack in Dapchi girls' secondary school where they abducted 110 female students. This act brought a new dimension to security challenges in Nigerian schools, indicating the absence of safety measures in most Nigerian schools (Lawal, 2018). Nigerian schools have increasingly become soft targets for violence and security incidents. There have been series of violent

activities occurring in many schools which have affected the school children. This has become a national concern and discourse for many stakeholders to find a lasting solution to the menace. While gun shooting in schools in places like South Africa within the continent is currently gaining ground, concerned stakeholders are devising ways in which this violent activity can be brought to an end (Bowman, 2018; Nicolaidis, 2018). In Nigeria particularly, gun shooting is not popular and incidence of such act has been rare except in cases of terrorist attack in the Northern part of the country. In the abduction of Chibok and Dapchi school girls (Amaza, Feb, 2018), and the kidnap of school children from Lagos schools (Shaban, July, 2017).

School Security

Security is the state of being free from danger or threats; freedom from doubt, anxiety or fear. Security according to Ever in Deyer and Osher (2000), is something that gives or assures safety. Security incorporates measures taken by an organization or government to prevent espionage, sabotage, or attack. It can be measures adopted by a business or home owner to prevent crime, assault, and to prevent an escape (Picarell, 2008). According to Rogers (2009), security can broadly be defined as a means of providing effective levels of protection against pure risk. It is a process used to create a relatively crime free area. The aim of security is to assess the vulnerability to risk and thereafter to employ techniques and measures in order to reduce that vulnerability to a reasonable level. Security will therefore assist in creating a stable, fairly predictable environment in which individuals may move freely with reduced or without any disturbance or injury (Lambaard and Kole, 2008). Security means different things to different fields of life. In Economics, it is described as a certificate or creditorship or property put in place to receive interest.

Furthermore, it is a measure taken by a military unit, activity, or installation to protect itself against all acts designed to, or that may impair its effectiveness, it is a condition that results from the establishment and maintenance of protective measures that ensure a state of inviolability from hostile acts or influences (Ken, 2012). Security can also be explained as a state of care of mind, freedom from doubt and absence of worry. It can be likened to watching over an organization for anticipated event. According to Green (1999), security entails a stable, relatively predictable environment in which an individual or a group may pursue its end without disruption or harm and without fear of disturbance or injury. Holton, (2004) agrees that security measures can assist in reducing crime and violence; however he stated that it is important to bear in mind that security measures cannot guarantee that no crime or violence will take place. School security can be defined as measures taken for the protection of the students, staff, property and other school valuable assets from attacks or dangers. According to

Kurtus (2012), it is a plan by administrators or Principals to protect students and staff in the event of danger. It is a plan against the criminal and anti-social behaviour which can cause disruption to the work of the school, physical and mental damage to the people and damage to the school building (Ragozzino, Litne, and Brien, 2009).

School security can also be explained as those measures taken to protect and manage school violence, reduce safety risks and liability, and improve on school community relationship (Trump, 2003). It is the physical protection of school property, school personnel and students from hostile acts or influences. They are measures taken to maintain order, discipline and prevention of disruption to the entire school (Fukumi, 2008). According to Gordon, (2000), school threats are those things that threaten the residents of the school community, or things they value and persons or ideas. They are those phenomena that jeopardize the safety of students, staff and the school property. School threats can further be explained as problems that undermine the security of any school community (Redding, 2006).

Peterson and Skaba (2001) described, school threats as the capacity of any human and non-human elements to destroy the vital interest of the school. This is to say that security threats cover all aspects of malicious intention, action or occurrence geared towards making the school vulnerable and exposed to security risk. In dissecting the foregoing definitions of school security threats, it can be understood that school security threats cover all aspects of malicious actions, occurrence, geared towards making students, teachers and the entire members of the school community vulnerable and exposed to security risks which in every way, may disturb or lead to school closure for some time.

According to Weaver (1995), this should make the school and safety officials to treat school threats seriously and have protocols in place for assessing and managing school safety. Security threats can be simply divided into two, namely natural and manmade threats. Natural threats are those threats that are generated by nature, capable of posing a great danger to the wellbeing and survival of people or members of the school community such as drought, heat waves and storms. While man made threats are any indication, circumstance or event with the potential to cause loss or damage to an asset or life, such as terrorist attacks.

Security interventions in schools

There are many security options that have been employed in some schools and countries across the world, including armed guards, improved locks and cameras, or on-site police substations. In the Nigerian case the interventions are mainly on the school and community-based interventions. Worried by the alarming rate of violence and insecurity across Nigeria, especially in the North East and particularly targeted at children and students in Nigerian schools, the Nigerian

Safe School Initiative was launched in 2014 by the Nigerian Government to step up actions on how to better protect the nation's schools against all forms of violence as well as potential threats which if not managed could endanger the education objective. It mobilized parents, policymakers, school officials, students, community leaders and religious groups across the nation to be key stakeholders in the implementation of the intervention. Efforts were put in place to educate stakeholders on the elements of school safety, as well as engage them in making more schools safer and facilitate the development of strategic plans that will effectively address each school's unique safety and security concerns.

Security Standards

The school safety and security standards intervention project is to assist schools and the entire education system to proactively provide a safe environment, conducive to learning, where students, teachers and school managers can be free from hostile incidents and other possible disruptions which can negatively impact the educational process and affect teaching and learning. A security system is made up of different components, namely security aids, security measures, policies and procedures, risks assessments risks analysis and risk control measures. Security aid comprises of both physical security and human element. These in turn are combined to develop and implement a security measure. In brief, security prevention measures are those pieces of equipment or manpower used to improve or add to the overall security system which is made up of a number of security aids Mentiki (2012). The way they operate and coordinate is based on a clear written security policy, which includes procedures and operational guidelines. This security measure can be achieved in the following ways: Policies and Procedures. Policies and procedures are vital parts of a security system in any institution. It sets guideline and provides direction as to how situations should be effectively managed and handled (Rogers, 2009). Procedures are the guidelines that inform everybody on how the objectives in the policy should be carried out and provide the instruction on how security activities must be conducted. Both security policies and procedures are relatively inexpensive measures that can be used to assist with the solving and reduction of crime and violence within the school premises.

There is a wide range of physical security measures that can be put into practice. They can be divided into categories, consisting of the outside perimeter measure, inner middle perimeter measure and internal measures (Lamboard and Kole, 2008). The outside perimeter measures are those measures that can be found outside the school building normally the perimeter of the premises such as signs, fences and other barriers, lighting, alarms and patrols. The inner middle perimeter measures are the security measures used within the boundaries of the facility and can include fence and other barriers, alarms, light, Close Circuit Television

(CCTV) external cameras, warning signs, doors, lock, burglar proofing on windows, security staff and access control system. (Philpott and Kunstle, 2007). Lastly, there are the internal physical security measures which are the ones that can be found within buildings such as alarms, CCTV cameras, turnstiles, windows and door bars, locks, safes, vaults protective lighting and other barriers.

Having the appropriate preventive and emergency plans in place is vital for any organization, especially schools. These plans must also be reviewed and updated on a regular basis and should be practised by both the educators and scholars. Improving and practising safety drill procedures are some of the least expensive ways of improving safety in schools. Yet, according to Campell (2007), it is often a factor that is overlooked by school management. According to Philopott and Kuenstle (2007), schools need to be prepared to deal with all types of risks that might face them. In addition to this, schools need not only to be ready but should also be able to handle all crises, large or small. Knowing how to deal with a crises situation and what to do when crises occur is the difference between calm and chaos, between courage and fear, between life and death (Philopott and Kuenstle, 2007). The intensity and scope of crisis can range from incidents that directly or indirectly affect a single scholar, to one that can impact the entire community.

According to Campell (2007), fear of a crisis occurring is best managed by education, communication and preparation, rather than denial. According to Campell each school's plan will be different and unique. The school will have to take into consideration the geographical area, problematic possibilities and other unique features they face. Crisis Response Teams (CRTs) need to be established to effectively respond during and after a crisis and to minimize any injuries that might be sustained. According to Green (1999), all CRT members must be trained in the crisis respond procedures, which can sequentially train the whole school community.

Conclusion

Most school environments in the country are no longer safe and secured for effective teaching and learning. Presently, security issues have become a major challenge in our educational institutions, hence the introduction of safe school security standards and the need for full compliance to provide conducive school system where students can be safe, free from hazards, and other possible disruption. It is therefore important that school authorities fully comply with all approved security measures to proactively check any incident that may disrupt and impact negatively on the educational process. That would positively prepare the school authorities to appropriately respond in the event of emergency situation.

Recommendations

In line with the security initiatives to ameliorate the challenges of school insecurity, the following measures were suggested.

Full compliance to safe school security standards is necessary and should be strictly followed to ensure safe and conducive teaching and learning environment. All school security supervisory agencies should be active and ready to punish any school authority that fails to comply with the set security preventive standards.

All public secondary school authorities should be mandated to establish a viable Teacher-Student-Parent Security Unit aside the PTA and School Based Management Committees (SBMC) to ensure a swift response in the event of emergency situation in the school.

Public secondary school authorities in northeast Nigeria should build strong security synergy with host communities to tackle any security challenge that may arise before it becomes uncontrollable. This will ensure smooth communication between the schools and the communities to monitor and report any observed threat and deal with it before it becomes uncontrollable.

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