Abstract

The paper explained that law-related education seeks to help citizens develop an understanding of the legal and justice system of the country. Various perspectives of crime and its types are discussed. Causes of crime are delineated into biological, psychological, social and economic perspectives. The paper itemized the crime prevention and control agencies in Nigeria and observes that despite their great number they fail to achieve the expected result because their strategies are mainly reactive and ad hoc. Strategies for enhancing crime prevention and control through law-related education are highlighted. The paper concluded that law-related education would help forestall excessive wielding of power by law enforcement agencies.

Keywords: Law-related education; crime prevention and control.
The complexity of Nigeria as a nation is not limited to its multi-ethnic, religious groups, rudderless polity and unfathomable economic policies; rather it extends to its unenviable high record of violent crimes and plethora of agencies for crime prevention and control. Most attempts at crime prevention and control seem to be ad hoc and reactive in nature hence their failure to achieve desired results.

The ever-changing nature of crimes and their attendant consequences call for proactive strategies based on more formalized data-based pedagogical principles and practices which should focus not only on crime as an aberration but also on the laws related to its prevention and control. This becomes very important when we realize that some of the crimes are committed by persons who are ignorant of the consequences of their action, furthermore, people are beginning to develop negative attitudes toward our legal system as it relates to crime and criminality. Law-related education is thus advocated to mitigate widespread ignorance of laws and justice system among Nigerian citizens.

**Concept of Law-Related Education**

Law-related education seeks to help citizens develop an understanding of the legal and justice system and to provide them with a functional knowledge of the operation of legal institutions (Jarolimek in Ikwumelu, 2013). Law-related education aims at debunking the idea that knowledge of law and legal system is a sole responsibility of lawyers and the judiciary; it presents law as an essential aspect of citizens’ every-day experience. This is because therein, the nation’s laws are presented not as a set of abstract concepts compiled exclusively for law school and courtroom use, rather it is viewed as human-centered rules and regulations aimed at instilling decorum and harmony in interpersonal relationships in order to ensure a low crime rate in the society.

Broad goals of law-related education include the following:

1. To develop an understanding of concepts that are basic to the legal system, such as liberty, justice, fairness, tolerance, power, honesty and equality;
2. To develop an understanding and appreciation of the constitutional basis of the Nigerian legal system;
3. To develop a functional knowledge of how the institutions of the legal system operate;
4. To develop an understanding of and respect for the need for a system of law and justice as a prerequisite for orderly and harmonious living;
5. To ensure that constitutional provisions relating to equality of rights before the law and impartiality of courts of law are understood and internalized. (Jarolimek in Ikwumelu, 2012; Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).
Law-related education is thus an effort at formulating and restructuring the basic concepts of law and legal system for pedagogical purposes to enhance general understanding and application by the public.

**Concept of Crime**

The term crime took its origin from Latin words maleficium’ meaning an evil deed, wrong doing, mischief; or ‘flagitium’ meaning scandalous conduct or a disgraceful action. Osborn’s Concise Law Dictionary (2001) defines crime as an act, default or conduct prejudicial to the community, the commission of which by law renders the person responsible liable to punishment by fine or imprisonment in special proceedings. From the legal practitioners’ perspective crime could be described as “those breaches of the law resulting in special accusatorial procedure controlled by the state, and liable to sanction over and above compensation and costs”, (Okonkwo, 1990:20). Continuing, Scanlan and Ryan (1985:3) held that a crime is “a wrong to society involving the breach of a legal rule which has criminal consequences attached to it (i.e. prosecution by the state in the criminal courts)” Ikwumelu (2012:37) simply explained that “crime is an infringement of the law of the society”.

From the foregoing the features of crime include:

1. wrongdoing, mischief, disgraceful action;
2. an act or conduct prejudicial to the community;
3. a breach of law;
4. wrong in society which has criminal consequences; and
5. Infringement of the law of the society.

These features combine to form what a crime alludes to.

Criminal offences used to be categorized either as felonies or as misdemeanors. While felonies refer to those crimes which had as their penalty on conviction the forfeiture of land and goods and even a death sentence, misdemeanor refers to any offence not amounting to felony, that is, less serious offence. Presently, crimes are categorized into indictable and summary offences. Indictable offences are more serious than summary offences. Crimes are also delineated into those against person, those against property, and those against the state. Those against person include murder, rape, suicide, infliction of bodily harm, etc; those against property are robbery, burglary, theft and arson; and those against the state include bribery, perjury, embezzlement, and forgery.

**Types of Crime in Nigeria**

While features and characteristics of crime may be common in every society, its complexity, sophistication, pertinacity, and pervasiveness vary from one society to
another depending on that society’s level of technological/scientific and socio-economic development. Aku, (2013:185) thus noted that “the rate of technological advancement indicates that we would always be witnessing the emergence of new trends or dimensions of crime”.

Data on the nature of crime in Nigeria are scanty and in some cases unreliable. Agreeing, Alemika (2013:281) observes that,

*It is difficult to quantify the losses associated with insecurity and crime in Nigeria due to the absence of reliable crime statistics. Police crime statistics in the country are unreliable because they are not properly recorded. Recorded cases are underreported due to lack of required skill, low investment in efficient crime record management and pressure to demonstrate effectiveness by reporting low crime figures.*

Despite the absence of an accurate record of the nature of crime in Nigeria, it is undeniable that crimes in less developed countries, including Nigeria, are not intrinsically different from those prevalent in the more advanced countries, they may only differ in magnitude and sophistication. Alemika (2013) presents the following as the types of crimes that hold sway in Nigeria:

- Murder
- Robbery
- Rape
- Sexual exploitation
- Kidnapping
- Theft of car/motorcycle / mobile phone/ money, etc.
- Domestic violence
- Forced same-sex intercourse
- Physical assault
- Burglary, and
- Armed violence other than robbery.

Available statistics from the Nigeria Police Force shows that over five years from 2005 to 2009:
- 1,043 citizens were killed in armed robbery incidents;
- 16,925 robbery suspects were arrested by the police;
- 3,651 armed robbery suspects were prosecuted, which constitute only about 20% of robbery suspects arrested during the period.
- 2,216 robbery suspects were killed in encounter with police,
- 517 police officers were killed in encounter with robbers, (Alemika, 2013). This shows the nature and types of crime in Nigeria.
Causes of Crime in Nigeria

Plethora of perspectives abound in relation to the causes of crime in Nigeria. They include biological, psychological, social, and economic perspectives. The biological explanation of the causes of crime has three dimensions, namely one that associates crime with physical features of a person (e.g. stocky and rounded builds, large ears, extra toes, shape of the head, etc); one that relates criminal tendencies to disease or illness; and lastly, one that attributes criminal behaviours to hereditary. These views have however failed to show consistent correlation and so lack scientific proof.

Psychological explanations of criminal behaviors focus on the after-effect of a lack of love in childhood. It postulates that lack of parental love and care in childhood leads to aggressive and hostile behaviors in adulthood which could eventually lead to criminal behaviors.

Sociological explanations rely on institutional and social dysfunctions or anomie. Lewis (2003) maintains that social polarization, institutional dysfunction, feeble and unsteady institutions could give rise to criminal tendencies on the part of the citizens. This situation creates confusion over society’s value consensus and system of shared values causing disenchantment and hatching out disparate groups of individuals.

Economic explanations of criminal behaviors seem to enjoy wider acceptance, (Murshed, 2007). Among the economic factors that can give rise to feeling of injustice and exploitation culminating in hatred of the society and criminal tendencies are inequality and discrimination; widespread corruption that engenders unwarranted disparities in life chances, and mass poverty and unemployment, McNamara, a former secretary of State of the United States of America, concurs by stating that “poverty leads to unrest, to internal upheaval, to violence and to the escalation of extremism”, (Alemika, 2013:244).

Crime Prevention and Control in Nigeria

Nigeria has experienced and is still experiencing the employment of many strategies in crime prevention and control. This ranges from community vigilante, private guards to Civil Defense Corp, Police and Military services, yet crime persists, pervading all corners of the country. This is probably because the causes of crime have been ignored while attention is glued to the effects, in addition to the fact that our crime prevention and control strategies are mostly reactive and ad hoc.

Fundamentally, strategies for crime prevention and control are dependant upon the philosophical perspective through which crime and criminal acts are viewed.
Two perspectives are prominent, namely, determinist and indeterminist perspectives. The proponents of determinist philosophy hold that crimes and criminal acts are caused by factors beyond the control of the perpetrators of such acts. Such factors as we have noted above could be biological, psychological, sociological or economic in nature. In this case, criminals should be pitied and empathized with. Consequently, prevention and control of crimes should aim at these causes and try to eliminate or curb them.

The proponents of indeterminist philosophy, on the other hand, maintain that individuals have control over their thoughts and actions and as such should be held responsible for any crime they commit. In this case crime prevention and control strategies would take the form of punishment as a deterrence to others.

In a determined effort at ensuring an effective crime prevention and control, the Federal Government of Nigeria has established the following agencies / bodies:

i. Armed Forces, comprising of Army, Navy and Air Force;

ii. Intelligence agencies, comprising of State Security Services (SSS), National Intelligence Agencies (NIA), and Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA)


iv. Specialized law enforcement organizations such as Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, (EFCC); National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC); and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC).

v. Nigeria Customs Service; Nigerian Immigration Service.

vi. Ministries of Justice at Federal and State levels.

vii. Legal Aid Council, and

viii. Nigeria Prisons Service

Despite all these agencies of crime prevention and control, crimes continue to thrive even with greater severity and impunity.

**Enhancing Crime Prevention and Control Via Law-Related Education**

We have earlier on noted that Law-related education became necessary as a result of escalating rate of crime, widespread ignorance of laws relating to crimes, legal and justice system in general. Law related education stresses law as an essential part of day–to–day living and lays concrete foundation for understanding the relationship between man and his legal institution as well as his rights and responsibilities as a citizen.

Law-related education is not limited to classrooms rather it extends to such places as church, mosque, market place, village square, prison, and police cell. Local
police officers, vigilante groups, NDLEA officials, lawyers, magistrates, teachers, and religious leaders could be used as resource persons to discuss perspectives of crime prevention and control, as well as consequences of criminal behaviours.

To ensure effectiveness of Law-related education in enhancing crime prevention and control, its content should focus on:

i. drug and alcohol use,
ii. penalties for drug abuse,
iii. consequences of act of vandalism,
iv. law enforcement problems,
v. individual rights and responsibilities,
vi. duties of law enforcement agencies,
vii. consumer protection law;
viii. equality before the law
ix. honesty and fairness, and
x. good governance

Conclusion

The escalating rate of crime in the society despite preponderance of agencies for crime prevention and control has necessitated a review of the extant strategies of crime prevention and control. The present strategies are reactive and ad hoc in nature hence their failure to achieve the expected results.

Law-related education is an attempt at giving human face to statutes so as to forestall excessive wielding of power by law enforcement agencies and sustain public confidence in the legal institution.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing discourse, the writes proffer the following recommendations:

1. Law-related education should be introduced into the nation’s secondary education via disciplines in Arts and Social Science education.
2. Adequate attention should be given to the causes of crime and proactive measures to crime should be emphasized rather than reactive and ad hoc strategies.
3. Law enforcement agencies should avoid excessive wielding of power.
4. An in-built mechanism for cooperation and networking among the law enforcement agencies should be put in place


