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Schooling and Communal Unrest: How Safe is Learning for Science and Technology (S &T) Education

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Abstract

The issue of schooling and safe learning environment for educational opportunities need to be discussed and its importance be elaborated to enable an average Nigerian citizen understand the effects of school insecurity in a community. This paper examined the concept of schooling, education, science, technology and society, and the relationship between them. It tends to present the critical state of communal unrest based on the situation the affected citizens and schools found themselves. The factors responsible for the unrest as the affected appeared were mentioned and the implications were expressed. Further, the paper discussed the benefits of safe learning environment and maintained that youths should be gainfully engaged in positive activities that foster security for progressive education and national development.

The fact that Nigeria has large population and high illiteracy rate is proved by her ranking among nine countries with the highest population of illiterates in below poverty line without natural hope of improvement of their condition, even when natural endowments abound. Over the years, Nigeria has expressed her concern for education with the belief that overcoming illiteracy and ignorance will form the bases for rapid technological advancement in national development. However, there remains inequality in access to education despite the unquestionable evidences that education is crucial in establishing sustainable development. It is worrisome that such unwanted and disastrous situation exists thus hindering the achievement of the goals of education for all in Nigeria. Such unfriendly situation creates obstacles to those citizens aspiring to gain literacy as the hooligans impose such ugly, unwanted, threatening and deadly

environment against the masses. As these factors struggle to exist in a single environment, safe learning environment becomes impossible and automatically disappeared, thus questioning the accessibility of education to all Nigerians.

The ever-increasing desertification, flooding, social unrest, strikes, robberies, assassination, terrorisms being perpetuated with the involvement of energetic youths, who should be educated and productive citizens have created tension in schools and learning environment, without resolutions. The training institutions that ought to have technologically advanced the nation for self-reliant citizens and sustainable development consequently informs the idea of equality of educational opportunities has globally been in principle, and are in dilemma. Its reality is a serious concern. Understandably, government is aware of the relevance of education as machinery for development and may have planned for its availability to her citizens but one need to ascertain its accessibility and the safe of the learning environment so provided. This is important because quality education is essential to success in an increasing competitive, ever-changing workforce. It is relevant that citizens be in participation of all activities concerning human existence to gain contribution in national economy and development. A sound quality education is necessary to provide the tools needed for useful citizens to develop their nation. Reason being that citizens make up society and what happens to society at large affects educational sector, and what happens in educational sector affects the society at large. As can be seen for the past twenty-five years, some groups of Nigerians have increasingly taken laws into their hand and adopt habits and tendencies that are destructives to social harmony, education, national economy and development, even threatens national co-existence because the values in society tend to push them in that direction. Such unacceptable development or environment seriously jeopardizes human activities especially equality of educational opportunities that enhances national development. The resultant effect is that the popular song "Education for all in Nigeria" is neither sung nor heard in those unfriendly, fearful and deadly parts of the nation. Obviously, the learning environment for Science and Technology Education is not safe in those unrest regions of Nigeria as far as education for all and national developments are concern.

Schooling and Education

Schooling is associated with teaching and learning, that is why some groups of taught refer to schooling as education. For instance, who is responsible for her schooling is the same as who is responsible for her education. In other words, schooling refers to someone attending classes at a school or in an institution. No wander Hornby (2005) expressed schooling as education received in school. According to Okafor (2013), education in itself, is a process involving teaching and learning. Equally, schooling is a process of being taught in a school or an act of teaching in a school. Encyclopedia Wikipedia defined schooling as a process of being formally

educated in a school and it involves teaching, coaching, training, instructions. This is in line with education, when expressed as gradual process of acquiring knowledge because it is a preparation for life.

The foregoing views, accepted that school is an institution or building designed for teaching of students where students receive education under the direction of a teacher. Undoubtedly, school system shelters learners, teachers and obligated to provide an equal and safe learning environment regardless of the learners background. So education for all in Nigeria means equality of educational opportunities. Further illustration implies, giving the same type of educational treatments to every Nigerian without any form of discrimination, regardless of any barrier the individual may have or face (Erase, 1983). The idea coincides with the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) statement "Nigeria's philosophy of education therefore is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system". Invariably, going to school and being educated citizens will go a long way to speed up the development of the nations' economy.

Learning Environment and School Insecurity in Nigeria

The issue of teachers and learners safety is increasingly becoming a big problem in our educational system. Think of the high school massacre in Colombia, Virginia Tech Incident, Sandy Hook Elementary School in USA and school attacks in Tunisia. In Nigeria, attacks on schools and other places in some parts of the nation is not left behind by the hoodlums. There are cases of several deadly attacks on public places in some Northern states of the nation: Monday market in Bornu state, police stations, churches and schools in most northern region , copper's lodge in Gombe State, and even travelers on the road. Looting in some school is common, even when students are in the class as in the case of Queens school, Enugu some years back. Secondary school students hardly leave their books in their lockers at school for fear of their being stolen. The exact number of lives and quantity of properties lost due to terrorisms are unknown. However, reports, estimated that these places have been looted, damaged, stolen, burnt, lives and properties wasted, leaving the unrest environment with serious degradation. Beyond the damage to buildings and lives, these events have as well left impacts on students and Nigerian citizens because many have been direct witnesses of violent scenes. Consequently, few that have experienced unrest environment and survived terrorists' attack fear death and absent from school. Parents refused the release of their children to school and mass migration to other peaceful parts of Nigeria became of the order of the day. Such tragic instances exemplify a growing problem within our educational system. Another factor that generated unsafe learning environment and affects school security in recent time in Nigeria is flood. Almost the thirty-six States of the federation were flooded last year. It affected the three levels of

our educational system. Those affected do not discuss schooling but how to save their lives. They were forced to relocate elsewhere, hoping to come back when the land emerge. Such tragic situation setbacks education. Where then is the accessibility of education for these learners/students who have been driven away from safe learning environment by man-made and natural factors.

Schools neither exist without learners nor teachers teach students who do not come to school. A risky classroom or a threatening environment is unlikely to have teachers and learners, which implies no learning no education. Is there really education for all in Nigeria? Friendly schools/learning environment is one where learners/students feel safe, receive quality education, participate and express themselves, and learn how to be responsible citizens.

School security is important as it relates to students' ability to concentrate and learn because learning requires a positive atmosphere in which students feel physically and emotionally safe. Learning of science and its application do not need tension because it involves critical thinking and careful harmonization of ideas for innovation.

Education, Science, Technology and Society

Education is a process involving teaching and learning. According to Ocho (2002), education aims at developing the potentialities of individuals to the fullest so that they become useful citizens to the society. Education functions as an agent and as an instrument for national developments. It equips and enables an individual to function effectively in any environment. The degree of knowledge of Science and Technology Education acquired by the students is portrayed in the society. With Education, Science and Technology, society builds up better.

The term science has to do with nature and that is why the popular saying 'science is universe' has never been a controversial statement. The Columbia Encyclopedia Wikipedia (2013) took science to be an accumulated and systematic learning, generally restricted to natural phenomena. Ali in Onyishi (2004) referred to science as "doing" which concern with various investigative processes and activities with regards to developing, acquiring and controlling knowledge, skills, capability and attitude about the natural factors of the environment. It implies that reliable and verifiable information are accumulated for use in any field of life. Science identifies problems within the environment and applies any possible solution through human to solve them. Science implies an intellectual activities through which man seek to understand nature.

On the other hand, technology is applied science. It involves practicalizing concepts of science. Ugwu (2004) defined technology as conversion of raw materials

into finished goods in industries and other areas of life in the course of solving problems. It involves developing devices, all processes and products designed to control nature for the benefit of human. This implies improving our efficiency, comfort, chances of survival and the quality of life. Technology and science are interrelated and inseparable. Science contains knowledge, ideas, but it's application to produce useful products is technology.

Society is the recipient of the products of Science & Technology. So, there is an urgent need to make all-out effort to ensure that suitable research outputs which can be put to use for the benefit of society, are generated and reach the people. Society needs mechanisms instituted through scientific institutions for development of industrial products and impact of these (products) on improvement of the quality of life of people. These are on the terms of health and nutritional status, purchasing power potential and increasing knowledge and empowerment.

Again, Science & Technology must aim at providing simple, affordable scientific solutions which help the individual save time and energy and argument income. This implies that the kind of technology to be provided would be what people want rather than what someone else wants them to adopt.

Implications of Safe Learning Environment

Having safe learning environment means ensuring students' safety and keeping experience free from both physical and emotional disturbances. Fear hinders ability to learn and affects teachers' capacity to impact knowledge, thus resulting to decline in the overall quality of education. Teachers who fear for their physical safety cannot concentrate in teaching nor do want to teach in such unrest environment. Definitely, students will lack qualified teachers they need to succeed academically. Safe learning environment maximizes the learning of every student and helps them become full participatory citizens of the society. Science and its application needs conducive atmosphere for study, this cannot be overruled.

Safety environment relaxes mind and helps it to bring the best of it. It holds a sense of community because everybody will work together for success, which leads to cost saving and economic benefits as prevention is less expensive than incarceration. Thus, in effect, speeds up activities for development of sustainable economy.

Conclusion

There is need for an appreciable level of communal security in Nigeria. This will help bring education at the door step of every citizen, this will enhance learning and improve our educational system to see the development of sustainable national economy. The government, communities and organizations should work together to

actualize the dream of suitable learning environment in Nigeria for progressive economic development.

The Way Forward

Education they say is the best legacy. If we fail as parents, government and society to protect the learning environment for the Nigerian child, there is likely to be no future for the nation. The plan for safe learning environment should be focused on academic achievement, maintaining high standard, fostering positive relationship between staff and students, and encouraging parental community involvement. It is an on-going comprehensive process which should involve the entire community and the entire nation as the case may be. It is the responsibility of educational system and the government to find balance within their wall to create effective safe learning environment and make education accessible to Nigerian citizens irrespective of their locations.

Youths should be encouraged and engaged through the following means:

a. Creating awareness that future belongs to them and must not be destroyed by them.
b. Sensitizing them to embrace the rule of law and democratic ideals.
c. Mobilizing them against abuse of the system through sanctions.
d. Sensitizing to seek greater employment and educational opportunities as a means of redirecting their energy and ideas from anti-social activities to creative efforts.

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