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ARMED CONFLICTS AND EFFECTIVE CURRICULUM DELIVERY: PERSPECTIVES OF BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study determined the effects of armed conflict on effective delivery of Basic education curriculum in schools in affected areas in Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey design. Two research questions were formulated to guide the study. A researcher-made questionnaire was used to elicit information from respondents. The population of the study consisted of 50 teachers. A sample of 30 teachers representing 60% of the entire population was selected through simple random sampling technique with non-replacement balloting technique. Instrument for data collection was a 10 item structured questionnaire of four point Likert scale of Very high extent, High extent, Low extent and Very low extent respectively. A reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained for the instrument using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Statistics. The result revealed that numerous armed conflict activities militated against effective basic education curriculum delivery in Nigeria. The identified challenges have drastic effects on curriculum delivery in basic education. Based on the findings, several recommendations were made.

Specifically the urgent need for good security to safe guard curriculum delivery in basic education which is the foundation of all levels of education in Nigeria was emphasized.

***Keywords*:** Armed conflict, curriculum delivery, basic education, teachers, Nigeria

Introduction

The importance of education as a key tool to accentuate individual and national development has long been recognized, but rising cases of armed conflicts in our societies today threaten the roles that educational systems play in this development process. Armed conflicts are one of the leading types of conflicts affecting education globally and Sub-Saharan Africa is historically the most affected conflict area in the world. For instance, statistics presented by Palik et al. (2020, as cited in Agbor, Etta and Etonde (2022) indicated that between 1946 and 2019, there have been an estimated 290 cases of armed conflicts around the world with Africa alone having a share of 101 of these armed conflicts. Nigeria has joined other Sub-Saharan countries (such as Congo, Cameroon, and Cote D'Ivoire just to mention but a few) in experiencing ongoing armed conflict.

It is disheartening that both teachers and students are in fear during and after school hours because of the alarming rate of armed conflicts in Nigeria which has divers effect on curriculum delivery. This is against the goals of the universal basic education programme to reduce drop-out at the basic education level as contained in both the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2013). Aliyu (2022) opined that security challenges like kidnappings, ritual and religious killings and political riots have been in existence in Nigeria for over a decade while Imhonopi and Urim (2012) asserted that crimes such as abductions, cultism, bomb attacks, ethnic clashes, banditry, and other violent crimes have grown more in Nigeria since 2009. It has become necessary to formulate appropriate

measures and procedures that would enhance teacher education that could tackle insecurity thereby resulting into effective curriculum delivery (Nwanko, 2013).

Curriculum delivery is concerned with the planning, development, implementation and interpretation of content and materials that would facilitate the learning of students. The students should have relevant information and knowledge that would not only enhance their academic concepts, but also inculcate the traits of morality, ethics, norms and values within them. Education is regarded as an imperative area that leads to growth and development of the individuals. One is able to sustain his living in an adequate manner, when he is well educated and informed and objectives of any society or nation can be achieved when the education system is well developed. Teacher education and curriculum development are considered as very important aspects of the education system. Teachers have important roles to play towards society. It is essential for them to be efficient, skilled, resourceful, conscientious and diligent in the performance of duties.

The Universal Basic Education Act establishes the legislative basis for the UBE Program, which makes basic education free and compulsory to it citizens. As a result, the UBE Commission (UBEC) was formed to ensure that the curriculum delivery of this program is properly implemented (World Bank, 2017). It is against this background that this study sought the perspectives of basic education teachers on armed conflicts and effective curriculum delivery in Nigeria.

Concept of Armed Conflicts

Conflicts are prolonged or extended frictions or disagreements amongst individuals or groups of individuals and can escalate into armed conflicts. The International Committee of the Red Cross (2008) described armed conflicts as protracted armed confrontations between two or more states

(international), or between governmental armed forces and those of one or more organized armed groups with a minimum level of intensity (non-international). For example, the armed conflict in Cameroon is between an organized group of "separatist fighters" and government armed forces. While in Nigeria, it is between the Nigerian government, individuals and the Wilayat Garib Ifriqiya" meaning "Islamic States West African Province" (ISWAP) as well as other numerous bandit groups often referred to as "unknown gunmen".

Researches related to armed conflicts have focused on the effects of armed conflicts on children's educational outcomes (Akresh & de Walque, 2008; Shemyakina, 2011), children's well-being (Winthrop & Kirk, 2008), enrolment, and so forth, with the process of teaching only as a secondary indicator - limiting empirical evidence about what happens in the classroom with regard to teaching during armed conflicts. Within these discourses, elements related to teachers and teaching activities in the classroom can be found. For instance, Buckland (2005) identified common problems associated with post-conflict areas such as chronic shortages of teachers because of the killings during conflicts, and under-supply of qualified teachers and teacher absenteeism - giving impetus for the need to study teaching processes during ongoing conflicts to alleviate the negative effects at post conflict stages. Cervantes-Duarte and Fernandez-Cano (2016) provided an underlying reason for teacher absenteeism, citing teachers' fear of going to work as one of the leading effects of armed conflicts and resulting in reduced staff and increased teacher/pupil ratio. Similarly, Jones and Naylor (2014) indicated fear, displacement, and recruitment of teachers into the armed force as effects of armed conflicts. While these results help us understand teachers' dispositions, they limit an understanding of what happens in the classrooms of schools that continue to operate in communities of ongoing conflict.

Empirical evidence from Nigeria proved some of these effects as well, for instance, Akame et al. (2021) reported that between 2017 and 2019, 42 schools were attacked with about 305 students, teachers, and principals being abducted and killed in the affected regions.

Schools remain unsafe, for instance, a world report in 2020 indicated that armed forces in Nigeria had occupied school buildings in conflict affected areas (Human Rights Watch, 2020). This situation has resulted in decreased enrolment, fear, panic, and the propagation of misinformation, which hampers the functioning of the school system (Akame et al., 2021). These evidences have been able to chart the events following the crisis in Nigeria but there is a gap to be filled about how teachers experience these events daily as those who are central to the effective curriculum delivery process. Teachers may be going through serious psychological traumas that could leave them demoralized and unproductive in the classroom; and, in worst cases, they might leave the job. In formal education, learning is inextricably linked to teaching, therefore, teachers are instrumental in the effective curriculum delivery process even in conflict areas. Understanding what happens in the classroom during ongoing conflicts, and how teachers perceive the effects of armed conflicts on teaching and learning processes in the classroom, can paint a picture of teaching and learning during armed conflicts and indicate key areas where interventions could be introduced to support the continuation of education in conflict-affected areas.

Concept of Basic Education

Basic education is the most fundamental level of education given to humanity. According to the National Policy on education (FGN, 2013), basic education is the education obtained from elementary school through junior secondary school. Ojukwu & Nwanna (2015) defined basic education as the base-line education on which all other educational advancement depend. Basic education remains the foundation for sustainable life-long learning which comprises a wide variety

of formal and non-formal educational activities, reading, writing, numeracy skills and programmes designed to enable learners acquire functional literacy. According to Aliyu (2022), basic education means the type of education, in quality and content, that is given in the first level of education. This construct changes from country to country. In the Nigerian context, basic education includes primary, junior secondary and nomadic education as well as adult literacy. Basic education was equated with six years of primary schooling in the past. Currently basic education is extended to include the three years of junior secondary school, making a total of nine years. Basic education later metamorphosed to Universal Basic Education (UBE) and it is conceived to embrace formal (National Policy in Education, FGN, 2013).

Concept of Curriculum

A curriculum consists of the "roadmap" or "guideline" of any given discipline. Offorma (2015) defined curriculum as a document, plan, or blue print for instructional guide, which is used for teaching and learning to bring about positive and desirable change in behaviour. Eduok & Bassey (2022) sees curriculum as those knowledge, activities and experiences both formal and informal planned and guided by the school for the benefit of the learner. It is the planned and unplanned experiences, which learners receive in the process of their formal or semi-formal education for the purpose of becoming rounded persons who can make meaningful contribution to the betterment of their society and the world. Uya and Eduok (2018) defined curriculum as a complex network of physical, social and intellectual conditions that shapes and reinforces the behaviour of individual's perception and interpretations of the environment in order to reinforce the learning objectives and to facilitate the evaluation. It is the formulation and implementation of an educational proposal to be taught and learned within a school in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice.

Obilo, Opara & Ajeka (2022) explained curriculum as the totality of what the teachers and learners do at school, which is curriculum delivery, and added that curriculum is concerned with the purpose of education. By this, it meant the aims, goals and objectives.

Curriculum delivery shall involve the sum total of school experiences, that which is to be learned, expected change in behaviour or the understanding as a result of learning experiences, the processes involved in the nature of techniques, approaches (methods) and other instruments such as relevant equipment and facilities (materials). The above explanation suggests that curriculum delivery incorporates both methodologies and facilities/materials developed by curriculum development agencies for the realization of objectives, goals or aims of the curriculum, education and basic education in particular. All these will bring learning, the insatiable curiosity that drives individual learner to absorb all the school offers in order to improve the efficiency and productivity of each individual learner.

Armed Conflicts and Curriculum Delivery

Insecurity is a major factor that could affect effective curriculum delivery of basic education in Nigeria. Security of any learning environment is pivotal to sustainable learning and remains an inevitable variable in education generally. Nigeria has had various intertribal crises, communal conflicts, religious disturbances, and disputes in the past while some are ongoing. These have disrupted the curriculum delivery in basic education, resulted in destruction of school physical infrastructure and constant fear of violence which keeps students and teachers out of classrooms. According to Otu (2019) insecurity engenders fear in students making them to study in an atmosphere of stress. Fear of unknown and being attacked at any time causes lack of concentration in teaching and learning activities. Aliyu (2022) reiterates that security challenges trigger traumatic disorder and toxic stress that affect learning negatively. In addition, stressful

conditions make learners to experience neurobiological changes. Aliyu (2022), and Ohiare-Udebu & Sarafadeen (2021) have concluded that insecurity and wars have untold negative effects on teaching /learning and therefore impedes sustainable basic education generally. Peace and tranquility remains the best antidote for a successful teaching and learning exercise. This state of insecurity affects drastically the school environment and results to psycho-social issues. Okudosiri (2013) maintained that emotional insecurity is basically feelings of general uneasiness triggered by perceiving of oneself to be vulnerable, thus a threat to one's self-image or ego affecting learning negatively.

Effect of insecurity on basic education is unquantifiable. There are so many other ills bedeviling Nigerian educational sector as a result of insecurity and they include:

- Poor school attendance due to crises which can result in consistent failure of students.
- The school calendar is hardly spent, thus leaving much academic work undone.
- Vandalization of school facilities: Facilities like school buildings are destroyed during crises making school facilities inadequate, thus learning is grossly affected.
- Closure of schools: Government had to close down many schools in crises-prone areas for several months. Borno State is a typical example, (Akintunde & SelzlingMusa, 2016).
- Insecurity has negative effects on teaching/learning when implemented in an unsafe environment.
- Effective and efficient curriculum delivery needs a peaceful environment to achieve its objectives because no meaningful curriculum delivery can takes place in an unsecured environment.

Challenges Facing Basic Education (BE) Curriculum Delivery in Nigeria

Curriculum as a set of education plans should be prepared and adapted based on the learning situation and future demand.

Tadesse (2007) indicates the following challenges of the school-based curriculum: inadequate supervision, time mismatch with school calendar, lack of financial and material support, and negative attitudes of teachers towards the curriculum.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study therefore is to investigate the relationship between armed conflicts and effective curriculum delivery of Basic Education (BE) in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the extent to which armed conflicts impede effective Basic Education's (BE) curriculum delivery.

2. Determine teachers' perspectives in relation to armed conflicts and effective curriculum delivery of Basic Education (BE) in Nigeria.

Research Questions:

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent does armed conflict impedes effective curriculum delivery of Basic education (BE) in Nigeria?

2. What are teachers' perspectives in relation to armed conflicts and effective curriculum delivery of Basic Education (BE) in Nigeria?

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted to elicit information from teachers, totaling 50 teachers. A sample of 30 teacher educators representing 60% of the entire population was selected through

simple random sampling technique with non-replacement balloting technique. Instrument for data collection was a 10 item structured questionnaire which was designed based on a four point Likert scale, developed by the researchers and weighted thus:

Very High Extent (VHE: 4 points), High Extent (HE:3 points), Low Extent (LE:2 points) and Very Low Extent (VLE:1 point). The instrument was validated and a test retest method was used to test it reliability. A reliability coefficient of 0.8 was obtained for the instrument using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Statistics. The instrument was administered by the researcher to the respondents. All the instruments were correctly filled and retrieved. Mean statistics was used for analyzing the data. Mean score of 2.5 and above was used as reference for high extent while mean score below 2.5 was deemed as low extent.

Results

Table 1: Mean response of teachers on the extent of impediment of armed conflicts on curriculum delivery in Basic Education in Nigeria.

S/N	ITEMS	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	∑X	_ X	DECISION
1	Corruption	20	5	3	2	**30**	3.2	High extent
2	Weak System	22	4	3	1	**30**	3.1	High extent
3	poverty	19	6	3	2	30	3.4	High extent
4	Armed banditry	21	5	2	2	**30**	2.8	High extent
5	Religious crises	20	4	3	3	**30**	3.0	High extent
	Grand mean						**3.1**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 above shows that all the items listed have impeded effective delivery of Basic education curriculum in Nigeria to high extents. The mean score of all the respondents in each item recorded as follows: 3.2, 3.1, 3.4, 2.8 and 3.0 respectively, are high compared to the reference mean score of 2.5 indicating the extent to which armed conflicts impede effective delivery of Basic education curriculum in Nigeria. Also, the grand mean of 3.1 which is higher than the reference mean of 2.5 for all the items indicates evidence of high extent of impediment of armed conflicts to effective Basic education curriculum delivery in Nigeria.

Table 2: Mean response of teachers' perspectives of the impediment of armed conflicts on Basic education curriculum delivery in Nigeria.

S/N	ITEMS	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	∑X	_ X	DECISION
1	Closing down of schools	21	4	3	2	**30**	3.3	High Extent
2	Shortage of resources	22	4	3	1	**30**	3.0	High Extent
3	Insecurity	21	5	2	2	**30**	3.0	High Extent
4	Rape	20	6	2	2	**30**	2.9	High Extent
5	Loss of lives	21	6	2	1	**30**	2.9	High Extent
	Grand Mean						**3.02**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 above shows that the mean responses of teachers' perspectives of extent of impediment of armed conflicts to effective delivery of Basic education curriculum in Nigeria. The mean score of teachers in each item recorded as follows: 3.3, 3.0, 3.0, 2.9 and 2.9 respectively, is high compared to reference mean score of 2.5 which implies that armed conflicts actually impede

effective Basic education curriculum delivery in Nigeria to a high extent. The grand mean of 3.02 for all the items indicate all the teachers agree that curriculum delivery in basic education is greatly impeded by armed conflicts in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the findings of the first research question revealed that teachers agreed that armed conflicts have actually impeded Basic education effective curriculum delivery to a high extent in Nigeria. This was revealed in the mean scores of all the items listed on the table being above the reference mean of 2.5. This finding is in agreement with the assertion of Kareem (2021), Omoyibo & Akpomera (2013), and Otu (2019) that armed conflicts are linked to corruption, poor leadership or weak system, abject poverty, massive unemployment, illiteracy, religious crises, physical violence just to mention but a few, making it very difficult for teachers to effectively deliver the desired curriculum as their lives are unsafe in such circumstances.

The result of the analysis of the second research question showed teachers' perspectives on the extent of armed conflicts impediment to effective delivery of Basic education curriculum. This is an indication that the adverse effects of armed conflicts challenges in curriculum delivery in basic education are too numerous. This is observed by the recorded high mean scores of all the items and the grand mean on the table being above the reference mean score of 2.5. This finding is in consonance with the assertion of Azazi (2011), Aliyu (2022), Ohiare-Udebu & Sarafadeen (2021) and Omoyibo & Akpomera (2013) who opined that armed conflicts have untold negative effects on teaching/learning and also impedes sustainable basic education. Also, this finding is in agreement with the work of Okudosiri (2013) who maintains that emotional insecurity affects curriculum delivery of basic education, and that this result in threat to one's self-image or ego thereby affecting learning negatively. Ogunode (2021) and Omoyibo and Akpomera (2013)

findings are in line with this finding for asserting that armed conflicts hindered effective and efficient schooling thereby impeding curriculum delivery of basic education. This therefore calls for urgent attention for its remedy.

Conclusion

Curriculum delivery is one of the key stages in curriculum planning. If a curriculum is developed without delivering it to the right persons, the objectives of the curriculum planners have not been achieved. Armed conflicts in Nigeria have actually affected proper curriculum delivery. In North East part of Nigeria, Boko Haram activities do not allow education system to operate, banditry in the North West, kidnapping in the South West among others. All these have constituted menace to the effective delivery of school subjects' curriculum in the present day education system of Nigeria.

Recommendations

From the above findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Education institutions should be put under strict control of the regulatory body to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum contents.

2. Priority should be given to security of education at all levels to ensure that lives and properties are safe-guarded for healthy living in Nigeria.

3. Education institutions should be graded in accordance to the standard of the institutions and admission should be allowed in accordance to the required standards.

4. Curriculum of teacher education programmes should be reviewed from time to time to meet the dynamic and changing needs of the society. The teachers should not only possess knowledge of academic concepts, but it is vital for them to be aware regarding the current societal problems and issues, then develop appropriate measures on how to solve them.

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