

Safe School Practices and Education Administrators: A Review of Borno State Conflict Context

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ABSTRACT : *The rising concerns of school safety in recent years across Nigeria is becoming alarming with Borno State being an epicentre following multiple attacks on schools and other related threats that impacted teaching and learning. This has continued to open fora for debate on the ways to address these concerns which necessitated this study aimed at exploring the roles of education administrators in ensuring school safety practices for effective teaching and learning in elementary schools in Borno state. The paper adopted a qualitative research approach which collected data from largely secondary sources through in-depth desk review and less of primary sources through key informant interviews with strategic education administrators in the state. The paper identifies the educational administration flows through different stages which involves policy formation, policy domestication, interpreting, implementation and monitoring. The study reveals that education administrators play a critical role in school safety and security such as development of policies and procedures, ensuring implementation and monitoring effectiveness of the policies and procedures in enhancing safety and security of schools. It is concluded that there is an important nexus between education administration and school safety which must be effectively utilized to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning amidst the increasing concerns of insecurity, natural hazards and other school related safety concerns.*

KEYWORDS -Attacks on School, Education Administrators, Education Administration, Elementary Schools, Safe School

I. INTRODUCTION

School safety has become an indispensable issue in this era of pervasive terrorism. This is because schools are singled out for attack by terrorists resulting in abduction and recruitment of children into armed groups, abduction for ransom/kidnap of school children, destruction of school plants, deaths of staff and students [1]. Available evidence in Nigeria suggests that challenges to safety and security of schools and learners are peculiar to natural and man-made factors that hinder access to education. These impacts negatively on the safety and security of learners, teachers and education personnel. Adeniran and Castradori stressed the peculiarity of the impact of school safety and security on education in Northern Nigeria amidst the realities of the population of out-of-school children in the region with estimated 69% of over 10.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria found in the north [2]. Education administrators are concerned with the management of both human and material resources towards enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning. This implies that administration is central to school safety and security which is paramount to effective teaching and learning.

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child states that as well as an education, every child has the right to be safe [3]. Despite this mandate, child injuries are replacing infectious disease as the leading cause of mortality in developing countries [4]. Therefore, as one of the principal environments where

children spend extensive time during their formative years, school safety should be effectively managed, promoted, and prioritised. However, in Nigeria school safety is generally considered to be of low priority compared with other educational issues, with a lack of effective policy across states and with schools struggling to justify safety costs. As a result, child injury is common in Nigeria, and according to Pike-Paris approximately 6,000 children die from preventable injuries each year [5]. While these injuries do not necessarily occur at school, children spend significant amounts of time within the school environment and there is a growing demand for safe schools in Nigeria, along with associated parental expectations of safety.

In the North Eastern part of Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency has a devastating impact on education in Northeast Nigeria with Borno State being the epicentre of the conflict. According to OCHA, the insurgency in Northeast Nigeria placed over 5.3 million children and youths (age 13-17) in dire need of educational assistance [6]. With over 80% of the conflict affected population living in Borno State and the largest displaced persons based in Maiduguri, the pressure on the available educational facilities increased geometrically resulting in a high need for educational assistance and interventions. This further intensified the concerns of school safety. Some of these factors affecting school safety and security in Nigeria include armed conflicts; students and schools being hit by bullets and shrapnel, recruitment of children as child soldiers, gender-based violence, child abuse and neglect, natural disaster; flood and fire. Other factors include physical and humiliating punishment, schools being robbed or looted, drug addiction and abuse, bullying, vehicular accidents and unsafe school facilities, school premises use for political events resulting to conflicts, among others. All of these have led to calls for creating a safe and protective learning environment for students, teachers and education personnel.

The strategic roles of the educational administrators positioned them as instrumental to achieving school safety especially in the conflict context of Borno state. This is because administrators lead the policy formulation and implementation in the educational system. As such, the continued attacks on schools and educational systems could be addressed with a shift from status quo in the administrative aspect of Elementary school practices.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

American Institute of Research defines school safety as schools and school-related activities where students are safe from violence, bullying, harassment, and substance use [7]. The institute further insisted that school safety "promotes the protection of students from violence, exposure to weapons and threats, theft, bullying, and the sale or use of illegal substances on school grounds". Safe school is concerned with providing a conducive atmosphere for improved teaching and learning outcomes. However, school safety in the context of this work is considered as the process and/or activities, which involve ensuring that students, teachers and school facilities, are protected from harm emanating from the activities of man or natural disaster.

Whereas education administration is a social process concerned with the identification, maintaining, motivating, controlling and unifying human and material resources to achieve educational goals. Ayanniyi defines educational administration as running of educational institutions, which involves guidance, leadership, and controlling of the efforts of individuals in the achievement of the goals of the institution [8]. It involves prudent management of resources and high degree of accountability on the part of organisational members [9]. Therefore, an education administrator is an individual shouldered with the responsibility of leading, planning, coordinating, implementing and controlling all educational system's resources and activities towards achieving the set educational goals. They are responsible for the day-to-day running of schools; directing educational activities, supervising staff, managing budget, distribution of resources, making decisions and developing policies to guide the overall delivery of the educational goals.

With a report of over 300,000 out of school children in Borno state [10][11] amidst the protracted Boko Haram conflict and the recent record hike in number of attacks as well as the perpetration of violence in the school environment. Especially the recent case of Hanifa Abubakar who was kidnapped and gruesomely killed by her teacher [12]. The search for approaches to address the concern of school safety and security is eminent which informed the study to assess the roles of education administrators and administrative approaches to effective Elementary school safety in Borno state.

II. HISTORIC BACKGROUND OF BORNO STATE

The present Borno state originated from the ancient Bornu empire of the Kanuri people as part of the northern Nigeria territory before it became a state in 1967 with Maiduguri as the capital city. The state was later divided in 1991 to have the current Yobe state which along with Adamawa and Gombe state borders Borno from south and west. While Niger Republic borders it from the north, Lake Chad/the Republic of Chad to northeast and Cameroon to the east [13]. The state covers 69,435 square kilometres according to the state government which makes it one of the largest states in northern Nigeria [14].

Although Borno state is not different from other northern states of Nigeria in terms of educational backwardness, yet the administrative structure of education follows a similar pattern with the entire country. More than 10.5 million children in Nigeria are said to be out of school while over 69% of the out of school children are located in the north. This is said to be influenced by the Boko Haram insurgency in the north eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. The conflict has led to the destruction of educational facilities/assets worth 28.76 billion Naira (143.80 million US dollars) in Borno as reported by the state development strategic plan 2020 to 2030. And the displacement of over 2.2 million people across the affected states [15]. These had a devastating impact on the educational system both the administration as well as the safety of the school and indeed the entire teaching and learning process.

III. CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL SAFETY

Widespread attacks on education globally were reported with over 11,000 attacks recorded in the space of 5 years between 2015 to 2019 [16]. Nigeria has suffered numerous attacks on schools with devastating impact on schoolchildren, teachers and educational facilities. GCPEA reported that more than 100 schools have been attacked between 2015 to 2019 [16]. However, the most recent report according to Save the Children International (SCI) indicates that more than 1,000 schools were attacked between January to August 2021 [17]. Whereas UNICEF reported over 2,295 teachers killed in the space of 11 years of the Boko Haram conflict in the Northeast [18]. This figure represents the highest incidents of attacks on schools in the history of Nigeria. In a similar development education in emergency working group – EiEWGN acclaimed that over 1,400 schools have been attacked since 2014 to 2018 [19].

Conflict has had a devastating impact on education in Nigeria with deliberate targets on schoolchildren, teachers, and school infrastructure. Insurgency and related military responses continue to increase out-of-schoolchildren and leave widespread devastation particularly in the Northeast of Nigeria, leading to large-scale displacement. A situation which has led to other school related safety issues such as dilapidated school structures, child abuse, exploitation, peer violence, bullying, physical and humiliating punishment; among others.

After the 2018 airstrike in Yemen, Mokhtar, an 8 years old survivor said “My father says he will buy me toys and get me a new school bag. But I don’t want a new school bag. I hate school bags. I do not want to go anywhere near a bus. I hate buses, I hate school and I cannot sleep. I see my friends in my dreams begging me to rescue them. So, from now on, I’m going to stay at home” [16]. Although Yemen is far from Nigeria, Borno state and indeed Maiduguri but the Borno State Children Parliament’s Speaker opines that there are many Mokhtars in the state [20]. The faith of many schoolchildren in Borno is confronted with numerous safety challenges which reinforces the call for domestication of the Safe School Declaration act in the state. Hence, the call for exploring all available options to improve the safety of children in and around school.

Although attacks on schools have greatly increased in recent times, it is worth noting that safe schools are not only concerned with attacks on schools. School safety takes cognisance of broad issues such as natural disaster impacts on schools, everyday hazards in and around schools, protection/violence related issues affecting schoolchildren and the over emphasised conflict related issues affecting schools among others. Dozens of shelters in IDP camps and house communities were reported to have been overrun by flash floods forcing the displacement of thousands of people which in most cases are double displacements [21]. Similarly, EiEWGN July to September, 2021 newsletter reported the continuous disruption of teaching and learning activities in

Borno state by flood which render most schools inaccessible for students and teachers [18]. This corroborates Saeed's report on the aftermath of heavy downpour on shelter and critical facilities in host communities and IDP camps [22]. However, school related drug abuses are reported in Maiduguri but no significant data or reports of uses among elementary school learners. While protection issues are continuously reported in and around schools, concerns around security actors' usage of school as an operation base, bully and physical abuse such as hitting children also remain a concern in Borno state schools.

If a safe school is considered as one where teaching and learning are not distracted by violence, bullying, sexual harassment, physical abuse (corporal punishment) and void of fear, then the context of Borno State and indeed Maiduguri could be considered as far from having safe schools. This necessitates the study to better understand the nexus of the roles of administrators and achieving school safety for effective teaching and learning in Borno State.

The study established that safe school in the context of Borno state, Northeast and Nigeria as whole was not popular until the wake of the 2014 incident of the abduction of 270 Chibok school girls in Borno state Northeast Nigeria. This development resulted in series of responses from national to global scene with the campaign tag "bring back our girls" especially as the incident manifested a drastic fall in enrolment and participation in schools among children and families in the Northeast Nigeria.

SAFE SCHOOL INITIATIVE

The bring back our girls' campaign led to quite a lot of efforts towards addressing the school safety and one of such initiative in Nigeria is the Safe School Initiative launched by the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, with support of Nigerian Global Business Coalition for Education and private sector leaders during World Economic Forum Africa in May 2014. The initiative took a three-dimensional approach which focused on school-based interventions; community interventions to protect schools; and special measures for at-risk populations. A Nigeria Safe Schools Initiative Multi Donor Trust Fund (Nigeria SSI MDTF) was established under the sponsorship of the Federal Government of Nigeria and the United Nations to mobilise resources for the initiative which is to be administered by the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) [23]. This is to complement the initial Safe School Fund mobilised from Federal Government, Private Sector and African Development Bank capitalisation. Through the initiative, interventions such as students/learners transfer from high risk areas, school infrastructural reconstruction and provision of innovative education strategies and material were implemented in the affected states of Northeast Nigeria.

SAFE SCHOOL DECLARATION

In May 2015, the Safe School Declaration document drafted by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Norway and Argentina through a consultative process with other states was opened for endorsement during the international conference at Norway. The document sought political commitment of the states to protect learners, teachers and schools, ensure continuation of learning and to implement the guidelines for protecting schools from military use during armed conflict. Nigeria was part of the first 37 countries to endorse the declaration which was officially signed in March 2018 then followed by the subsequent signing of the memorandum in March 2019; which approves safe school declaration laws and policies to be mainstreamed and implemented in Nigeria. By this commitment, Nigeria is expected to develop and implement a national law and policy which complies with the global stand on the Safe School Declaration[24].

NATIONAL POLICY ON SAFETY, SECURITY AND VIOLENCE – FREE SCHOOLS (NPSSVFS)

The policy which aimed to provide guidelines for a comprehensive school safety plan and a preventive and response mechanism at all levels of educational administration was published in 2021. The policy document focuses on four key areas which were built into the four pillar approach to comprehensive school safety. According to the Minimum Standard for Safe School in Nigeria 2021, the NPSSVFS aims to protect learners and education workers from death and injury in schools and learning centres; plan for education continuity in the face of expected natural and/or man-made hazards; safeguard educational sector investments at all time; and

strengthening a disaster – resilient citizenry through education. The policy was formulated with a guideline for implementation which provides a comprehensive reporting, tracking and responding system alongside a monitoring and evaluation system which also define the critical stakeholders. [25]

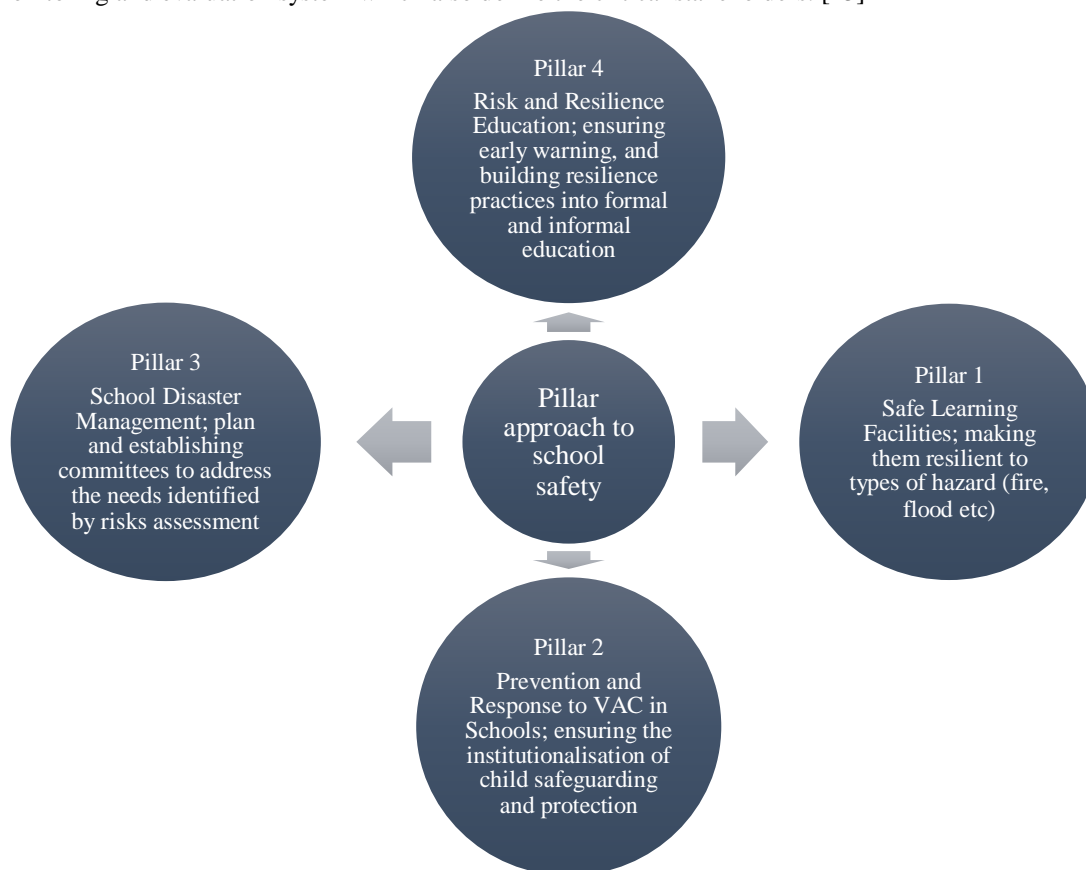


Figure 1: Pillar Approach to School Safety

Source: Minimum Standard for Safe Schools

MINIMUM STANDARD FOR SAFE SCHOOL

Riding on the principles of education as fundamental human rights; zero tolerance to violence against children; continuation of schooling at all times; non-militarisation of learning institutions; high level professionalism; uniformity; measurement of results and strong institutional system; the standards were developed with the following objectives.

- i. To understand how violence against children (VAC) affects teaching and learning
- ii. To identify which natural hazards have been experienced in schools and learning centres
- iii. To identify the conflict prevention and reduction mechanisms that exist in the schools or learning centres
- iv. To identify the common everyday hazards that occur in schools and learning centres
- v. To understand how school managers and learning centre authorities provide safety at educational facilities. [26]

The standard identified critical stakeholders and defined their role in the development and implementation of the safe school minimum standard. While the roles of education administrators at all levels were identified as critical stakeholders, the fifth objective of the minimum standard clearly recognised their roles in school safety and security.

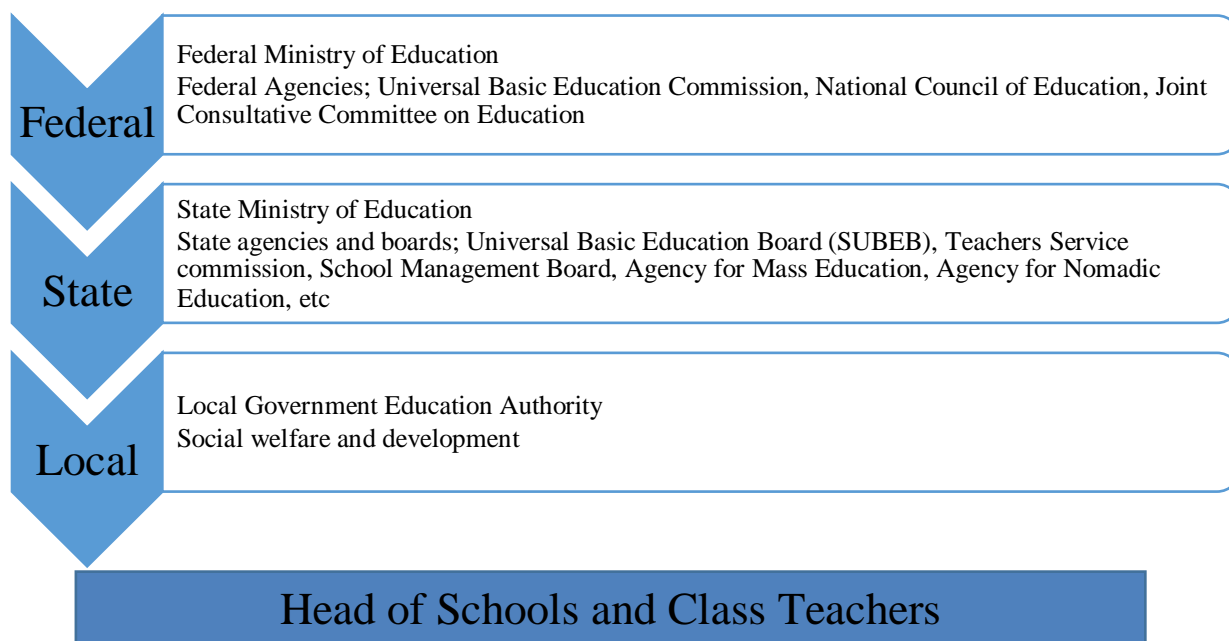
IV. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The concept of educational administration and school safety are viewed from different perspectives by different scholars. This session will review and provide insight from available literature in the areas of the educational administration and administrators, Elementary school structure, safe school and the categories of hazards in school.

EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION AND ADMINISTRATORS

The functionality of education is determined by the administrative structure of the educational system which implies that educational administration is central to an effective educational system and the realisation of the national education goals and objectives. Hence, addressing any form of deficiency in the educational system requires a critical review of the educational administration. The term Education administration is viewed from different perspectives by different people. Agwara defines education administration as the process that is concerned with the using of principles, methods and practices to establish, develop and execute the goals, policies, plans and procedures necessary to achieve the objectives of education [27]. Whereas, Education Administrator is considered as the individual saddled with the responsibilities to ensure the successful realisation of the administrative process. School Administrators are the head of the school who makes the decisions and implement the policies and educational programmes. They also coordinate the efforts of the human and material resources of the educational institution.

Federal Ministry of Education guidelines describe the educational administrative structure of Nigeria to flow from Federal to the school administrative level as; federal, state, local and school administrative level [28].



Source: Field work

The Federal level of educational administration is concerned with the strategic development of policies and plans for educational development. It is involved with setting goals, objectives and direction as well as supervision of educational development of the state. The state level domesticates the national plans, strategies and policies developed at the federal level and champions the implementations of these directional documents at the state level. The role of the state level also involves the adapting national policies/development of state level strategies, plans and policies for development of education. The state level is also concerned with operationalisation of education strategies through its agencies such as state ministry of education, school management board, teachers service commission and state universal basic education. These agencies manage the

local education authorities, schools and ensure effective running of the schools through recruitment and supervision of the educational staff. While the local level is concerned with the operationalisation of education strategies at the elementary school/educational level. At this level, we have the local education authority who directly support the schools with logistics and ensure full operationalisation of the schools then we have the heads of schools leading the administration of educational activities within the schools. The school level is the lowest level of educational administration in Nigeria context that is led by the Head Teacher or Principal as the case may be. School safety is a function of all stakeholders across all levels of the education as it is popularly said "safety is everyone's business" as such the role of administrator as the heads of the educational system is critical to shaping the safety and security of the schools. [28]

The National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence Free Schools in Nigeria (NPSSVFSN) defined the roles of national (federal), state, local and school level of administration in the implementation of the policy [25]. This further reinforced the strategic flow of authorities in the administration of education as well as contribution to the different levels to school safety. The national minimum standards for safe schools further corroborate the policy in defining the stakeholders in the safe school implementation at the various levels. The policy defines the supporting tools for implementation of the school safety programmes and the various levels of administration that uses the specific tools for effective coordination and implementation of the programme.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STRUCTURE

The educational system of Nigeria has undergone a series of transformation and in the most recent time it moved from the 6-3-3-4 (representing 6 years in primary school, 3 years in junior secondary school, 3 years in senior secondary school and 4 years in tertiary school) model to 9-3-4 (9 years in basic school, 3 years in senior secondary school and 4 years in the tertiary school) according to Yahaya [29]. As reported by Uwaifor and Uddin, the 9-3-4 system replaced the 6-3-3-4 system in 2006 to support the country's strive towards actualisation of the millennium development goals (MDG) and education for all strategy [30]. The Nigeria educational system allows for pre-primary or pre-basic school as the case may be, even though it was not officially stated on the 9-3-4 policy document and it is not compulsory [29]. Yet it is targeted at supporting early childhood development and preparing the children for basic education. It is referred to as a kindergarten or nursery school system that is centred on early childhood development [29].

The elementary school system in Nigeria covers the period of pre-basic education to the completion of the primary education at the 6th year of the initial 6-3-3-4 model of education. However, the management of this level of education follows within the universal basic education system which is led by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) at the Federal level, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) at the state level and Local Government Education Authority (LEA) at the local level.

SCHOOL SAFE

The concept of school safety is drawn from two perspectives: security and protection concerns for school children. From a security perspective, it involves all measures taken to mitigate the risk or threat to school children, teachers and other educational staff. It involves measures taken to secure the environment for effective teaching and learning activities. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), threats to safety and security of schoolchildren, teachers and other school staff could emanate from natural causes such as earthquake, flood and storm or manmade causes like arson, violent crime, conflict and vandalism [31]. Whereas, from the perspective of protection; school safety encompasses all school related activities that keep children from degrading punishments, violence, substance abuse, harassment and bullying among others. Therefore, a safe school is one that provides a conducive place for learners and teachers to interact effectively, void of harm, violence, danger, intimidation, harassment and humiliation [32].

Nigeria minimum standard for safe school defines safe school as a system that promotes the protection of students from violence, exposure to weapons and threats, theft, bullying and the sales or use of illicit substances on school grounds. It further defines school safety as school and school-related activities in which learners are safe from violence, bullying, harassment and substance use [26].

The use of school for non-educational purposes that disrupt the school system or damage the educational facilities is a school safety issue. OECD emphasised that school safety and security include facility designing, institutional management, emergency response and post-conflict intervention to mitigate the negative impact [31]. This implies that to ensure that school is a safe place for learners, there are different stages of the safety process to consider; first attention must be placed on the decision to establish schools from the point of school site; geographical location and siting of schools. The choice of school location must be made with the mindset of safety for the learners especially elementary schools where the learners are children of age 2 to 14. The next stage of school safety is determined by the management (administration) system of the school; where attention must be placed on the effective functioning of all aspects of the school within the ambit of safety for all and sundry. The school administration is responsible for policies and procedures as well as effective implementation that will enhance the safety of the learners, teachers, other school staff and school facilities. The emergency response stage is a combination of both management of the schools and the external emergency response system of the state. This involves the lay down plans to ensure effective response to emergency situations within the school by the administrators, staff and learners in the school as well as the point where the state emergency response system could come to the rescue of the school during an emergency. And the final stage deals with prevention and/or mitigation of negative impact of conflict on the school in the aftermath.

With the report of over 1000 attacks on schools in Nigeria between a timeframe of 7 months and the decade long insurgency in the context of Borno state which is central to an ideology that is against western education; education in Borno state could be classified as education under attack [17]. Since attack on education encompasses any intentional action or threat carried out against learners, teachers, other staff and educational facilities/institutions for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, religion and criminal reasons. Borno state has seen schools being occupied by the Boko Haram insurgents and/or military force as a base of operation, as IDPs camps, for distribution of food/non-food items to IDPs, schools used for political purposes (campaign and meetings) and election purposes by government and non-government. All these are against the purpose of the school and disruptive to teaching and learning activities of the schools.

CATEGORIES OF HAZARDS IN SCHOOL

Safe Schools Common Approach (SSCA) identified five thematic components to safety and security in schools. The approach focuses on key forms of hazardous risks that threaten safety and security of schools for school children and education workers [33].

- I. **Violence:** Violence thematic area focuses on all forms of violence in schools which are targeted at learners, teachers and other staff in the school. It is broadly grouped as physical (beating, corporal punishment, assault, among others), emotional (psychological), sexual, gender-based and negligence.
- II. **Natural hazards:** refers to all forms of risks, threats and danger learners, teachers and other staff in the school face which originate from natural causes. This thematic area focuses on amelioration and prevention of natural hazards like floods, erosion, windstorms/sandstorms, earthquakes and wildfires.
- III. **Conflicts:** activities of insurgents and military and its impact on teaching and learning functions of the school are central to this thematic area. It focuses on the prevention and reduction of conflict hazards like the use of schools by security forces, armed attacks on schools, civil unrest, unexploded ordnances, abduction/kidnapping and child recruitment.
- IV. **Everyday hazards:** the occurrences of the daily risks associated with our routines such as the kinds of playing activities of the learners in the school, the risks involved in the movement of the learners, teachers and other staff from their homes to school among others. This thematic area focuses on the reduction of everyday health hazards (epidemics, pandemics, malaria, malnutrition), power shortages, drowning, playground accidents, dangerous materials and so on.
- V. **Safety of school facilities:** the design and construction of school facilities poses some level of risks and safety concerns to the learners, teachers and other staff. This thematic area focuses on the proper dissemination of safety and security policies to staff, learners and all affiliates of education to ensure that the activities within the school and the use of the school facilities does not cause harm.

Thus, a comprehensive framework for safety and security in schools should aim to protect learners and education workers from death and injury in schools, plan for educational continuity in the face of expected hazards, safeguard education sector investments, and strengthen a disaster-resilient citizenry through education [33].

V. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROACH TO ADDRESSING SCHOOL SAFETY

The widespread incidences of attacks in schools, abduction for ransom, torture, dehumanisation and barbaric killing of school children in Nigeria and the increase gap created by insecurity in and around schools in Borno state amidst other school safety issues necessitate urgent action towards exploring all available option to ensure continuous safe teaching and learning activities in schools. The strategic role of education administrators positioned them on the helm of affairs towards addressing the school safety and security concerns. This was supported by Adeniran and Castradori who also believe that policy makers and school leaders among others have critical roles to play towards salvaging education from a catastrophic ending in Nigeria [2].

IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND INITIATIVES

The highest education administrative level (federal) has done a great job building on the national commitment to the global safe school declaration in development of the NPSSVFS, guidelines and minimum standard for safe schools following its decision making and policy implementation role. These documents will only remain on the shelf if conscious efforts are not channelled into implementation considering that the Nigerian government has been heavily criticised on the poor implementation of policies. The case of safe school related policies must not follow the same pattern in the light of the potential catastrophic impacts of failure to implement these policies on the future of the country. Hence, administrators at the state level especially Borno state, the epicentre of the Boko haram insurgency must swing into immediate action in ensuring the domestication of these policies and frameworks in the state with a well-defined implementation plan backed by commitment and action. Education administrators must continue to push for the state buy in and domestication of these frameworks. Similarly, as the lead and forerunners of all initiatives such as safe school initiative and safe school declaration sub-committee among others, the federal administrative level of education must ensure the functionality of these initiatives through close monitoring, effective supervision and dedication of human resources to the operationalisation of these platforms.

RECRUITMENT OF SECURITY EXPERTS

The administrative function of human resource management should be employed in recruitment of dedicated security experts who will continue monitoring, reporting and providing advisory support to the schools across the state is eminent in the wake of the present realities. The personnel should lead the development of a security response plan for each school in coordination with the national security actors. As suggested by Adeniran and Castradori, contingency plans for education continuity must be established as a mitigating factor in response to the threats [2]. Borno state government must take the initiative of utilising the available resources to fill in this gap and ensure that dedicated security experts work closely with educational administrators to enhance safety of schools in the state.

CONTINUE RISK ASSESSMENT AND SECURITY COORDINATION

Wholistic security risks assessment should be conducted as a matter of urgency across all schools in Borno state to ascertain which schools should continue operation, relocate and those to be completely closed out with immediate effect. The administrators at state and school level must synergise in continuous assessment of security threat across all schools and development of risk registers that must be duly reviewed and updated on routine basis using their planning and organisational skills. The outcome of these assessments must not be swept under the carpet but continuously being implemented along with a well-defined report of action taken per assessment leveraging of the administrative control roles. The school administrators must coordinate with the government security forces and share relevant information timely for effective response towards addressing the

identified threats. The assessment must strive to map out the critical stakeholders both in terms of prevention and response to aid networking and partnership for holistic response.

SAFE SCHOOL FACILITIES

Education administrators must ensure that location and construction of school facilities are done with the foresight of safety for all. Construction of schools around insecure areas of the communities and/or by major roads that increase the risks for the children must be discouraged. A holistic security assessment must be undertaken as much as environmental impact assessment before construction of schools while the existing schools should be assessed and upgrade the protection of the school premises where needed.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

The value of community engagement and partnership cannot be overemphasized, administrators must ensure they utilise the existing platforms such as School Based Management Committees (SBMC), Parent – Teachers Association (PTA) and other community structures to continuously engage with stakeholders to harness their contribution and support towards mitigating and responding to security threats. Effective communication, information sharing and interaction between the community stakeholders and school administrators as well as government security forces is very important in security management and enhances school safety. Education administrators must effectively utilise their coordination skills to bring all stakeholders on to the tables on school safety and security matters to achieve the desired goal. The importance of building a strong community support system in this perilous time cannot be overemphasized, education administrators at school level must work closely with the community leaders to foster a strong community support system that monitors, prevent, support and respond to school safety and security concerns from a holistic viewpoint.

ESTABLISHMENT OF EARLY WARNING AND EARLY RESPONSE SYSTEM

An early warning and early response system has proved effective in crisis mitigation and response. The school administrators should consider the need to pull resources into the development of a system that detect early signs and duly develop a response mechanism that minimise the impact of attacks on school and charter a cause for continuity of teaching and learning activities. A good early warning and early response system must be all encompassing as such administrators must employ the service of external stakeholders including community and security stakeholders to build a system that mitigate attacks on schools and provide emergency response systems that minimise the impact on teaching and learning activities. Experience from COVID pandemic response could be explored to strengthen the effectiveness of the response mechanism.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND AWARENESS CREATION

Many initiatives, frameworks and standards developed for enhanced school safety are known to only but few educational staff and stakeholders. As an all-encompassing task (security and safety of schools), stakeholders must be supported to know the provision of the NPSSVFS policy, guidelines and minimum standards for safe schools as well as their roles in the actualisation of these frameworks. This must start from training of the education administrators who are duty bearers at all levels then down to staff and other stakeholders. An enhanced advocacy and communication programme must be launched to increase the awareness of the content, provision and roles of all and sundry as it relates to these frameworks.

STAFF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFEGUARDING

The signing of the Child Rights Act into law in Borno state has opened the door for effective protection of elementary school children which must be effectively harnessed. Educational administrators should design capacity building and awareness creation mechanisms that will spread the knowledge of the provisions of law concerning the child rights and establish a control system to support the staff to abide by the law. The domesticated law should be summarised into key policy terms for the educational staff to sign as a commitment to safeguard the rights of the children and protect them from harm in and around the schools. While such

policies are being signed to commit the staff to protection of the child rights, an established monitoring system must be in place to reinforce the implementation through dedicated safeguarding focal persons in the schools.

ADMINISTRATIVE ADVOCACY FOR EXTERNAL SUPPORT

Educational administrators at all levels must advocate to other arms of government to support the effective implementation of the different policies and framework for safe schools. Advocacy for improved logistics support to military towards establishment of their camps are operational base outside schools; stop deployment of armed security personnel to schools; establishment of proximate security post to schools; construction of child friendly and inclusive educational facilities; fencing the school premises to reduce external interference and training of security actors on the provision of safe school declaration among others.

SUPERVISION, MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFE SCHOOL INITIATIVES

The function of education administrators spans the quality control of all educational initiatives that enhance effectiveness of teaching and learning. This implies that administrators have a vital role to play in ensuring that a conducive environment is created for educational activities to thrive. Initiatives as highlighted in this work must be effectively monitored to achieve the desired outcome. Hence, administrators must consider school safety initiatives as a critical part of their responsibility to champion effective implementation and so, ensure to provide all needed support to educational personnel and other stakeholders towards its effectiveness.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The structure of educational administration in Nigeria placed the educational administrator as pivotal to effective school safety practices being the responsible individuals for design and implementation of school safety and security procedures. The fact that safe schools are not only related to the impact of conflict on school activities and the all-encompassing of school safety means that administrative activities are key to achieving school safety. Borno state government must empower the educational administrators and hold them accountable to the implementations of all possible initiatives towards safety of educators and learners. The paper discovered that safe schools range from categories of hazards in and around school such as violence, conflict, everyday hazards, natural hazards, and school facilities. This implies that an administrative process that involve the development of policies and procedures, monitoring and implementation of the policies which span from the establishment of the school, construction of the school facilities, educational activities, emergency preparedness and responses systems as well as efforts put in place to ensure continuity of teaching and learning activities in the aftermath of crisis. Borno state has progressed effectively especially with the domestication of the child rights law, the domestication of the NPSSVFS is be the next priority while intensifying awareness creation on the provision of the laws such as child rights laws and the national frameworks such as guidelines and minimum standards for safe schools among administrators and educational staff. Therefore, it is recommended that school administrators in Borno state should be encouraged through capacity building to further understand their roles in identifying, reducing and responding to violence, natural and everyday hazards and crises in and around school. Also, to promote positive discipline, child friendly classroom management, address physical and humiliating punishments, bullying and peer violence as well as sexual and gender based violence. And to develop an effective linkage with emergency management agencies, build effective reporting and referral protocols that will enhance safe continuity of teaching and learning in the aftermath of the crisis.

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