

Prioritising Training and People-oriented Security Education for Effective Policing in Nigeria

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Abstract

Currently, Nigeria's security sector needs effective policing considering the spate of insecurity and frustrated relationship between the citizens and the police. Consequently, some officers are seen as dishonest and agents of complicity. Unlike most parts of the world where the people love, support the police, Nigeria still records threats to police-public relations owing to the attitudes of some officers who tarnish the image of the security agency through uncivilised, inhuman and unlawful acts while on duty and beyond. With qualitative data, this paper explores how training and people-oriented security education can enhance effective policing for a more secure Nigeria. This paper argues that police effectiveness should no longer be hinged only on equipping officers for counter-terrorism or establishment of special units to eradicate organised crime, but also on training them on weekly/monthly basis to respond to rapidly emerging threats to national security and trainings on enhancing collaborative police-public relations.

Keywords: Effective policing, Police, Training, Security education, Security skills

1. Introduction

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has identified lack of training to help the police adapt or effectively implement new strategies as one of the challenges of policing. The relevance of training to the development of individuals and institutions cannot be downplayed. Training makes it possible for people to improve on the skills they already acquired with appreciable impact on service delivery. The police are an integral part of every modern state system that desires security and maintenance of law and order. The relationship between increasing crime wave and the need for security education and effective policing is crucial.

Training is one of the departments in the Nigeria Police with strategic importance that can facilitate the success of logistics, force intelligence bureau, operations, information and communication, research and planning. Various training programmes are needed by police officers enlisted in the following formations: Port Authority Police, Marine Police, Police Academy, and Counter-terrorism Squad. It is through training that police officers are empowered with the skills they require to excel through on-the-job performance.

The Federal Government is saddled with the responsibility of regulating and controlling the activities of the police as contained in the Constitution of Nigeria, which recognises the existence of the police in the exclusive legislative list, with Section 215 giving the President of the country the powers to appoint the Inspector General of Police (IGP), the head of the Nigeria Police, as well as the powers to appoint Commissioners of Police in the states to the Federal Police Service Commission (Nwolise, 2012).

The police play a central role in maintaining social order. Any discourse on management of public order is incomplete without a focus on the police because they have the constitutional responsibility of forestalling breakdown of law and order in the polity; and initiating and executing lawful efforts at ensuring that Nigerians and foreigners living around the Nigerian geographical space are law-abiding and beneficiaries of a lawful and orderly society. A number of studies have been conducted on the police and national security. Most of these studies rather focused on corruption, inefficiency, lack of accountability, and complicity among others. Ajozie (2000,p.27) argues that the police in Nigeria are "inadequate both

in strength and equipment to curtail the crisis in the land and ensure security of lives and property of the citizens.” The numerical strength of the police is currently below one police officer to 400 citizens in a country as the standard United Nations required ratio to enhance human security. This is why most people blame the police for the abysmal degree of internal security in Nigeria. Similarly, the fact that the public perceive the police offices as “dishonest people who align with armed robbers to terrorise and kill people” (Post Express, 2001,p.41) makes Magbor (2001,p.11) to state that the problem of the police is that they are not mentally prepared for re-orientation project to the extent that they are not concerned with how low they have sunk in the public perception, which demands that they work extra hard to regain the trust and confidence of Nigerians. There is no doubt that ‘police’ as an institution has become a source of sorrow to many families in Nigeria, owing to police brutality, with attendant death of victims. For instance, Asuquo (2013, pp.269-281) discusses the geometric rise of security challenges and Nigeria’s woes since 2000, largely due to the failure of policymakers and security forces to distinguish between the immediate and the underlying causes of civil disorder.

Adekunle (2013) describes the Nigerian state as porous and highly volatile, noting that the police are deficient in crime prevention and detection. According to Idowu (2010), taboos were very effective in combating deviant behaviours in traditional Yoruba society. But today, most societies, including the Yoruba society, have become hotspots of deviant behaviour, and the police are required to contain such. It is timely to explore how effective policing can be enhanced through training and security education for police officers.

Although the police have been empowered to use firearms to achieve a lawful policing objective without violating human rights, some police officers usually kill innocent members of the public while doing their legitimate work (Osse & Cano, 2017). The problem is a result of poor training and security education backed by monitoring. As noted by Muhammedally (2015,p.2), “security forces need to prioritise, learn, and put into practice civilian protection by undertaking in-depth, pre-mission and in-mission planning and training to avoid harm, and proactively protecting civilians provision of security to returnees, as well as protection both from crime and revenge attacks”. The following policing challenges, as identified by UNODC (2013), also affect Nigerian police: order maintained by informal local structures, resource-based conflicts, illegal provision of basic urban services, high levels of deprivation and tension between the wealthy and the poor, being targets of political violence and terrorism. These have complicated police efforts in maintaining law and order despite investigation efforts, street patrols, and arrest of suspects aimed at controlling crime. As asserted by Oshodi (2011), the police have had the problem of sub-standard recruitment and training processes; not only developing a training manual for potential and actual members of the police is a way forward, but also emphasising on ethical guidelines in the task of policing. It is, however, worrisome that after receiving training on the professionalism required in policing, some officers are implicated in the violation of human rights through indiscriminate use of lethal force with arms that are meant for criminals as last resort especially when they pose threat to society.

Poor security education in the Nigeria Police (NP) caused security lapses and greatly contributed to the debate on whether or not Nigeria has reached the stage of establishing state police across the thirty-six states of the federation as a result of the police proclivity for abusing their ranks, politics of security and complicity in different quarters. Nwolise (2012) chronicles some reasons by the protagonists and antagonists of the state police controversies: the protagonists say state police will generate job opportunities for youths, state police is an attribute of federalism, it will check election rigging by the NP, government will easily contain criminality; while the antagonists mention misuse of the state police by some state governors, just as they deploy state electoral commissions for their political interest, inadequate budgetary allocations to accommodate state police, and state police being threat to democracy.

In terms of methodology, this study is qualitative. The data were got through media reports, IFRA-Nigeria press files, Nigeria Watch database, and other secondary sources.

2. The Police and Security Education: A Philosophical Explanation

The police are a body of recruited and trained personnel of the state (Odoma, 2012). Police organisation refers to the agency or institution saddled with the responsibility of enforcing laws and regulations, maintenance of public order and health with a view to preventing crimes and punishing the breach of the law (Adekunle, 2013). This means that anything short of maintenance of law and order undermines the constitutional role of the police. As state security providers (Ashkenazi, 2013; Nwobueze & Okolie-Osemene, 2017), the police are also one of the notable actors of criminal justice in every state. As a security agency that exists to serve all citizens, neutrality should be the watchword of the police organisation, especially in political matters. Part of the maintenance of law and order also include intelligence gathering and prevention of arms proliferation in society.

The Police Act 1958 as amended, Cap 41, and 1990 outlines the constitutional role of the Nigeria Police thus: “the power to prevent and detect crime...the enforcement of all laws; the preservation of law and order; the performance of such military duties within or outside Nigeria as may be required of them by or under authority of this or any other act” (Nigeria Police, 2006; Odoma, 2012; Nwolise, 2012). Like most police institutions across the world, the functions of police

personnel in Nigeria have expanded beyond criminal investigation and prosecution to involve issues of security, community and neighbourhood policing, containment of demonstrations and mass protests, counter-terrorism, anti-kidnapping, containment of bank robberies, cordon-off activities during electioneering or tribunal sittings, as well as restriction of movements in urban and rural areas when leaders visit to commission projects.

The training needs of police officers are essential for the development of manpower in the Nigeria Police. Security education should be attached to the central elements of human rights-based policing in democratic societies, as outlined by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2013), namely: the police's special role given its monopoly on the use of force; professionalism; the requirement of strict legality; internal and external accountability; transparency; and a relationship of trust with the public. Accountability in policing discourages the use of excessive force (Skilling, 2016). The idea of security education is that it is possible to be a security agent without comprehending or appreciating the ethical guidelines for carrying out security tasks.

This paper is anchored in policing community philosophy, which Beu and Nepravishta (2013,p.180) describe as “a working philosophy and an organized strategy which is considered as one of the contemporary methods of policing. This philosophy is essentially based on the fact that, people should cooperate within the process of policing and police should offer to them qualitative services as a return of their support to the police.” The authors state that managing the problems of the community requires the enhancement of the relationships between police and the community. Similarly, in order to confirm their suspicions, officers conduct stop and search as crime control measure which requires public trust in the police (Bradford, 2015). While embarking on stop and search, officers are expected to make such operations intelligence-led, beyond crime scenes to make it effective through timely cooperation with the people (Delsol, 2015). Although there is no disputation on the legality of police action in this regard, scholars are divided on the effectiveness of police searches and identity checks as social control measures which encourage police contact with the people, thus perceived as inadequate security initiative (Fielding, 2005; Body-Gendrot & Wihtol de Wenden, 2014; Delsol, 2015). The essence of training and security education is to enhance effectiveness of policing in the interest of society as far as security provision is concerned. It is believed that the improvement of policing would impact positively on the relationship between police and the people.

3. Relevance of Training and Security Education in Policing Nigerian Society

The Nigeria Police consist of about 371,800 personnel who had to undergo an extensive battery of intellectual, personality, visual-motor, and ethics-related testing usually classified as psycho screening (Oshodi, 2011). Such screening is also the beginning of many events that would empower officers for the task ahead as far as national security is concerned. After the recruitment of police officers, training is organised for them across the six geo-political zones in the country for several months. They are usually hosted at Police Staff College Jos, Police College Ikeja, Police Training School Ibadan, and police colleges in Enugu, Kaduna, Bauchi, Sokoto, Ilorin, Nonwa-Tai in Rivers, Benin, Calabar, Gwoza, Maiduguri and Makurdi. Some of the ranks that receive such training are Cadet Assistant Superintendents of Police, Cadet Inspectors, Constables, and Assistant Superintendents of Police. Urbanisation and the sophistication of criminal networks in Nigerian society have made it necessary for Police Service Commission and other relevant stakeholders to think beyond training officers after recruitment to also consider organising annual or quarterly training programmes that would prioritise security education for people-oriented policing. This is based on how training enlightens people and transforms the mind and thinking. Further, police assistance and training in human rights and good governance within the framework of control efforts will facilitate the improvement of relations between security forces and the public in target areas.

For Nigerian police officers to deliver as expected in the professional policing models that include approaches like community policing, problem-oriented policing, intelligence-led policing (UNODC, 2013), they need training to equip them with the task of swiftly responding to not only crime but also all forms of security threats which usually change in frequency. A number of factors have been presented as contributing to professionalism. Roberts (2003, p.147) argues that the “militarization of the police has manifested in excessive use of force which often yielded objectionable public repercussions, failure to maintain order in real sense and only act during emergencies.” Through the use of force even in peace time, particularly during peaceful demonstrations, the police attack innocent citizens of the state to the extent that their professionalism is subjected to criticisms. Further, continuing corruption and misuse of weapons by members of security forces, and, in particular, the impunity with which “uniformed” men engage in discourteous and unlawful acts, seriously hamper the emergence of the rule of law.

The foregoing contributed to the confrontation of the police when people notice some of their relations/friends have been killed by police officers. Afeno (2014,p.15) avers that “many security personnel have also been killed in the course of discharging their duties, to the extent that the police and the army arguably suffered the highest casualty figures”. Tackling such issues as corruption and the culture of impunity is a considerable challenge, as it requires a profound change in attitudes among government and security officials. While they welcome the provided human rights training for the men

under their authority, they are considerably less open towards cooperation in investigations into alleged human rights violations of police officers.

In addition, tackling impunity requires an effective and neutral judiciary that can withstand external pressure. However, courts are often under the influence of strong and wealthy men and the executive arm of government, that try to intervene in the rulings of the judges. In such circumstances, it is difficult to see how people can be convinced that state institutions and organs are working in the public interest. This clearly hampers the development of the degree of public trust and confidence required to rid Nigeria of the increasing rate of career situational criminality and insecurity across the country.

Police officers earn average of thirty thousand naira a month, a sum that evidently does not allow for covering more than most essential needs of police officers and their families. This possibly explains why the police are much more susceptible to corruption and once you undermine the central role of the police in that way, you will have a very serious weakness in the system of protecting human rights as well as judicial enforcement. It is changes in such fundamental structures and relationships that would seem required for the police force and essential for the consolidation of the rule of law in Nigeria. In this context, the emergence of a viable and critically engaged civil society is the key towards such changes.

Recording avoidable deaths while discharging police duties, is an indication that the officers have little or no security education, particularly in preventing upsurge of violence. Political and urban youth crises are usually used to justify police violence, while it is sometimes claimed that the need for the police to defend themselves and deal with public disorder, especially to contain potentially violent demonstrators or intervention in an area where crime has been committed, makes them to act that way (Brewer, 1996; Momoh, 2003). Such developments make Nwolise (2012,p.30) to argue that “the Nigeria Police Force is psychologically and structurally too distant from the people they are meant to protect; and do not share or get bound by the values, interests and sentiments of the people.” Such psychological disconnect manifests in killing of citizens for various reasons, which range from their failure to do what the police demand to other reasons, like crime control, accidental discharge and self-defence, notwithstanding the fact that some of their stop-and-search activities around checkpoints are usually aimed at extorting the majority of commuters. This situation raises the question of accountability, as most of such culprits have neither been prosecuted nor sanctioned by authorities even after denying people’s rights to life, freedom of movement and other socio-economic rights. Most of the intentional killings occur at the point when drivers refuse to cooperate or when they try to run after the drivers.

Modern policing focuses on the protection of population and effective control of security (İşleyen, 2017). This is why Nigeria’s Ministry of Police Affairs embarked on capacity building and training of police personnel in 2011. About 15,342 police personnel were trained in counter-terrorism, intelligence gathering and many others. This means that for the police to continue delivering the service of protecting the entire populace through the provision of adequate security, tactical training is inevitable to update their skills, considering how new threats to national security usually emerge and increase in frequency.

Beyond professional training in police academies and academic degrees in universities, sending law enforcement personnel to further training to get more knowledge of the job is of great importance to maintaining security in the country (Cao, Huang & Sund, 2016). Such security education can be formal or informal as the case may be and this has to be done in line with the national policy on security. The goal of security education can also be achieved through the organisation of people-oriented conferences and awareness-raising workshops that aim at improving the capacity of police officers to enhance security of lives and property. Through informal and formal security education, police personnel will advance their knowledge and exhibit positive attitude needed in police checkpoint; during joint security patrols and surveillance operations; peacekeeping operations; curbing of youth restiveness; handling of police helicopters; and while engaging in community based policing. It will also help them to appreciate police-public relations as a necessity in the police force and part of confidence-building mechanism, as well as timely protection of victims of crime to save them from further human rights abuses, a necessary condition for effective policing.

Training and security education will not only enhance effective policing but also reduce fatalities that are gradually becoming the attribute of the Nigeria’s security sector relations with the public. There is no disputing the observations of human rights defenders on how some security forces, especially the police, have become trigger-happy, and unable to maintain order properly and peacefully. The Nigeria Watch report revealed that the police have killed in 295 incidents out of 517 in 2006-2007, and 240 out of 443 in 2007-2008 (Nigeria Watch 2008; 2011). Training and security education are crucial due to their potential of reminding officers of the need to identify the stages a firearm must go through before an officer fires at a target to reduce casualties.

Training and security education will reduce the violation of citizens’ inalienable rights in the process of discharging police duties and still ensure a lawful society. The fact that civilians have had a large share of human rights abuse in the hands of the Nigeria police cannot be disputed, especially considering how crime control has become synonymous with flagrant disregard of fundamental rights.

Security education will enhance police public relations, the image of the police, with appreciable impact on the public respect for the police. This would reposition police officers to become agents of solution to the problem of insecurity rather than becoming the sources of insecurity or aggravating it themselves. When they understand the training they undergo, they can extend it to various communities on ways of responding to threats to human security before the arrival of officers, particularly in identifying the locations where criminals operate from and also being knowledgeable about security tips. This shows the need for cordial relationship between communities and police Department of Operations, and Department of Training and Development for people-oriented security education.

Police Department of Operations is headed by a deputy inspector general of police, with the following sections: Department of Operations Administration, Department of Federal Operations, Force Veterinary Section, Border Patrol Section, Police Mobile Force, Explosive Ordinance Disposal Unit, Force Police Air Wing, Force Dog Section, Force Mounted Troop, Force Armaments Section, Counter-Terrorism Unit, Force Transport Section, Directorate Of Peacekeeping Operations, National Inland Waterways, Central Motor Registry, Force Marine Section, Special Protection Unit, and INEC Liaison Unit. Adequate partnership between the police and communities will address the need for non-violent policing, which remains an important aspect of security education. Security education is important to the task of ensuring safety because it will promote non-violent policy in policing. Non-violent policing encourages the maintenance of law and order without using the instrument of violence which should only be adopted when necessary as the last resort. A case in point on the issue of violence in policing is the incident in February 2016, when two police officers engaged a soldier in argument that led to a conflict between them. The soldier had just returned from the Northeast where he participated in counter-insurgency operation and drove his car through the *garri* market at Ojoo near the Headquarters 2 Division Nigerian Army when he was stopped and molested by the police officers who threatened to shoot him and fired into the air. A clash between the army and the Ojoo Divisional Police officers was averted when soldiers got to the scene with motorcycles and discovered that the police officers had fled the scene.

Security education will reduce the involvement of police personnel in avoidable human rights abuses and also shape the image of the police. Police officers will be equipped with relevant training to respond swiftly to distress calls whenever criminals attack residential and business areas instead of waiting for bandits to finish their operations before arriving at crime scenes. Only a security officer that does not understand the dangers of delaying to respond to calls would give reasons for failing to rescue oppressed citizens from criminals. It is simply an indirect way of motivating crime. Also, the issue of ambush that threatens the police crime control model of national security would be a thing of the past when they are equipped with the needed training and material resources to counter crime. Hence, it becomes crucial to address most of the issues during deployment of police personnel to volatile areas.

Security education is also necessary because most officers are yet to appreciate the importance of appearing in public to carry out their assignments in uniform. Some armed officers usually mount road blocks, particularly in Edo State, without approved uniform, thereby making it difficult for residents to differentiate them from armed gangs. This ugly trend was observed along Airport Road, Akpakpava Road, Irhirhi Road, Ubgowo-Uselu Road in Benin City and many other areas in the state. Police personnel must be made to understand their roles in ensuring that they adhere strictly to the provisions of the national policy on public safety and security by inculcating security education into their minds and thinking. Equipping the police through training will strengthen their capacity to protect all citizens and also reduce the formation of ethnic militias, most of which are indirectly motivated by security lapses.

Security education will build the capacity and skills of police officers in the craft of writing and presentation of reports to enhance prosecution in law courts and justice delivery system as well as judicial enforcement. In the light of the above, the police can serve the cause of justice and peace. It is possible to redirect security energies through functional education for sustainability of Nigeria's democracy and economy.

In this context, security education will prove vital to ensure that police officers respect and promote human rights, curb rascality and impunity as well as promote healthy and peaceful living among men and officers of the Nigeria police force.

4. Conclusion

This paper has examined the relevance of training and security education in Nigeria. It has been noted that security education will promote non-violent policing even when officers are carrying out their constitutional duties because some police officers have been implicated in repression and extra-judicial killings. Adequate training and security education can offer officers the opportunity to comprehend the dangers associated with violent and indiscriminate use of firearms on the civilian population they should protect. With adequate security education, police officers can easily map the trends of crime and threats to human security. Police officers require intelligence gathering as part of security strategy to achieve the goal of maintaining law and order in the country. This is achievable when they respond swiftly to early warning signs.

Security education is essential for security operatives to understand why suspected criminals must not be abused, released or allowed to escape after being apprehended until they have been prosecuted. This will reduce criminality in society.

Security education and welfare scheme must go together to motivate gallantry in the police because poor insurance scheme makes the majority of the officers to hold the perception that reward for effective service delivery is usually lacking and that their diligence is gamble with life that has become synonymously brutish with the police work. It is evident that the police officers are the least paid officers when compared with related agencies, like the Department of State Services and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, which seem to have lesser hazards; the police personnel have to confront armed bandits almost on a daily basis at highways, in the streets, at financial institutions, on campuses, and in the markets and motor parks among others.

Apart from the fact that adequate training and security education have the capacity to discourage excessive lethal force, they have confidence-building significance in encouraging citizens to cooperate and collaborate with the police in crime prevention and containment, and also motivate them to give police helpful information without fear of arrest and prosecution. Given that effective policing has positive impact on the image of a nation, security education, just like peace and human rights education, will eradicate the tradition of police violence, make the slogan “police is your friend” a reality on the ground and promote people’s trust and confidence in the police. Apart from transforming the perception of excessive force, security education has a human rights value. The main argument of this paper is that, when training and security education are people-oriented, with programmes organised on weekly and monthly basis to respond to rapidly emerging threats to national security to enhance police-public relations, the country would witness a gender-sensitive and effective policing with peace impact on national security and development.

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