

## Adaptive Education for Rehabilitation and Integration of Victims of Kidnapping in Nigeria: A Catalyst for Sustainable Development

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### Abstract

*Kidnapping has become one of the most devastating security challenges confronting many countries, particularly Nigeria, where armed banditry, insurgency, terrorism, communal conflicts, and organized criminal networks have increased kidnapping incidents. Beyond the immediate physical and psychological trauma, kidnapping often causes prolonged disruption of education, social exclusion, economic deprivation, and reduced opportunities for productive participation in society. Conventional educational approaches are inadequate for addressing the unique rehabilitation and reintegration needs of kidnapping survivors, necessitating adaptive educational interventions that respond to their diverse psychosocial, cognitive, emotional, and vocational needs. This paper examines adaptive education as a strategic framework for the rehabilitation and integration of kidnapping victims and explores its implications for sustainable development. Drawing on recent studies, policy documents, and international best practices, the paper discusses adaptive education, the multidimensional consequences of kidnapping, trauma-informed practices, psychosocial support, flexible learning pathways, vocational and digital skills development, community participation, and inclusive educational policies. It further examines the contribution of adaptive education to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 4, 8, 10, 16, and 17. The paper argues that adaptive education can help survivors regain academic confidence, develop employable skills, rebuild social relationships, and become productive members of society. It concludes that sustainable rehabilitation requires coordinated efforts among governments, educational institutions, humanitarian agencies, security organizations, mental health professionals, families, and communities. It suggests comprehensive policy reforms, increased educational financing, trauma-responsive teacher preparation, technology-enhanced learning, strengthened school-community partnerships, and continuous monitoring and evaluation of rehabilitation programmes to ensure long-term social inclusion and sustainable national development.*

**Keywords:** Adaptive education, kidnapping victims, rehabilitation, social integration, trauma-informed education, sustainable development

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## Introduction

Education remains one of the most powerful instruments for promoting peace, human development, social inclusion and national transformation. In contemporary societies, educational systems are expected not only to transmit knowledge but also to respond to humanitarian emergencies, violent conflicts, displacement, disasters and other crises that disrupt learning. In conflict-affected societies, education has therefore moved beyond conventional service delivery to become an important instrument for rebuilding lives, restoring hope, developing resilience and promoting peaceful coexistence (UNESCO, 2024).

Nigeria has experienced a significant increase in kidnapping over the last decade. What was initially associated largely with militancy in the Niger Delta has evolved into a widespread criminal activity involving terrorists, armed bandits, insurgents and organized criminal groups. Victims include schoolchildren, university students, teachers, health workers, traditional rulers, religious leaders, business owners, farmers, transport workers and other citizens. Of particular concern is the increasing incidence of school kidnappings, which has disrupted educational activities, particularly in northern Nigeria, and exposed learners to prolonged school closures, displacement and psychological trauma (UNICEF, 2024). The consequences of kidnapping extend beyond physical injury and temporary interruption of schooling. Survivors may experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, emotional withdrawal, poor concentration, learning difficulties, social isolation, loss of confidence and fear of returning to school. Families may equally experience emotional distress, financial hardship and reduced educational investment because of ransom payments, displacement and loss of livelihoods (International Rescue Committee [IRC], 2023). Conventional educational systems are often inadequately prepared to address these complex needs because they are primarily designed for stable learning environments. Rigid curricula, standardized assessment, conventional instructional practices and inadequate psychosocial services may therefore fail to meet the needs of learners recovering from severe trauma.

Adaptive education provides an alternative approach. It refers to learner-centred educational systems that modify instructional methods, curriculum delivery, assessment practices, learning environments and support services

according to learners' abilities, experiences, circumstances and needs (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). For kidnapping survivors, adaptive education can involve trauma-informed pedagogy, individualized learning plans, flexible schedules, accelerated learning programmes, psychosocial support, counselling, digital and blended learning, vocational education, mentorship, family engagement and community-based reintegration. These measures can help survivors recover emotionally while rebuilding academic competencies and life skills.

The significance of adaptive education extends beyond individual rehabilitation. Educational rehabilitation can reduce poverty, strengthen employability, promote social cohesion, improve resilience, enhance civic participation and prevent social exclusion. It is therefore directly relevant to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on quality education, SDG 3 on health and well-being, SDG 8 on decent work, SDG 10 on reduced inequalities and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions (United Nations, 2023). This paper examines the concept and principles of adaptive education; analyses the educational, psychological and socioeconomic consequences of kidnapping; explores adaptive strategies for rehabilitation and social integration; examines the contribution of adaptive education to sustainable development; and proposes measures for strengthening educational rehabilitation programmes for kidnapping survivors.

### **Concept of Adaptive Education**

Adaptive education recognizes that learners differ in their academic abilities, psychological conditions, social backgrounds, cultural experiences and learning needs. It therefore rejects a rigid "one-size-fits-all" approach and emphasizes modification of curriculum content, instructional methods, assessment techniques, learning environments and support services to accommodate individual circumstances (UNESCO, 2024). Although adaptive education is sometimes associated with personalized digital learning, its application is broader. It is increasingly relevant to learners affected by conflict, displacement, disasters, disabilities and traumatic experiences. According to OECD (2023), adaptive education promotes equity, inclusion, participation, resilience and improved learning outcomes by ensuring that educational systems respond appropriately to differences among learners. For kidnapping survivors, adaptive education requires attention to both educational and psychosocial recovery. Important components include trauma-

informed teaching, individualized learning plans, accelerated learning, flexible assessment, psychosocial support, counselling, social-emotional learning, vocational training, digital learning, family engagement and community participation. Its major principles include learner-centred instruction, curriculum flexibility, differentiated teaching, individualized assessment, inclusive practices, continuous monitoring, psychosocial support and collaboration among schools, families, health professionals and communities. Education Cannot Wait (2023) indicates that adaptive educational responses can improve engagement, learning, emotional well-being and resilience among vulnerable learners.

### **Rehabilitation, Social Integration and Sustainable Development**

Rehabilitation is a comprehensive process through which individuals who have experienced physical, psychological, emotional or social trauma regain functional independence and become productive members of society. It goes beyond medical treatment to encompass psychological counselling, educational recovery, vocational training, social support, healthcare and community reintegration (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Kidnapping survivors require multidimensional rehabilitation because captivity may expose them to physical abuse, emotional trauma, prolonged fear, isolation and disruption of normal life. These experiences can result in PTSD, depression, anxiety, cognitive difficulties, low self-esteem and educational setbacks. Educational rehabilitation is particularly important because it restores learning opportunities, rebuilds confidence, develops cognitive functioning and provides the competencies required for productive participation in society. Effective rehabilitation should therefore integrate trauma counselling, psychosocial support, remedial and accelerated education, vocational skills, life skills, family counselling, healthcare, community support and continuous monitoring. Because survivors differ in age, educational background, duration of captivity and psychological needs, rehabilitation should be individualized.

Social integration refers to the process through which individuals become accepted, valued and actively involved in the educational, social, economic, cultural and political life of their communities (United Nations, 2023). Kidnapping survivors may encounter stigma, discrimination, emotional withdrawal, disrupted education, unemployment and reduced self-confidence. Some children returning from captivity may face bullying or rejection, while

survivors of sexual violence may experience additional forms of exclusion. Adaptive education can address these barriers by providing inclusive learning environments where survivors develop communication skills, emotional intelligence, resilience, interpersonal relationships and civic responsibility.

Sustainable development involves meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It encompasses economic development, social inclusion, human capital development, poverty reduction, gender equality, quality education, peaceful societies and resilient institutions. Adaptive education contributes to these objectives by restoring access to education, improving employability, reducing inequalities, strengthening resilience and promoting social cohesion.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper is anchored on Trauma-Informed Theory and Resilience Theory. Trauma-Informed Theory explains how traumatic experiences can affect cognition, emotional regulation, behaviour, learning and interpersonal relationships. Severe trauma may result in poor concentration, impaired memory, anxiety, emotional instability and difficulty establishing trusting relationships (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2023). Trauma-informed education consequently emphasizes emotional safety, predictable routines, positive teacher-student relationships, restorative discipline, counselling, peer support and family engagement. Its central assumption is that effective learning is difficult when learners do not feel psychologically safe.

Resilience Theory complements this perspective by emphasizing the ability of individuals to recover, adapt and thrive despite adversity. Rather than focusing exclusively on the deficits created by trauma, the theory emphasizes protective factors such as supportive families, quality education, positive peer relationships, counselling, community acceptance, vocational opportunities and responsive educational institutions. Adaptive education can strengthen resilience by providing academic support, emotional regulation skills, life skills, problem-solving abilities and opportunities for personal development.

## **Empirical Evidence**

Empirical and programme-based evidence indicates that kidnapping, armed conflict and insecurity negatively affect educational access, learning outcomes, psychosocial well-being and socioeconomic development. UNICEF (2024) reported that 10.2 million primary-school-age children and 8.1 million junior-secondary-school-age children were out of school in Nigeria, while 74% of children aged 7–14 lacked basic reading and mathematics skills. The report also documented attacks on schools and closures in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States, demonstrating the extent to which insecurity disrupts education. Earlier UNICEF assessments reported that 11,536 schools in Nigeria had been closed because of abductions and security challenges since December 2020, affecting approximately 1.3 million children during the 2020/2021 academic year. UNICEF further estimated substantial potential losses in lifetime earnings resulting from interrupted education. These findings demonstrate that kidnapping affects not only immediate safety but also human-capital development and future economic productivity.

The global situation reinforces the Nigerian experience. Education Cannot Wait (2023) estimated that 224 million crisis-affected children required urgent education support globally, including approximately 72 million who were out of school. More recent estimates placed the number of crisis-affected school-age children requiring urgent educational support at 234 million, with 85 million completely out of school. Programme evidence also indicates that targeted interventions can improve learning outcomes and participation among crisis-affected learners. The evidence supports the argument that adaptive education should be viewed as more than an instructional innovation. It is a multidimensional rehabilitation strategy that can restore educational continuity, address psychosocial needs, develop employable skills, support social reintegration and reduce the long-term human-capital consequences of kidnapping. For Nigeria, the evidence justifies increased investment in trauma-responsive education, flexible learning pathways, psychosocial services, vocational and digital skills, safe-school mechanisms and collaboration among government, schools, families, communities, health professionals and humanitarian organizations.

## **Educational Implications of Kidnapping**

Kidnapping has profound implications for survivors' educational experiences. The first is disruption of educational continuity. Victims may spend weeks or

months in captivity and subsequently miss substantial instructional time. School closures, relocation and absenteeism further compound the problem. Learners often return with significant gaps in literacy, numeracy and other foundational competencies, making remedial and accelerated programmes necessary. A second implication is psychological trauma and associated learning difficulties. PTSD, anxiety, depression, emotional dysregulation, sleep disturbances and persistent fear can impair attention, memory, problem-solving and executive functioning (WHO, 2022). Traumatized learners may show reduced classroom participation, poor concentration, declining academic performance, emotional withdrawal, aggressive behaviour, difficulty trusting teachers and peers, fear of unfamiliar environments and frequent absenteeism. Third, kidnapping can increase school dropout and educational inequality. Families may withdraw children because of security concerns, relocation or inability to meet educational costs following ransom payments and loss of livelihoods. Rural learners, internally displaced children, girls and children with disabilities may be particularly vulnerable. Educational exclusion may consequently increase exposure to child labour, early marriage, criminal activities and intergenerational poverty. Finally, survivors may experience social stigma. This is especially serious for those who have experienced sexual violence. Stigmatization, shame and discrimination can discourage school attendance and undermine confidence. Schools must therefore provide inclusive environments that protect survivors from discrimination and secondary victimization.

### **Adaptive Educational Strategies for Rehabilitation and Reintegration**

**Trauma-Informed Teaching:** This provides emotionally safe and supportive learning environments for survivors. Teachers should create predictable classrooms characterized by trust, empathy, respect and consistency. Punitive approaches that may reinforce fear should be minimized, while trauma-related behaviours should be understood and appropriately managed. Teacher professional development should include trauma-sensitive pedagogy, classroom management, identification of trauma symptoms and referral procedures for specialized services (SAMHSA, 2023).

**Individualized Learning Plans:** Survivors differ considerably in academic readiness, psychological recovery and learning needs. Individualized Learning Plans should therefore include baseline assessment, personalized learning goals, differentiated instruction, flexible assessment, progress monitoring and

transition arrangements. Such plans allow learners to recover academically without being subjected to unrealistic expectations that may create additional stress.

**Accelerated Learning and Flexible Assessment:** It helps survivors recover essential competencies after prolonged absence from school. Such programmes are particularly useful for learners returning from captivity or displacement. Flexible curricula should permit modifications in instructional pace, learning materials and assessment. Competency-based learning, project work, portfolios, continuous assessment, oral presentations and digital assignments can provide alternative ways of demonstrating learning while reducing unnecessary examination anxiety.

**Social-Emotional Learning:** It supports emotional recovery and social reintegration by developing self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, communication, conflict-resolution skills, decision-making, resilience and responsible citizenship. These competencies complement academic recovery by helping survivors rebuild relationships and confidence.

**Psychosocial Support:** Psychosocial support is central to educational rehabilitation. School-based counselling should provide opportunities for individual counselling, group therapy, crisis intervention, grief counselling, family counselling and referral to specialized mental-health services where required. Peer-support programmes can reduce isolation and promote belonging, while trained peer mentors can provide encouragement, academic assistance and positive role modelling. Family engagement is equally important. Parents and caregivers should participate in educational planning, counselling and rehabilitation activities. Community leaders, faith-based organizations, civil society organizations and traditional institutions can support reintegration by reducing stigma, encouraging acceptance and facilitating community dialogue.

**Technology-Enhanced Education:** Digital technologies can maintain educational continuity during insecurity and displacement. Virtual classrooms, mobile learning applications, offline digital resources, radio and television education, learning management systems, digital assessment and artificial-intelligence-supported personalized learning can provide alternative learning pathways. However, implementation requires reliable electricity, internet connectivity, affordable devices, teacher digital competence, cybersecurity and inclusive digital policies.

**Vocational Education and Skills Development:** Vocational education is particularly important for older adolescents and young adults who need employable skills to rebuild their livelihoods. Programmes may include entrepreneurship, digital literacy, agricultural innovation, tailoring, fashion design, carpentry, welding, electrical installation, catering, ICT programming, graphic design, renewable-energy technologies and financial literacy. Partnerships with industries, technical colleges and vocational centres can provide internships, apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

**Family, Community and Multi-Sectoral Collaboration:** Rehabilitation cannot be achieved by schools alone. Government should develop adaptive education policies, increase funding, strengthen safe-school initiatives, recruit counsellors and psychologists, establish rehabilitation centres and improve infrastructure. Educational institutions should adopt trauma-informed practices, provide individualized learning plans, integrate psychosocial services, promote inclusion and monitor learners continuously. The health sector should provide clinical assessment, therapy, rehabilitation planning and referral services, while security agencies should collaborate with schools on emergency preparedness, school safety and early-warning systems. Civil society organizations can contribute psychosocial services, learning materials, teacher training, scholarships, advocacy and community mobilization. Families, religious institutions and community leaders have an important role in promoting acceptance and providing sustained emotional support.

### **Proposed Adaptive Education Rehabilitation Framework**

The paper proposes an Adaptive Education Rehabilitation Framework consisting of six interconnected stages.

**Stage One:** Identification and Assessment. Survivors should be registered and assessed medically, psychologically, educationally and socially. The findings should guide individualized rehabilitation plans.

**Stage Two:** Immediate Recovery. This stage should provide medical treatment, trauma counselling, family reunification and essential educational materials.

**Stage Three:** Educational Reintegration. Survivors should receive individualized learning plans, accelerated learning, flexible curriculum delivery and continuous psychosocial support.

**Stage Four:** Skills Development. Vocational education, digital literacy, entrepreneurship and life-skills education should prepare survivors for economic independence.

**Stage Five:** Social Reintegration. Peer mentoring, community dialogue, anti-stigma campaigns, family empowerment and civic engagement should support acceptance and active participation.

**Stage Six:** Long-Term Monitoring. Continuous academic assessment, mental-health follow-up, employment tracking, community participation and programme evaluation should ensure sustained recovery and enable timely intervention.

The framework emphasizes collaboration among education, health, security, social welfare, humanitarian organizations, families and communities. Its central strength is the integration of educational recovery with psychosocial rehabilitation and economic empowerment.

### **Adaptive Education as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development**

Adaptive education contributes to sustainable development by restoring human capital, promoting social cohesion, reducing poverty and inequality, improving mental health and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

First, it contributes to human capital development. Kidnapping interrupts educational investment and reduces future economic opportunities. By helping survivors complete their education and acquire vocational and entrepreneurial competencies, adaptive education restores productive capacity and reduces dependence on humanitarian assistance.

Second, it promotes social cohesion and peacebuilding. Survivors may experience fear, distrust and social isolation. Educational environments that emphasize empathy, tolerance, communication, conflict resolution and civic responsibility can rebuild relationships and promote peaceful coexistence.

Third, adaptive education contributes to poverty reduction and reduced inequality. Kidnapping can impose substantial financial burdens on families

through ransom payments, displacement and lost livelihoods. Scholarships, accelerated education, vocational training, digital literacy, entrepreneurship and employment support can improve economic opportunities and reduce socioeconomic vulnerability.

Fourth, adaptive education promotes mental health and well-being. Counselling, trauma-informed pedagogy, psychosocial support, peer mentoring and social-emotional learning can support emotional recovery and resilience. Improved psychological well-being can subsequently strengthen academic participation, employability and community engagement.

Adaptive education also supports several SDGs. It advances SDG 3 through mental-health and psychosocial services; SDG 4 through inclusive and equitable learning; SDG 8 through vocational and entrepreneurship programmes; SDG 10 through the reduction of educational inequalities; SDG 16 through peacebuilding, civic responsibility and social justice; and SDG 17 through partnerships among governments, schools, humanitarian organizations, communities and development partners.

### **Challenges to Implementation**

Despite its potential, adaptive education faces significant implementation challenges in Nigeria. Inadequate funding limits investment in counselling, teacher training, learning materials, digital infrastructure and rehabilitation centres. Shortages of mental-health professionals restrict access to specialized psychological and psychosocial services. Limited teacher capacity is another challenge because many teachers have not received sufficient preparation in trauma-informed pedagogy, differentiated instruction and psychosocial support.

Persistent insecurity continues to undermine educational continuity by discouraging parents from returning children to school and exposing schools to further attacks. Weak policy implementation also limits the effectiveness of existing educational and child-protection policies because of inadequate coordination, institutional capacity and monitoring. Social stigma, particularly against survivors of sexual violence, can hinder reintegration. Finally, the digital divide, reflected in limited electricity, internet connectivity, devices and digital skills, restricts the use of technology-enhanced adaptive education in many rural and vulnerable communities.

## **Conclusion**

Kidnapping constitutes a serious threat to educational development, human security and sustainable national progress in Nigeria. Its effects extend beyond immediate physical harm to include educational disruption, psychological trauma, school dropout, poverty, social exclusion and weakened human-capital development. Conventional educational systems, which are largely designed for stable learning environments, cannot adequately address the complex rehabilitation needs of kidnapping survivors. Adaptive education provides a comprehensive response because it combines trauma-informed teaching, individualized learning, flexible curriculum and assessment, psychosocial support, accelerated education, vocational development, technology-enhanced learning and community participation. These interventions can help survivors recover academically and emotionally while rebuilding confidence, resilience, employable skills and meaningful social relationships.

The significance of adaptive education extends beyond individual recovery. By restoring educational opportunities, improving employability, reducing inequalities, supporting mental health, promoting peaceful coexistence and strengthening institutional resilience, adaptive education contributes directly to sustainable development. It therefore represents not merely a response to educational disruption but a strategic investment in human dignity, national stability and sustainable peace. Effective rehabilitation requires coordinated action involving government, educational institutions, health professionals, security agencies, humanitarian organizations, families, communities and development partners. Investing in resilient and adaptive education systems is consequently essential to protecting the right to education and ensuring that kidnapping survivors are not permanently excluded from national development.

## **Suggestions**

Based on the foregoing discussion, the paper suggests that:

1. Federal and State Governments should develop comprehensive adaptive education policies addressing the rehabilitation of kidnapping survivors and other learners affected by conflict and emergencies.

2. Dedicated funding should be provided for trauma-informed education, counselling, teacher professional development, psychosocial services and educational rehabilitation centres.
3. Teacher education institutions should incorporate trauma-informed pedagogy, adaptive instructional strategies, social-emotional learning and inclusive education into teacher preparation and professional development.
4. Schools should establish multidisciplinary rehabilitation teams involving teachers, counsellors, psychologists, social workers, healthcare professionals and community representatives.
5. Accelerated learning programmes should be expanded to enable survivors to recover lost instructional time without compromising educational quality.
6. Vocational education, entrepreneurship and digital-skills development should be integrated into rehabilitation programmes to promote economic independence and reduce poverty.
7. Digital learning infrastructure should be strengthened through investment in connectivity, affordable devices, digital content and teacher digital competence.
8. School-community partnerships should be strengthened to reduce stigma, increase family participation and facilitate acceptance of survivors.
9. Security agencies should collaborate with educational institutions to strengthen school protection, early-warning systems, emergency preparedness and implementation of safe-school measures.
10. Further empirical studies should examine the long-term educational, psychological and socioeconomic outcomes of adaptive education programmes for kidnapping survivors in Nigeria and other conflict-affected societies.

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