

Insecurity and Provision of Quality Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

The Nigerian nation has for the past two decades, been plagued by unprecedented crises such as economic downturn, terrorism, banditry, militancy, religious extremism, kidnapping, corruption, leadership crises and more. The educational system being a part of the mainstream society has not been spared from these maladies. This paper discusses insecurity and quality education in Nigeria. It examines the concept of insecurity and quality education, types of insecurity, causes of insecurity, the effects of insecurity on the provision of quality education and factors militating against security delivery in educational institutions. Arising from the discussions, some suggestions for maintaining security to achieve quality education are provided.

Keyword: Insecurity, education, quality, Nigeria.

Introduction

Education is the foundation of national developments and the channel through which individuals in the society achieve their life goals. Without peace, no functional and quality education can thrive. Globally, there is a rising wave of insecurity and the educational system is not spared from this problem (Ekpoh, Edet & Ukpog, 2020). The rising wave of insecurity in the nation has been a source of great concern recently. In the 60s, 70s and up to 80s, educational environments were relatively peaceful for teaching-learning process to go on without hindrance. However, the situation changed since in the 1990s. Recent happenings have shown that educational environments are not so safe for the students and the school personnel any more, due to some threatening security challenges.

Insecurity means a state of being unsafe, fearful and being threatened. Insecurity varies in dimensions and magnitude across regions in Nigeria. Each region in Nigeria seems to be confronted with different forms of insecurity. For instance, in the North Eastern region there is Boko Haram, a sect with an ideology that is opposed to western education and anything it represents. The IA- Foundation (2024) describes Boko Haram as a major driver of insecurity in Nigeria that perpetuates violent attacks on citizens. In the North West there are banditry and cattle rustling. In the West, there is the Oodua People's Congress (OPC). In the Eastern region, there are such groups as the Movement for the Actualization of Biafra (MOSSOB), who advocates for self-independence, together with the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOP), who encourage defiant actions such as sit at home every Monday, which disrupts school activities on such days all throughout the year. Ogunode, Umeora and Olatunde (2022) reported that IPOP disrupted teaching and learning and that teachers and students are not usually allowed to come for teaching and classes regularly. Militancy and kidnapping exist in the South-South region, while in the Middle Belt farmers and herdsmen deadly clashes are prevalence. In all these security crises, Nwankwo (2013) noted that the educational system is unavoidably the first casualty in times of serious national security problems. Apart from this, in serious security crises situations, schools are closed and school buildings and facilities taken over and occupied either by the aggressor or intervention forces or humanitarian relief workers. With this, progress in the provision of quality education programmes suffer near total collapse as educational services are not delivered and curriculum implementation poor.

Insecurity is a formidable threat to providing quality education to the teeming population of Nigerian children. According to Mensah, Baafi, Arthur, Somuah, and Mprah (2019) educational institutions are no longer safe havens for learning but have become targets of violence and terror. Over the last 10years since the 2014

Chibok school girls' abduction, Nigeria has been grappling with the alarming escalation of insecurity within the educational sector. The reality of insecurity is that no educational institution is free from attacks and many Nigerian school children and teachers have become victims of abduction, kidnapping and ransom demands. In the process, many innocent children have lost their lives, some taken as hostages, some forced into early marriages, some have dropped out of schools and some schools have been closed, leaving many students stranded and without hope of having education. It has been reported that insecurity crises have caused the closure of 11,536 schools in Nigeria since December, 2020 (IA Foundations, 2024).

Safe-guarding the academic environment for educational activities is very important. It is for this reason that Okebukola (as cited in Youdeowei and Iruoma, 2015) submits that "no safe school, no future for the world". The author gave three reasons to justify this assertion as follows; (i) The dream of harnessing the power of education for achieving goals in health, food, employment, enrolment, energy, security will come to naught. (ii) Without safe schools, the vision of education for all will remain a pipe dream (iii) Quality education yearned by all countries of the world will be hindered.

Xaba (2014) describes safe school environment as one that is not dangerous and possess no threats to physical, emotional, psychosocial and psychological well-being of the occupants. In other words, it is an environment that is secure and free from threat and danger. This is needful because as cautioned by Gomme and Micucci (1997), the perception of school environment as a dangerous place may erode the quality of academic and social life for students, faculty, as well as, undermining a school's ability to attract and retain both clientele and personnel. The focus of this discourse is on insecurity and quality education in Nigeria.

Meaning of insecurity

Insecurity is a situation in which a society that once enjoyed peace and tranquility is no longer secure. It is a state of being fearful, unsafe and threatened. Insecurity means sustained increase in violence, criminal activity and general lawlessness, which threatens the safety, stability and well-being of members of a community. Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpan-Robaro (2013), defines insecurity as a condition of being open or subject to danger or threats of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. To Ogege (2013), insecurity is a situation in which members of the society cannot go about their daily activities as a result of threat and harmful interference with their lives and properties. Belard (as cited in Kpee, Uchendu and Bright 2013) defined insecurity as the absence of protection from crime and lack of freedom from psychological harm. Insecurity has been a serious threat to the provision of quality education as it has resulted in massive loss of lives of staff, students and school properties.

Quality

Quality is something that is of high value, very good and of high standard. According to Asiyai (2014), quality is defined as a measure of how good or bad the products of education institutions in Nigeria have become. Quality has a connotation of differentiation according to standards or grades. To Saleh, Uwaleke and Allahnana (2019), quality in the field of education refers to the highest or finest standards to be pursued, a sort of degree of excellence to be aspired to.

Quality education

Quality education is one that produces a whole individual and prepares the individual for success in life. It is based on a holistic development that equips one with knowledge and skills for the future as well as inculcating the right values and imbuing students with positive learning attitudes. Quality education is one which is relevant to the needs of the society. It is the type of education that takes place in a learner-friendly environment, with supportive learning facilities and quality teachers that are continuously developed to cope with global changes in educational sector. Quality education can only be provided in a safe and secure environment.

Types of insecurity in educational institutions

Various types of insecurity exist that threaten the lives, properties, peace and tranquility in educational institutions and thus, hinder the provision of quality education. They include:

1. Abduction and kidnapping for ransom
2. Cultism
3. Boko Haram insurgency
4. Militancy
5. Armed robbery
6. Communal clashes
7. Vandalism
8. Arson
9. Assassination
10. Ritual Killings
11. Religious extremism and intolerance.
12. Farmer/ Fulani herdsmen clashes
13. Banditry
14. Suicide bombing
15. Piracy
16. Militant Biafran separatists
17. Stealing

Some Cases of Security Threats in Nigerian Educational Institutions

Ekpoh, Edet and Ukpog (2020), has catalogued some incidence of security threats in Nigerian educational institutions as follows:

1. In 2011, students of University of Calabar went on rampage over increase in school charges, destroying buildings, facilities, cars and entering staff residential areas to destroy houses and staff properties worth millions of Naira. The security personnel were over powered by the rioting students. This incident resulted in the loss of academic months (Ekpoh, 2018).
2. In 2012, about 40 students of Federal Polytechnic Mubi were massacred by Boko Haram terrorist group.
3. In 2013, students of University of Abuja demonstrated over non-provision of adequate laboratory facilities for medical and engineering students, which led to failed accreditation.
4. In 2013, students of University of Uyo rioted against school authorities due to increase in intra-campus transport fare and insufficient lecture halls. This led to the destruction of school properties on campus and also the loss of a student's life.

5. On August 16th 2013, a female student of Abia State University was held hostage for over one hour and gang-raped by persons suspected to be cultists.
6. On 18th December 2013, suspected cultists attacked and killed Dr. Segun Onabanjo, a Senior Lecturer in The Department of Sociology of Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Ogun State.
7. On 3rd April 2015, Mrs. Awala George, a lecturer in University of Port Harcourt was kidnapped but later freed by police operatives eight days later (Oni, 2016)
8. On April 14th 2014, about 276 girls were abducted from Government Secondary School, Chibok. The girls were in the process of writing their Senior School Certificate Examination. This particular incident attracted global condemnation. Some of the girls have since been released while others are still in captivity till date.
9. In July 2015, an 18-year-old admission seeker in University of Lagos was raped by a lecturer.
10. On August 29, 2015, a 4th year law student of the University of Calabar was sexually assaulted by her lecturer, the then Dean of Faculty of Law.
11. In the University of Calabar Staff Quarters, lecturers were attacked and three persons were kidnapped on May 23rd 2016. The incident of 23rd May led to one week withdrawal of service by academic staff.
12. In July 2016, a female under-graduate of Babcock University, Ogun State, was kidnapped her friend to make money from the parents (Oladipo, Awoyinfa & Adefarakan, 2018).
13. In 2017, a Professor in the Department of Zoology, University of Calabar was kidnapped by gunmen while he was jogging on campus at about 6.40 am. The kidnapped lecturer was dragged for over 100 meters on the road by his abductors amidst intense gun shooting, before whisking him away to a waiting boat at the Big Qua River that borders the University.
14. On 16th January 2017, two suicide bombers attacked University of Maiduguri, killing three people including a professor.
15. On 19th February, 2018, 111 secondary school girls from Government Girls' Science and Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State were abducted.
16. In May 2019, a final year male student in Cross River State University of Technology was butchered in the classroom by persons suspected to be a rival cultist group.
17. On February 17, 2020, an Associate Professor in the Institute of Public Administration, University of Calabar was kidnapped in his house. His abductors demanded the sum of N50 million ransom.
18. In April 2020, three students of University of Port Harcourt were kidnapped, killed and subsequently buried in a shallow grave.
19. On 27th May, 2020 some suspected assassins entered University of Calabar staff quarters and killed a policeman on duty and escaped with his gun. The suspects escaped without being apprehended.

Also, IA Foundation (2024) reports that between January to September 2021, more than 20 attacks on schools were reported where over 1400 children were abducted, 16 killed and over 200 missing. In March 2024, gunmen were reported to have attacked a primary school in Kaduna State, abducting 227 students alongside many teachers and the head teacher. The aforementioned cases are not exhaustive. There are many more incidents of insecurity till date, which indicates that educational institutions in Nigeria are no longer safe havens but have been seriously infiltrated and invaded by criminals.

Causes of insecurity in Nigeria

A number of factors are responsible for the high level of insecurity in Nigeria. The following are the major causes of insecurity in Nigeria:

1. **Bad governance:** Government that is insensitive to the plight of the teeming population. Government that consistently formulates policies without due consideration of the welfare of the citizens, and the outcome which is abject poverty among the citizenry. There is high level of impunity among the political class and non-compliance to the rule of law is a common feature of governance in Nigerian society. This situation has been observed by Oke (2021) that some Nigerian leaders consider themselves superior to their followers because of their levels and positions of authority, and this is not good for mutual cooperation in tackling security threats.
2. **Unemployment:** Most youths in Nigeria are unemployed. The current unemployment rate in Nigeria is put at 36%. It is rather unfortunate that most graduates from universities stay for periods up to 10 years and above without jobs. Zakaria (as cited in Okosun 2013), noted that the unemployed youths are easy tools in the hands of politicians. The saying that an idle mind is a devil's workshop becomes manifest when able-bodied youths are prepared to work but with no available work and are easily lured into criminality.
3. **Unequal socio-economic development** of the various regions has led to inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflict. The dissatisfaction by the youths of South-South (Niger Delta) on the paltry development given to their region and the damage done to their ecosystem by oil exploration and exploitation are the major causes of alarming rates of insecurity in the region.
4. **Poverty:** Another major cause of insecurity is the dehumanizing poverty situation in Nigeria. Poverty is defined as a condition of lacking the basic necessity of life such as food, shelter and clothing. A greater number of people in Nigeria are living below two Dollars a day (Padilla, 2024). The poverty index released by the Federal government in 2022 indicated that 130 million Nigerians were poor. Also, a World Bank 2022 report indicated that 4 in 10 Nigerians live below 1.90 USD per day. Nigeria is ranked among the 25 poorest nations of the world, below other African countries like Ghana and Kenya, despite its abundant natural resources. Kale (2012) laments that 112.519 million Nigerians live in relative poverty conditions. According to Kolade (2013), poverty is the cause of all the woes – terrorism, kidnapping, piracy, and so on, experienced in Nigeria. This assertion is confirmed by Olatunde and Onwudiwe (2013), who observed that the greater percentages of the Boko Haram sect members are poor and illiterate people who do not see the need to stay alive. When an individual has basic needs and there is no hope of satisfying the needs, the available option is to look for money through whatever means to solve the problem. Hence involvement in crime.
5. **Poor parental upbringing:** Good family upbringing is a sure foundation for good societal behaviour. Unfortunately, most children are not properly raised by their parents and so do not have good moral values for proper societal conduct. They engage in anti-social behaviour. The Almajiri's in Northern Nigeria is a clear example of children without proper upbringing and this has made them to be easily indoctrinated and recruited into criminality.

6. Corruption: This is another major contributory factor to insecurity in Nigeria. Corruption is perpetuated at all levels of governance in the country, which has been a major reason for the deplorable situation currently being experienced in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the Judiciary which could have acted as a watchdog is also involved in corruption, making the situation almost hopeless.

Furthermore, Achumba, Ighomeroho and Akpan-Robaro (2013), also identified the following as causes of insecurity in Nigeria:

1. Lack of institutional capacity resulting from government failure to deliver public services and provide for the basic needs of the masses.
2. Inequality and unfairness, which has contributed to the high level of dissatisfaction among members of the society. Government policies are not people friendly and political offices are no longer equitable.
3. A mis-match between the public and government perceptions on socio-economic issues. The government and the citizens no longer operate on the same level concerning issues that pertain to the citizens, such as petroleum product pricing.
4. A weakness in the security architecture of the nation, where there are inadequate facilities and equipment for law enforcement personnel in the discharge of their duties.

Insecurity and quality education provision

Insecurity in whatever form it may manifest has disrupted quality education provision in many parts of Nigeria, especially in northern parts, middle belt and eastern states of Nigeria. Schools have increasingly become targets of attacks and this has at times led to closure of institutions for months, leading to displacement of students and teachers. The prevailing insecurity, particularly in the northern part of the country, has resulted in the abduction of innocent school children and forced the closure of schools due to concerns for safety of both teachers and students. This has made it impossible for the curriculum in the affected schools to be covered. Insecurity challenges has caused the closure of 11,536 schools in Nigeria since 2020, affecting the education of 1.3 million children (IA Foundation, 2024). The fear of attack has influenced parents from sending their wards to schools, thus leading to an increase in the number of out of school children in the country. It is alleged that Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children globally, with about 18.5 million Nigerian children out-of-school (UNESCO, 2022). This figure is alarming and does not augur well for educational development and the desire for quality education in Nigeria.

Due to constant violence and threats to life, schools located in violent-prone areas have witnessed mass exodus of qualified teachers from the affected areas. The lack of security and constant fear for their lives have forced many teachers to seek safe environments, leading to shortages of educators who would have provided quality education, thereby making the provision of quality education in the affected areas a mirage. Insecurity poses a significant obstacle to construction and maintenance of school facilities and classrooms. The fear of attack on educational facilities has discourage investment in infrastructure development, making it increasingly challenging to meet the demand for educational space. Without adequate infrastructure, the goal of providing quality education cannot be achieved. Insecurity causes disruption of academic calendars. When schools are attacked, educational programmes are suspended. When schools are reopened, teaching is rushed, examination is rushed over and students are made to graduate without the requisite knowledge and skills. Hence, quality is compromised. The consequence, is that the end users of the products of educational institutions, the employers of labour cannot obtain the desired quality of skilled manpower. The current insecurity in the nation has created a

bad business environment and has prevented parents in vulnerable areas from engaging in viable economic ventures. This has affected parents negatively, making it difficult for them not to have enough money to meet their children's educational needs.

Prior to insecurity crises, Nigeria was already behind other countries in budgetary allocation to education. Presently, with the current security challenges, the money that would have been used in providing quality education has arguably been redirected to fight insecurity. Budgetary allocation continues to decline against increased budgets to defense. Seye (2021) reported that N 2.41 trillion budgetary proposal to security and defense was more than the entire allocation to education and health. The entire budget proposal for education in 2021 was N1.290 trillion, out of which N875.93 billion was for Ministry of Education, all Universities, all Polytechnics, all Colleges of Education, Unity schools and Federal Government owned schools. While the Universal Basic Education was given N108 billion and TETFUND was given N306 billion for infrastructure in tertiary education. All these funds are less than half allocated to defense and security.

The incidence of security threats, has to some extent, increased expenditure on education. Attacks on educational institutions is usually accompanied with loss of school facilities, which cost fortunes to replace. Hence according to Kpee et al (2013), when learning facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, sports facilities, hostels and learning materials are destroyed during attacks on schools, it results in reintroduction of already incurred expenditure. Also, the cost of monitoring school facilities during periods of insecurity results in an increase to the cost of education. Funds, which otherwise would have been used in providing educational services are channeled into security. The implication of this scenario is that it creates a vicious circle whereby educational expenditure will increase without commensurate increase in the provision of quality education. Insecurity contributes to increased inequality in access to education. The dimension and magnitude of insecurity in some states of the federation have continued to expand the imbalance in access to quality education in Nigeria. Security challenges have cripple effective supervision and inspection of schools which are carried out to maintain and improve quality of teaching and learning. According to Ogunode, Ukozor and Ayoko (2023) supervisors and inspectors are scared of going out for supervision as expected and when they do, it is haphazardly done for fear of attack.

Factors militating against security delivery in educational institutions

There are many factors militating against effective security delivery in educational institutions. Ekpoh, Edet and Ukpong (2020), enumerated the factors that militate against effective security delivery in educational institutions to include the following:

1. Inadequate security personnel
2. Insufficient patrol vehicles.
3. Poor lighting of educational environments.
4. Non-availability of modern security facilities.
5. Poor funding of security departments
6. Porous campus environment
7. Lack of security awareness education.
8. Non-availability of electronic security gadgets (E.g. Close Circuit Television, CCTV to monitor campus environments).
9. Low morale among security personnel.

Strategies for achieving effective security for quality education

1. Federal government should prioritize the safety and security in educational institutions by taking decisive actions to ensure the safety of students and staff in all educational institutions, especially in high- risk areas.
2. Adequate number of security personnel should be deployed to schools especially in high-risk areas, as this will deter potential attacks and provide security and safety to both staff and students as well as infrastructure.
3. There is a need for collaboration with the local communities in which the education institutions are located, so as to promote community policing and information gathering to prevent attacks on schools. The local communities should, as a matter of utmost importance, take the responsibility of safe guarding their schools against attack by criminals.
4. Government should invest in infrastructural development of schools by providing perimeter fencing and gates to barricade school environments from intrusion by criminal elements. The school fence should be reinforced by capping the fence with sharp objects or barbed wires to create some degree of difficulty for people who may attempt to scale through the fence. Additionally, a security post to house security officers at the gate should be provided.
5. Security units in institutions of learning should be equipped with adequate facilities to combat crimes. For instance, Close Circuit Television (CCTV) should be deployed at strategic areas within the school vicinity to monitor suspicious movements and criminal activities. Also, available facilities should be maintained and serviced when necessary. Additionally, school environment, should be well lighted with security lights as criminals operate under the cover of darkness to unleash mayhem in schools.
6. Federal and state governments should ensure prompt and quick rehabilitation of damaged school infrastructure to encourage continuous schooling without disruption.
7. Given the magnitude and the dimension of insecurity which prevails in educational institutions, and to ensure provision of quality education in institutions of learning, there is need for school managers at all levels to engage in strategic partnership and alliance with the Nigerian Police Force, the State Security Service (SSS), the Civil Defense Force Corps (NSCDC), the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and private security agencies to step up preventive security management systems.
8. Innovative approaches such as deployment of technology, radio broadcast and distance learning to deliver quality education to students in areas that are having insecurity challenges should be encouraged.
9. Efforts should be made by Federal government to address the fundamental causes of insecurity in Nigeria by initiating policies that will reduce poverty and also provide employment opportunities for the teeming youth population.

Conclusion

The insecurity challenges in educational institutions constitute a serious threat to a safe academic environment for quality educational activities. The scourge of insecurity in Nigeria's education sector demands a concerted effort of all stakeholders- government officials, security agencies, community leaders, parents, educators and students themselves to forge a path towards a safer and more secured environment for teaching and learning process. Quality education is the right of every child which should never be sacrificed at the altar of insecurity. Otherwise, the consequence will affect the overall development of children with limited education who

will not be able to compete with their peers globally. Also, as cautioned by IA- Foundation (2024), failure to address the educational crisis caused by insecurity will undermine the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDG), especially SDG 4 which addresses quality education.

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