

INSECURITY AND QUALITY OF NIGERIAN TERTIARY EDUCATION

By

PATRICK CHUKWUDI CHINEMERE¹

Department of Education Foundations¹
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

REV. FR. DR. ASOGWA, TIMOTHY EMEKA²

Department of Educational Foundations
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

NGWOKE, CELESTINE IKECHUKWU³

Department of Educational Foundations
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

ORAEKESI CHIOMA STELLA⁴

Department of Educational Foundations
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

&

DR. EZEMA, JANE CHUKWUBE⁵

General Studies Department
Maduka University, Ekwegbe-Nsukka

Abstract

The tertiary education goals can be attained in a teaching and research environment that is free from tension and insecurity. The growth of Nigerian education to meet with global norms and trends has been a source of concern for policy makers, stakeholders, and leaders in education sector over the years. These tasks cannot be completed successfully in an insecure and frightening environment. The nation's ongoing unrest and security issues have proven a hindrance to progress despite several attempts by educational policy makers to enhance educational conditions in the country. This paper emphasizes Nigeria's current condition of insecurity and how it affects the quality of education. This is despite the fact that the issues of insecurity in Nigeria are widespread and vary between states and regions. This paper concluded that the state of insecurity in tertiary education in Nigeria caused by ongoing kidnappings, terrorist attacks, armed robberies, cultism, communal clashes, the activities of non state actors like IPOB among others, has continuously hampered the growth of education. As a result, the government must realize that education accelerates the development of nations and as such should be given a stable, serene, tranquil, and peaceful environment for education to thrive. In order to restore and maintain educational standards, the government urgently needs to take initiative to address the problem of insecurity in Nigeria tertiary education.

Keywords: Insecurity, Quality, tertiary Education, Nigeria.

Introduction

Tertiary education represents the concluding phase of formal education, focusing on the cultivation of skilled individuals for the overall societal, economic, and technological advancement of a nation. Tertiary education embodies a systematic approach to instruction, research, and community outreach. According to the National Policy on Education (2013), tertiary education is the educational pursuit following Post Basic Education and is offered by various institutions including universities, inter-university centers like the Nigeria French Language Village and Nigeria Arabic Language Village, as well as the National Institute of Nigerian Languages. This education is also provided by Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), Colleges of Education, Montetchnics, Polytechnics, and specialized institutions like Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology, and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI).

The objectives of Tertiary Education encompass various aspects. This includes the facilitation of national progress through the training of skilled personnel at an advanced level. Furthermore, it involves offering learning opportunities that are both easily accessible and affordable, while also ensuring that the quality of education remains paramount. These opportunities are provided within the framework of both formal and informal education, thereby catering for the diverse needs and interests of the entire Nigerian populace. In addition, Tertiary Education is also committed to delivering exceptional career guidance services and lifelong learning programs. These initiatives aim to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills required for self-sufficiency and successful integration into the workforce (FRN, 2013).

Tertiary educational institutions shall endeavor to achieve these objectives by means of: the enrollment of high-quality students; the provision of high-quality teaching and learning; the advancement of research and development; the adherence to stringent standards for the quality of facilities, services, and resources; the promotion of staff welfare and development initiatives; the implementation of a more practical-oriented curriculum that is relevant to the demands of the labor market; the generation and dissemination of knowledge, skills, and competencies that contribute to national and local economic objectives, thereby equipping students for success in a knowledge-based economy; the provision of a range of flexible learning modes, including full-time, part-time, block release, day-release, and sandwich programs; access to training funds, such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund); the establishment of a well-structured, coordinated, and supervised Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES); the preservation of minimum educational quality through appropriate regulatory bodies; the implementation of an all-encompassing admissions policy to promote national unity; the promotion of affordable and equitable access to tertiary education through scholarships and student loans; the fostering of inter-institutional cooperation and linkages; and the provision of dedicated services to the community through extramural and extension services (NPE, 2013).

According to Ogunode, Okwelogu, Elechukwu, and Yahaya (2021), the goal of tertiary education in Nigeria can only be achieved when the environment of tertiary institutions is peaceful, secure, and conducive environment within tertiary institutions, which facilitates effective teaching, learning, and research implementation. However, it is unfortunate that many higher institutions in Nigeria are grappling with a different reality. Specifically, the higher institutions situated in the Northeast, South East and in Niger Delta region of the country are confronted with significant challenges pertaining to insecurity. According to Enang (2019) university communities in recent times have become plagued by a wide array of criminal activities, which regrettably depict a gloomy and disheartening scenario. Akor, Musa & Ogunode (2021) contend that numerous schools, including tertiary institutions in the northern part of the country, have been compelled to shut down due to incessant attacks, resulting in the loss of lives and the abduction of both students and staff, while also witnessing the destruction of facilities. Ogunode, et al (2021) argue that the recurrent attacks on tertiary institutions, particularly targeting academic staff, non-academic staff, and students, do not bode well for the sustainable development of tertiary education in Nigeria.

Tertiary Education and Insecurity in Nigeria

Nigerian tertiary educational institutions are established with the primary objective of providing students with a comprehensive and high-quality education in order to enable them to effectively function in any field they choose and contribute positively to society (Iyoha, et al., 2010). Furthermore, this education aims to promote self-fulfillment and self-actualization. Unfortunately, many of Nigeria's tertiary institutions are encountering significant difficulties in achieving these objectives due to the ongoing insecurity within the nation. In the current state of insecurity, the attainment of effective teaching and learning becomes unattainable. Ajibade (2013) asserts that the insecurity prevalent in Nigeria's tertiary education system can be attributed to the detrimental effects of corruption and poverty. It is emphasized that the country can only liberate itself from this malevolence if governmental bodies at all levels exhibit unwavering commitment to fulfilling their responsibilities and enhancing the well-being of their constituents. Olamosu (2000) posits that insecurity can be defined as a state or condition in the existence of a social unit, system, organization, or society wherein the presence of a problem assumes a critical magnitude to the point where the survival or continuation of said social system or structure is imperiled. The central notion conveyed here is that insecurity poses a threat to the organization, society, or system. Nevertheless, in the context of this dissertation, insecurity denotes a situation characterized by sudden outbreaks of violence within an organization or institution, necessitating the swift implementation of crucial decisions. According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (2020), the number of students, educators, and scholars who have sustained injuries surpasses 22,000, killed, harmed or in some cases brutalized in the education sector during conflict situation. Insecurity over the last Five years in the view of Education Under Attack as published recently by the body on the protection of education from violent attack over 11,000 separate attacks on education facilities, have been destroyed by various forms of crisis in the sector in Nigeria. Such attack on education include bombing, burning of schools, rapping of students,

adoption of staff and students and lately, the activities of unknown gun men, who have made Mondays in the south a compulsory seat at home.

Ogunode, Godwin and Unoaku (2021) along with Oluwa (2014) in Bassey's study (2016) delineate various manifestations of insecurity in Nigeria. These include but are not limited to: the presence of militancy within the Niger Delta Region, clashes arising from tensions between Fulani herdsmen and farmers, conflicts of an ethnic nature, religious clashes, a state of cold war among ethnic nationalities, the activity of the faceless unknown gun men, the prevalence of the area boys syndrome, conflicts among gangs and cults, incidents of kidnapping, acts of robbery, occurrences of mob attacks and the lynching of suspected criminals (which can be perceived as premeditated), instances of ritual killings involving innocent individuals, instances of police brutality as well as cases of extrajudicial killings. Additionally, Abdullahi and Orukpe (2016) note that theft, cultism, kidnapping, rape, room break-ins, office break-ins, cellphone snatching, stealing, violent demonstrations by students, vandalism, and other forms of assaults pose significant security challenges within campus environments and recently, seat at home order by non state actors across all the igbo speaking states in Nigeria. The emergence of new forms of insecurity challenges in contemporary Nigeria is a cause for great concern. These challenges have reached a distressing level, almost crippling various sectors, particularly the education sector. A recent example is the breakdown of law and order witnessed in the country due to the "End SARS Protest" movement. This movement sought to put an end to police brutality, corruption, hunger, bad governance, and the high-handedness of security agencies, among other issues. The society was already tense due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and its related consequences, as well as other forms of insecurity. The education sector has been heavily impacted, with school activities being suspended across all levels in Nigeria since March 2020. This has led to an increase in the rate of negative engagement and the unproductive use of time among the youth, further exacerbating crises and unemployment. As Lehr (2014) argues, the noble goals of education cannot be achieved in isolation; they require a conducive and peaceful atmosphere.

Quality education cannot be achieved in a condition that is characterized with insecurity and violence. Quality education is one that is pedagogically and developmentally sound and educates the student in becoming an active and productive member of society. A quality education is not one that is measured purely by a test score

Not even by how many words per minute one can read, but by the environment, the productive level of the learner and its impact society in the long run. This makes a secured environment an important aspect of achieving quality education in Nigeria. It is an issue that should be seriously tackled as Nigerians look towards building a strong education system, just, democratic and egalitarian society. Although the issue of insecurity has attracted much public debate over the years, interest in solving the insecurity equation appears to be waning and even when the issue is addressed, little or no attention is paid to the socio economic, political implications it may have caused Wang, (2010). According to Best (2006) No society can grow beyond its level of education. Therefore, any nation that is poor in education will

invariably be a poor state- Education therefore remained a major catalyst in nation building (UNICEF, 2000).

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

According to Oтите (2012), the state of insecurity in Nigeria can be attributed to the presence of security weaknesses on the part of security agents. Abubakar (2005) identifies the failure of the government to provide or manage the fundamental needs of their citizens, ethnic conflicts, and disputes over national resources as some of the factors responsible for insecurity in Nigeria. Udoh (2015) argues that insecurity in Nigeria is caused by vulnerable borders, the illegal importation of firearms, the proliferation of illicit weapons, ethnic divisions, the emergence of ethnic militia groups, corruption, marginalization, ineffective leadership, religious fanaticism/extremism, and unemployment. Similarly, Olawale (2016) identifies unemployment, imbalanced development, corruption, a weak judicial system, and porous coastal borders as causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Nadabo (2013) believes that bad leadership, corruption, and illiteracy, among other factors, contribute to the breeding of insecurity in Nigeria. Odidi (2014) argues that the politics of bitterness is characterized by a perception that the attainment of political power is a matter of life or death. Consequently, this mindset gives rise to acts of political thurgery and contributes to a state of insecurity. In Nigeria, insecurity is closely tied to the prevalence of extensive and unregulated corruption, greed, self-centeredness, lack of patriotism, absence of political determination and moral consciousness, as well as a dearth of visionary leadership and clear objectives, as stated by Akintokunbo (2011). The current security challenges in Nigeria, especially as it concerns tertiary education is occasioned by government harsh economic and monitory policies like removal of fuel subsidy and other harsh economic policy of the present government.

Effects of Insecurity on quality of Tertiary Education:

The effects of insecurity on tertiary Education can never be over emphasized this includes the followings

Poor Quality of Education

In Nigeria, the issue of insecurity is having a detrimental impact on the quality of education. This is primarily due to the fact that many educational institutions are unable to cover their curriculum and syllabus as a result of frequent closures. The closure of schools is a common occurrence in the country, largely attributable to the prevailing insecurity. As a consequence, the inability of these institutions to effectively deliver their curriculum and syllabus is significantly compromising the standard of education. For instance, in regions such in Northern Nigeria, educational institutions have been forced to shut down due to security concerns caused by Boko Haram, the sit at home in the Easter region caused by IPOB has make research and learning difficult for students. This has resulted in students being sent home and disrupted the teaching and learning process. Upon their return, students are immediately required to sit for examinations without completing the necessary coursework. Insecurity forces students to progress through their academic journey without adequately covering the prescribed curriculum, as schools are frequently closed due to insurgent attacks. According to Paul (2015), this situation leads to graduates who lack the essential knowledge

and skills needed to thrive in the workplace, ultimately becoming a burden rather than an asset. The overall consequence is a decline in organizational performance, which in turn negatively impacts the national economy. Given the high incidence of insecurity within the educational system, this issue poses a significant challenge to the Nigerian economy. Insecurity can be likened to a virus that must be eradicated, as its negative multiplier effect extends beyond education and threatens the broader development of the nation. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) emphasizes the urgent need to address this issue, stating that if research and fieldwork cannot be conducted due to insecurity, the educational sector and the entire concept of national development will be in jeopardy (ASUU, as cited in Punch, 2020). The union further argues that aside from diminishing the quality of graduates produced by universities, the larger consequence is the potential incapacitation of the entire educational system. The far-reaching implications of this scenario would be profoundly detrimental (Punch, 2020). It is worth noting that some schools, although not officially closed by the government, still produce graduates who are inadequately prepared due to the prevailing insecurity. These schools are unable to complete the stipulated number of months per term, and the lack of qualified teachers in unsafe areas further hampers the quality of education. Consequently, students are not receiving proper instruction (Oluyomi & Grace, 2016).

Brain-drain

The issue of brain-drain in the Northeast states is a result of the problem of insecurity. The concept of brain drains, as defined by NOUN (2009), pertains to the migration of academic personnel from domestic educational institutions to overseas or comparable establishments where their contributions are more adequately compensated. The decline in institutional quality and erosion of salaries over the past decade have significantly contributed to the brain drain of academic staff and hindered the recruitment of new talent. Additionally, brain drain, as explained by Docquier and Rapoport (2006), entails the international transfer of knowledge and resources in the form of human capital and encompasses the migration of academics, skilled professionals, and technical personnel and experts from developing to developed countries. The term "brain drain" is used in a narrower way in the non-academic literature to refer to the migration of physicians, academics, scientists, engineers and skilled labor with university training. Ogunode and Ishaya (2021) posited that insecurity problem is one of the major problems facing both the academic and non-academic staff of the public universities in Nigeria. Nigeria is facing insecurity challenges which is affecting all public institutions especially the higher institutions in the country. Many public universities administrators have been killed and kidnapped within the universities staff quarters Ogunode, et al (2021) confirmed that the insecurity problem ravaging the higher institutions and the continuous killing of academic staff by bandits and insurgents is leading to displacement of academic staff across the country. Many lecturers are leaving states with high security risk to states where the security risk is lower.

Increased in the Cost of Running Tertiary Education

The presence of security challenges in the states of the North-east has necessitated an augmentation in the allocation of funds for the operation of educational institutions. The

facilities that were decimated by insurgents and criminals are being reconstructed through the utilization of substantial resources that were originally intended for other developmental initiatives. Both governmental bodies and the administrators of educational institutions find themselves obligated to expend a significant amount of money in order to rebuild and modernize lecture halls, lodging facilities, and administrative structures that were ravaged by these criminals. This represents an additional financial burden for the administrators of these educational institutions. Bello (2016) observed that the security predicament confronting the religious communities in the North-east is particularly exacerbating the cost associated with the provision of education at all stages. A greater amount of funding will be necessitated in order to rehabilitate the schools, hospitals, and police stations that have been destroyed by the insurgents throughout the various states.

Destruction of Infrastructural Facilities

Insecurity in the North-Eastern states of Nigeria has resulted in the devastation of infrastructural assets in educational institutions, particularly those at the tertiary level. According to Ogunode and Agor (2021), school infrastructural assets encompass the social capital present within the educational environment. These assets consist of various elements, including school buildings such as classrooms, tables, examination halls, chairs, auditoriums, desks, staff offices, seminar/conference/board rooms, laboratories, workshops, studios, farms, gymnasias, central libraries, specialized/professional libraries, faculty libraries, departmental libraries, and so on. Additionally, they encompass specialized facilities within institutes/centers, such as ICT infrastructure, special laboratories, conference facilities, and various types of boards, such as interactive, magnetic, screen, and chalk boards. Furthermore, they encompass ICT resources, such as computer laboratories and services, network connectivity, multimedia systems, public address systems, slide and video projectors, as well as ergonomic furnishings in laboratories, libraries, lecture rooms/theaters, moot courts, and studios. Accommodation for students includes boys' and girls' hostels, while municipal/physical infrastructure encompasses power supply, water supply, good road networks, sports facilities, health and sanitation facilities, staff schools, and security facilities. The significance of infrastructural assets in educational institutions lies in the following aspects: they facilitate the effective delivery of administrative functions within schools, ensure the prompt and reliable provision of services, enable teachers to impart lessons efficiently, provide a conducive working environment for both teachers and students, facilitate ease of learning and enhanced learning outcomes for students, enable teachers to teach effectively, prepare their lessons, and deliver them online (using ICT).

Reduction in Enrolment of Students

The enrolment of students to tertiary institutions across the North-east and some parts of south east political zone dropped due to the insecurity challenges various kind of insecurity facing the zones. Many parents have decided to send their children to other part of the country where there is peace and safety of lives and properties while many have even decided to abandon their higher education dream since they cannot afford to travel out. This problem has reduced the capital inflow of tertiary institutions in the zones because the higher the enrolment of

students, the higher the revenue of the various institutions. Bello (2016) acknowledged that one of the effects of insecurity in the North-East tertiary institutions is the reduction in the enrolment of students into various programme across the higher institutions.

Ways to improve security in Nigeria for Quality Education:

The issue of insecurity in almost all the political zones in Nigeria as a whole necessitates the attention and intervention of both federal and state governments. It is imperative for the government to prioritize the provision of employment opportunities for the youth and effectively address all prevailing social concerns in the nation.

- a. The government should increase the funding of public higher institutions in all the affected zone in Nigeria. All the tertiary institutions in the North-East political zone should be provided with parameter fence. This will help to prevent free entry of bandits into the institutions environment.
- b. Security officers in tertiary institutions in charge of security and handling of ICT surveillance gadget should be adequately trained and regularly be sent to conferences, workshops and seminars when the need arises to update their knowledge about the current issues on ICT surveillance.
- c. School administrators should deploy ICT facilities like Circuit Television (CCTV).
- d. Government at all levels should commit to arming the security forces with ICT security systems and adequately supporting the various security agencies in order to mobilize them to all affected Ares in Nigeria to provide security in schools.
- e. The government should give ICT more attention so that it can be a more useful tool for security system monitoring.
- f. There is need for national dialogue, to chart a new course and find lasting, reliable and honest solutions to security challenges facing Nigeria tertiary education
- g. Universities should be supported to improve their ICT facilities to enable online lectures as this has the capacity to limit travels and engage best lectures from anywhere in the world. This done the quality of teaching and learning can remarkably approve the limited security risks.

Conclusion

The issue of insecurity in almost all the political zones in Nigeria as a whole necessitates the attention and intervention of both federal and state governments. It is imperative for the government to prioritize the provision of employment opportunities for the youth and effectively address all prevailing social concerns in the nation. Government should know that tertiary institution is the engine room for virtually all forms of development and anything that affect the tertiary institution in Nigeria affect Nigeria in a whole. Therefore, there is urgent need to pay more attention in securing our tertiary institution.

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