

## Leveraging Preservice Teacher Education Curriculum in Higher Institutions of Learning: A Panacea for Addressing Security Challenges in Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Security remains a fundamental pillar of any progressive society. In Nigeria, a nation blessed with diversity, natural resources, and vibrant human capital, the persistent wave of insecurity has continued to cast a long shadow over its developmental aspirations. While military and policing strategies are often prioritized, education, particularly the education of future teachers, holds untapped potential in the promotion of peace and national cohesion. This paper delves into the role of preservice teacher education in addressing Nigeria's security challenges. It explores the ways in which the curriculum can foster critical thinking, peacebuilding, tolerance, civic responsibility, and social justice. Ultimately, it proposes a bold reimagining of teacher education to position educators not just as transmitters of knowledge, but as builders of a more secure, just, and peaceful Nigerian society.*

**Keywords:** Insecurity, Pre-service Teachers, Curriculum

### Introduction

Nigeria stands at a crossroads. With escalating incidents of terrorism, banditry, cybercrime, kidnapping, ethnic violence, and separatist agitations, the question of national security has taken center stage in public discourse. Security, in its broadest sense, transcends the absence of violence. It encompasses human dignity, access to education, economic opportunities, and the assurance of justice. Unfortunately, efforts to address these issues have remained reactive, fragmented, and often exclusionary of one of the most potent tools of change: education. Teachers are nation builders. They are the architects of conscience and character, shaping the minds and attitudes of young citizens. It follows then that preservice teacher education is not just an academic exercise but a strategic intervention point for societal transformation. If Nigeria is to rise from its security quagmire, then the curriculum that prepares its future educators must be revisited, reformed, and revitalized.

Security is the state of being secured from what would make you feel afraid, and or feel threaten. Cambridge (2021) defined security as protection of a person, building, organisation, or country against threats such as crime or attacks by foreign countries. According to Collins English Dictionary (2021), it is the state of being secured or having freedom from fear, anxiety, danger, doubt; state of safety or certainty. Dasuki (2013) defined security to be absence of insecurity as a result of actions of law enforcement agencies stressing that security is understood to be the job of the defense force of the national frontiers and of the police inside the country.



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Security is the degree of protection against danger, damage, loss and crime. Security is a form of protection consists of structures and processes that provide or improve security as a condition. Security is defined as a form of protection where a separation is created between the assets and the threat. Furthermore, security is a state of resistance to any type of behaviour that causes harm or damage to a person or property. Security can also be defined as protection against criminals, thieves and threats (Buzan and Hansen, 2009). There are different dimensions of security, it can be economic security, food security, health, environmental, personal, community/national and political security (UNDP, 1994), which have all permeated the Nigerian society which is why we always refer to the term as national security. Human security is concerned with weapons, it is concerned with human life and dignity (UNDP, 1994). It is defined as an encompassing condition in which people, and communities live in freedom, peace and safely enjoy the protection of vital freedom. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, buildings on their strength and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks, dignity, and inhabits ones environment which is not detrimental to their health and wellbeing. Security basically refers to the totality of measures undertaken to ensure protection of lives and properties. It was averred that security is a protection or defense of people against all kinds of victimization including protection from external military, economic want, poverty, illiteracy, disease or ill-health, political exclusion, social exploitation, criminality act, among others (Odekunle, 2012). It is important to note that since the end of the cold war, there appear to be a shift from viewing security from state-centric perspectives to a broader view that place emphasis on individual. In which national security also encapsulates human security, human right and national development. It was explained further that security is any mechanism devised to alleviate the most serious threats that prevent people from pursuing their cherished values (Audu, Lukeman and Mohammed, 2014). According to Iredia (2011), national security simply means the capacity of a state to overcome challenges confronting her. He added that national security is not limited to military might, defense or law enforcement, it covers basic dimensions like job, water and food security. Oyegun (2012) described the security situation in Nigeria as a litany of unfulfilled dreams and disappointment. He observed cases of unrealised potentials, poverty in the midst of wealth, total lack of inspiration held for by insecurity due to incessant crimes and abject poverty. There are various symptoms of social disorganization and vices which have become overt and easily noticeable with; prostitution in urban centers; drug use/abuse and associated ailments; direct and indirect child abuse; child trafficking; severance of disregards for community values; general indiscipline; violent disorder; and ethno-religious conflicts. All of these have generated into insecure environment and has called for the need to re-organise, strengthen and re-direct the delivery of functional, moral and value education in the broadest possible sense in our education system in such a manner as to effect the younger generation positively to build their level of consciousness as they seek to make the choices that will determine their future.

### **Concept of Insecurity**

Insecurity can be regarded as the state of lacking confidence or assurance of something or somebody or group of people, having no self-doubt or state of being insecure. The prevalence of insecurity and its negative effects on the individual citizens and the society at large is seriously impinging the development of the Nigerian society if left unaddressed. This is because most people who engaged in these vices of insecurity are youths who should be the one who are supposed to constitute quality human resources needed to drive the developmental strides in Nigeria. Hence, the incidence of insecurity amongst the youths calls for efforts to stem it if not eradicate it totally. Insecurity is the state of fear or anxiety, stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection. It is lack of or inadequate freedom from danger. Physical insecurity is the most visible form of insecurity, and it feeds into many other forms of insecurity such as economic security and social security. King (2016), a renowned security expert suggested that for government to tackle insecurity, a key starting point should be to understand the causes of insecurity as well as to investigate their sources of social disorder and instability. King pointed out that it is necessary to provide a holistic view to the suggestion or recommendations of solutions. More often, however, policy makers have not stated the particular causes and they prefer blanket references, with the consideration that the causes of insecurity are interwoven and contributory to one another. Like in many other societies, the sources of insecurity in Nigeria has been classified or grouped into external and internal factors. Beyond the external-internal dichotomy, sources of insecurity have also been classified either remote or proximate and immediate sources/causal factors. In Nigeria, the challenge is not so much about insecurity of external sources, but rather that of internal sources. Some internal factors have been enhanced and strengthened by the presence of external forces, but there is no doubt that, if the internal situations did not present themselves, the external forces would be unable to infiltrate.



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Quite disturbing is the escalation of violence, problems of insecurity, religion and ethnic tension, criminal activities, kidnapping, the deadly Boko Haram. This insecurity is taking alarming dimensions in various regions of the country, even though there is no country that is free of violence and crime, but when a nation begins to have organised groups like the Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen, armed banditry. Then, it informs us that the apparatus of the state for maintaining security, law and order is being threatened. And when we analyse the age brackets of these criminals, it also informs us about the rate of unemployment in the country that cannot accommodate her youths. The gift, or extortion and generally have a significant impact on the people in their locales region or the country as a whole. Similarly, the United Nation convention against transnational organized crime (Article 2 (9) states that an “organised criminal group shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crime offences established in accordance with the convention in order to obtain directly or indirectly a financial or other material benefit. The problem requires robust structured analytic thinking for its resolution and also, security experts and law enforcement agencies needs intelligence gathering analysts to use a powerful analytic tools such as morphological analysis. The will enable the analysis array the threat analytic data into a matrix set up the dimensions of the problems and possible examine permutation of different combination of the matrices (Howard, 2013, Micheal, 2009, Jeffrey, 2009).

### **National Security**

National security is the absence of threats faced by the state (threats which aimed at state’s values and interests). Society security deals with identities and cultures and can easily lead to politics of discrimination and exclusion. Their focus is on any aggression against the goals and interests of the state. Such interests and values are peace and general well-being of the masses, assurance of life and health of citizens, and other acceptable norms and conduct within the state, which government oversees. In this case, any attempt to unleash terror on citizens, even a single citizen of a country is a national threat. For national security, there should be protection against hunger, epidemics and external aggression. National security is different from societal security in the sense that, societal security is concerned with security “outside the state” or “beside the state” to them, national security is seen as political security. Security at all levels is sacrosanct to peaceful co-existence of the people and it is a catalyst for national development and economic growth. Buzan (1981) presents the perspective of a more complex security complex, by describing security based on levels and sectors. The three levels he mentioned are individual, state and international sectors. Protecting an individual against the unforeseen attack of nature and man is part of national security, also protecting the state resources from wastage and securing the state against internal criminalities, that could bring pain to or hurt the government and the generality of people is national security. National security is about maintaining a healthy international relationship with other countries, signing bilateral treaties and security pact with other countries. It is generally the protection of the country from external and internal aggression. Adoyi (2019) further observed that since 1947, national security has been institutionalised as philosophy, law, policy, strategy and structures, institutions and individuals to take on a life of its own. The meaning of national security is so deep rooted that it is covered by consistency of expositions, practices, conventions, scholarships, media analysis, movies, documentaries, awards, and endowments over the course of several decades to avoid any ambiguity whatsoever. Security is presently a major challenges in Nigeria, even though the government claims to be on top of the situation yet the problem persists. Thus, National security, a concept understood by some as an abstract notion relating to the condition of the state, and referred to in security and intelligence legislation. Adoyi (2019) conceptualised national security as the members of the law enforcement defense establishment appropriate national security as their own. They confronted domestic challenges occasioned by the failure of Nigeria's military government to provide adequate security. Ammerdown (2016), asserts that national and international security may be understood as a shared freedom from fear and want, and the freedom to live in dignity. Prabhakaran (2008), argues that national security is the measurable state of the capability of a nation to overcome the multi-dimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people and its survival as a nation-state of any given time, by balancing all instruments of state policy through governance and is extendable to global security by variables external to it. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994) human security may include absent of Chrome threats, such as hunger, disease and repression. However, national security is the defence of a country against internal and external threat to national unity, cohesion, peace, aspiration and goals. Adoyi (2019), conceptualised national security as the members of the law enforcement defense establishment appropriate national security as their own. They confronted domestic challenges occasioned by the failure of Nigeria's military government to provide adequate security. Adoyi (2019), further observed that since 1947, national security has been institutionalised as philosophy, law, policy, strategy and structures, institutions



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### **Sources of Insecurity**

#### **Remote or Root Factors**

Lack of institutional capacity resulting in government failure. This result from what Fukuyama (2004) described as the corrosion or breakdown of institutional infrastructures. The foundations of institutional framework in Nigeria are very shaky and have provoked a deterioration of state government and democratic accountability, thus, paralysing the existing set of constraints including the formal and legitimate rules nested in the hierarchy of social order. Evidently, Igbuzor (2011) observed that the state of insecurity in Nigeria is greatly a function of government failure, or can be linked to government failure. this is manifested by the capacity of government to deliver public services and to provide basic needs of the masses. Lack of basic necessities by people in Nigeria has created a pool of frustrated people who are ignited easily by any event to be violent.

#### **Pervasive Material Inequalities and Fairness**

Greater awareness of disparities in life chances is a major root cause of insecurity in Nigeria. This is a rooted general perception of inequality and unfairness which has resulted in grievance by a large number of people. The perception stems from the perception of marginalisation by a section of the people, government development policies and political offices and this has become a primary source of disaffection and resentment. Onuoha (2011) noted that a large number of the Nigerian population is frustrated and have lost hope, especially the youths, and have now emerged to expres their disillusion about the pervasive state of inequality.

#### **Ethno-Religious Conflict**

These have arisen from distrust among various ethnic groups among the major religions in Nigeria. Salawu (2010) and Igbuzor (2011) identified ethno-religious conflict as a major source of insecurity in Nigeria. It is a situation in which relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group, in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is characterised by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation.

#### **Conflict of Perceptions Between the Public and Government**

Over the years, there has been a standing mismatch between public and government perceptions. A situation which often result in the reactions of the public to the excesses of the military regimes which governed Nigeria nad has continued after the end of military regimes and created a sensitivity by those in government at public intrusion in matters of state. Frequently, on any given incident, public and government reactions diverge. In such situations, the media has never helped matters. Media practices have always focused on the dramatic and the specular view of the given situations. Such reports have always been capitalised on in sophisticated ways by various groups, some of which are violent to incite public clamour for a change and immediate reaction through strategically provocative violence.

#### **Weak Security System**

This results from inadequate equipment for the security arm of government, both in weapon and training. this is in addition to poor attitudinal and behavioural disposition of security personnel. In many cases, security personnel assigned to deal



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with given security situations lack the expertise and equipment to handle the situations in a way to prevent them from occurring. And even when these exists, some personnel get influenced by ethnic, religious or communal sentiment and are easily swallowed by their personal interest to serve their people, rather than the nation.

### **Concept of Security Planning**

Security planning can be described as a process of establishing objectives, allocating resources within prescribed or authorised budgetary limitations, and determining what should be done, how it should be done, and how soon it should be set into operation. It is the security manager's responsibility to determine what the security objectives should be, what the goals in each area of objectives should be. He decides what has to be done. Reach the objective that is definition of ends, and the determination of appropriate means of achieving the desired ends. He decides on who should do what; how it should be done; when to do it and where to do it. Consequently, this aspect of his job involves hard thinking since it is future oriented. Security planning, in the main, requires specificity and purposefulness. Most importantly, the process of planning involves establishment of standards (against which actual performance will be compared), thus, the importance of control to prevent deviation, developing rules, regulations and standard operating procedures, developing the road map which will help the security manager to decide for one or more specific course of action. For example, if a company's objective is higher profits and the widespread prevalence of employee theft is eating away those profits, a primary objective of the security function should be to reduce employee theft, and thus contribute to the corporate objective of increased profits. This paper sets out to examine how the preservice teachers curriculum impacts security in Nigeria. It seeks to inspire curriculum planners, policymakers, teacher educators, and student-teachers to see education not merely as a means of literacy acquisition, but as a powerful instrument for peace, social integration, and national renewal.

### **Challenges Facing the Preservice Teachers Curriculum in Nigeria**

**Inadequate Curricular Coverage:** Although most teacher education programmes include elements of civic education and moral instruction, these are often treated superficially. Content specific to conflict resolution, countering violent extremism, and digital security is largely absent. The result is a curriculum that is disconnected from the socio-political realities of the country.

**Emphasis on Theory over Praxis:** There is a marked gap between knowledge and application. Lectures remain heavily theoretical, with minimal opportunities for student-teachers to engage in simulations, peacebuilding projects, or community engagement activities. Yet, the classroom must be a microcosm of society, preparing teachers to model and teach empathy, resilience, and conflict management.

**Lack of Critical Thinking and Media Literacy:** In an age where misinformation fuels violence and social media is weaponized for propaganda, it is alarming that preservice teachers are not being trained in media literacy and critical thinking. These skills are essential in helping learners distinguish fact from fiction, resist radical ideologies, and engage in respectful discourse.

**Teacher Preparedness and Attitudes:** While many student-teachers demonstrate a passion for national development, they often feel unprepared to tackle issues of violence, radicalization, and student conflict in their future schools. There is a consensus on the need for curriculum reform to reflect current challenges.

### **Inspiring Change: Reimagining the Curriculum for Security**

**Education for Peace and Unity:** Courses in peace education should be made compulsory across all teacher education programmes. These should cover dialogue techniques, trauma-informed pedagogy, non-violent communication, and intercultural understanding. Nigeria's diversity must be celebrated in the classroom, not feared.

**Community-Based Learning:** Student-teachers should undertake service-learning projects in communities affected by conflict. This will not only ground their knowledge but foster empathy, leadership, and a deeper understanding of societal dynamics.

**Infusion of Digital and Media Literacy:** Curricula must include training on digital citizenship, cyber-security, and responsible media engagement. Teachers must be able to guide students through the digital landscape with integrity and discernment.

**Promotion of Democratic Values:** Preservice teachers should be immersed in democratic practices: participatory decision-making, student councils, open debates, and inclusive classroom management. These practices will become templates for the societies they will one day shape.



## Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. The Federal Ministry of Education should work with the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Universities Commission (NUC) to integrate peace and security education into teacher education standards.
2. Continuous training for teacher educators on peacebuilding and transformative pedagogy.
3. Establishment of mechanisms to assess the implementation and impact of security-related curriculum content.
4. Partnerships between universities, civil society, and security agencies to co-create resources and provide experiential learning opportunities.

## Conclusion

Nigeria's quest for peace and security will not be won solely through weapons and warfare. It will be achieved in classrooms, in conversations, and in communities. It will be driven by educators who inspire a generation to choose dialogue over division, hope over hate, and unity over conflict. The preservice teachers' curriculum must rise to this challenge. Let us empower our future teachers not just with knowledge, but with vision; not just with methods, but with mission. In doing so, we will plant the seeds of a more secure, inclusive, and prosperous Nigeria, one classroom at a time.

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