

Access, Equity and Quality of Education in the Face of Insecurity in Nigeria: Implications on School Administration

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Abstract

Over the years, Nigerian Educational system has significantly aligned, improved and enabled individuals by providing opportunities for learning and growth through basic, tertiary and special education. However, the emergence and lingering of the bedeviling insecurity in Nigeria, consequentially, has retarded the accessibility, equity and quality of Basic, Tertiary and Special education. Insecurity has plunged Nigeria into tragedies resulting from the activities of terrorism and insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, ethno-religious conflict, farmer-herder clashes, militancy in Niger Delta, organized crime, abductions, food insecurity, etc., and these problems has been causative of internal displacement of staff and students, poor academic performance, teacher shortages, destruction of educational facilities, close of educational institutions, economic hardship among other tragedies. This paper explores how insecurity affects access, equity, and quality in education (Basic, Tertiary and Special), and examines the implications on school administration hence, recommendations to improving on situation based on findings. This paper adopts secondary data (published and unpublished papers) to provide empirical facts concerning highlighted points. The secondary data were sourced from journals online and printed materials. Similarly, the recommendations include: strengthening schools security protection, promoting alternative education, engaging communities, formulation and implementation of developmental policies, addressing the porosity of borders, ensuring the effectiveness of the rule of law against perpetrators irrespective of social or political class.

Key words: Insecurity, Education.

INTRODUCTION

The instrumentality of education towards the attainment of all-sphere development is an unavoidable trajectory to any development-seeking country. Education in Nigeria, over a decade has been on gradual degradation owing to challenges emanating from insecurity, this in turn has constituted a formidable threat to the nation's future. The promise of education, which is a mandate to opportunities, a catalyst for progress and foundation for a brighter future is under assault in Nigeria. Hence, the access to, equity and the quality of education in Nigeria has been attenuated deeply as a result of the lingering insecurity; particularly, in the northern region where the adverse effect is more devastating. According to premium times (2024) the National Bureau Of statistics (NBS) report (May, 2023-April, 2024) documented 614,937 fatalities nationwide due to insecurity. The northwest region recorded the highest number of deaths at 206,030, followed by the North-East with 188,992. Additionally, 2,235,934 individuals were kidnapped during this period with a total ransom of approximately ₦2.2 trillion paid. Similarly, Placng.org (2024) highlighted that the widespread of kidnapping in the country has seen pupils, teachers and a school bus driver abducted in Ekiti state, A monarch was killed and his wife abducted in Kwara State, within one week. Report surfaced of fresh attacks in Mangu, Plateau State on Tuesday, January, 23rd in which 25 persons were killed, barely one month after no less than 195 persons were killed and over 10,000 others displaced following attacks in several communities across Bokoos, Barkin Ladi and Mangu Local Government Areas of the State on Christmas eve. There has also been reports of further attacks on communities in Benue state on January 23rd, in which 30 persons were killed. On the same day, gunmen attacked Yandaka village in Batsari Local Government of Katsina State where they killed three persons and abducted 32 others. With the occurrence and re-occurrence of the aforementioned tragedies bedeviling Nigeria; obviously, the access to education, equity and quality of education will inevitably diminish perpetually.

Theoretical framework

This paper build on theory of Peace by Norweigan Sociologist called Johan Galtung in 1969. It emanated from his work titled “Violence, peace and peace Research”. Galtung known as the father of peace studies developed the concept of “positive peace” and “negative peace”, He famously differentiated between negative peace (absence of violence) and “positive peace” (a just and equitable society where the underlying causes of conflict are addressed). He further explained: positive peace describes a state where not only direct violence is absent, but also structural violence; meaning, it encompasses social justice, equity and well-being for all within a society. Examples of structural violence include: unequal distribution of wealth, lack of access to quality education or healthcare, discriminatory policies base on race, gender or social class. The theory is relevant to this paper because Nigeria is fraught with various violence emanating from various forms of insecurity such as: terrorism and insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, ethno-religious conflict, farmer-herder clashes, militancy in Niger Delta, organized crime etc. Therefore, to achieve positive peace, the government must address underlying structural inequalities by implementing policies that promote social justice, economic development and equal access to resources. Policies in similitude to Local Government autonomy and their implantation is key to ameliorating

Conceptual Framework

The concept of access, equity and quality in education are primitively of utmost vitality to ascertaining an inclusive and effective system. Bhola (2006) advocated that access to education is merely a matter of educational expansion, that is, seeking to bring education to as many school-aged children as possible, and in some rare cases, seeking to bring literacy or adult education to adult men and women who had been bypassed or underserved by formal school systems. Access to education in the view of Ene (2007) implies making benefits of education possible for everyone and anyone who is entitled to education to receive it (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). By implication, we understand this stance as having the connotation that for access to be possible, comprehensive educational resources such as: classrooms, laboratories, teachers, instructional materials, school plants, among others, would be provided for everyone and anyone in the society without. However, equity in educational provision, unlike access to education, is determined by resource allocation and distributive efficiency (Oghenekohwo, 2010). This is premised on the fact that equity in education implies ensuring that all the segments of developing society get their “fair” share of access to whatever educational opportunities are provided. However, we are quick to query who determines the fairness and the sharing formula? To answer this query, we are convinced that the elements of exclusion may not be totally eliminated, hence, public policy instruments on educational development must be isolated from all forms of exclusion. Therefore, equity in educational provision would depicts fairness to all as it implies the provision of equal opportunities for those who are qualified to receive education (and we know that everyone is qualified, without prejudice) irrespective of circumstances of birth, ethnic group, religion and social status. Besides, Mohammed (1998) wrote that equity in education must be devoid of all forms of impediments to educational opportunities, which are not due to natural incapacities but which are the products of social exclusion, because equity sustains social justice in access to education for development.

Quality education is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various element contributing to effective learning and positive outcomes. A comprehensive literature review traces the evolution of quality education from ancient philosophical perspective to contemporary learning theories applied in digital classrooms. Balogun [2010] affirmed that education is the light, without which the world would be in darkness. This view presupposes quality of education as the basis for modernity, science and technological transformations. Onye and Anyaogu [2017] stated that quality education is the education which is relevant and adapted to the needs of the community in a complex and integrated world of living, in technological age where standard of things is set. Quality education as a process is the education that puts the learners at the center as it thrives to enable them develop and utilize their latent potentials and inherent qualities required for integrated personality to survive in constant changing world.

Basic Level of Education in Nigeria

Basic education refers to the foundational stage of formal learning, typically covering early childhood, primary, and lower secondary education. It aims to provide essential literacy, numeracy, and life skills necessary for personal development and active participation in society. Basic education systems vary worldwide but are often structured according to national education policies and international guidelines set by organizations like UNESCO and the World Bank.

Components of Basic Education

1. *Early Childhood Education (ECE)*: Focuses on cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development in children aged 3-6 years. It lays the groundwork for future learning.

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2. *Primary Education*: Covers basic literacy, numeracy, and fundamental subjects such as science, social studies, and arts, typically for children aged 6-12 years.
3. *Lower Secondary Education*: Bridges primary education and higher levels of schooling, enhancing subject-specific knowledge, critical thinking, and life skills for adolescents aged 12-15 years.

Importance of Basic Education

- i. **Cognitive and Social Development**: Enhances critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills.
- ii. **Economic Growth**: Leads to a more skilled workforce, increasing employability and income potential.
- iii. **Health and Well-being**: Promotes awareness of hygiene, nutrition, and basic healthcare, improving public health outcomes.
- iv. **Civic Engagement**: Encourages democratic participation, social responsibility, and cultural understanding.

Global Frameworks and Policies

International organizations emphasize the role of basic education in sustainable development:

- i. UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework for Action supports universal access to quality basic education (UNESCO, 2015).
- ii. The World Bank's Education Strategy 2020 highlights investment in early learning and primary education as key to reducing poverty (World Bank, 2011).
- iii. UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) aims for inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030 (United Nations, 2015).

Tertiary Level of Education in Nigeria

Tertiary education refers to the level of education that follows secondary education and includes universities, colleges, vocational training institutions, and other post-secondary education providers. It plays a crucial role in developing advanced knowledge, skills, and competencies needed for various professions and personal development.

Key Aspects of Tertiary Education

1. Types of Institutions

- i. **Universities**: Offer undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, emphasizing research and theoretical knowledge.
- ii. **Colleges**: Provide specialized training and education, often at the undergraduate level.
- iii. **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Institutions**: Focus on practical skills for specific careers, such as engineering, healthcare, and information technology.

2. Degrees and Certifications

- i. **Undergraduate Degrees**: Bachelor's degrees (e.g., BA, BSc) typically take 3–6 years to complete.
- ii. **Postgraduate Degrees**: Master's (e.g., MA, MSc, MBA) and doctoral degrees (PhD) focus on advanced research and specialization.
- iii. **Diplomas and Certificates**: Shorter programs that provide specialized training in various fields.

3. Role in Economic and Social Development

- i. Higher education contributes to economic growth by fostering innovation and developing a skilled workforce.
- ii. It promotes social mobility and reduces inequality by providing individuals with greater career opportunities.
- iii. Universities serve as centers for research, advancing scientific and technological knowledge.

4. Global Trends in Tertiary Education

- i. **Massification**: Increasing enrolment due to the rising demand for higher education.
- ii. **Digital Transformation**: Growth of online and blended learning models.
- iii. **Internationalization**: Increased student mobility and global collaboration among institutions.

Special Education in Nigeria

Special education refers to customized instructional programs designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. These programs aim to provide equitable educational opportunities by offering specialized teaching methods, assistive technologies, and individualized support services.

Key Components of Special Education

1. Individualized Education Program (IEP)

- i. A legally mandated document in many countries (e.g., U.S., under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA) outlining tailored educational goals and support services.
- ii. Developed collaboratively by educators, specialists, parents, and sometimes the student.

2. Inclusion and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

- i. The principle of integrating students with disabilities into general education settings whenever possible.
- ii. Supported by research advocating for inclusive education's positive effects on academic and social outcomes.

3. Disability Categories

- i. Includes learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia), intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), emotional and behavioural disorders, and sensory impairments (e.g., blindness, deafness).

4. Teaching Strategies and Assistive Technology

- i. Special education employs differentiated instruction, multimodal teaching approaches, and technology-assisted learning (e.g., text-to-speech software, adaptive communication devices).

5. Legal and Ethical Considerations

- i. Governed by laws such as IDEA (U.S.), the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), and international frameworks like the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

6. Challenges in Special Education

- i. Issues include lack of resources, teacher training deficits, disparities in service availability, and debates over the effectiveness of inclusion versus specialized settings.

Impact of Insecurity on Access, Equity and Quality of Education in Nigeria

Education is a fundamental right and a key driver of social and economic development. However, insecurity—arising from armed conflicts, terrorism, kidnapping, gang violence, and other threats—poses a major challenge to access, equity, and quality in basic, tertiary, and special education. Schools, students, teachers, and administrators are increasingly vulnerable to attacks, leading to disrupted learning and a decline in educational outcomes.

1. Impact of Insecurity on Access to Education in Nigeria

Access to education is significantly hindered in regions affected by insecurity. The following are some key issues:

- i. School Closures: Fear of attacks forces schools to shut down, particularly in conflict-prone areas.
- ii. Forced Displacement: Insecurity leads to displacement of students and teachers, reducing school enrolment.
- iii. Economic Hardship: Families in insecure areas struggle financially, leading to increased drop-out rates as children are forced into child labour.
- iv. Restricted Movement: Curfews, roadblocks, and violence make it difficult for students and teachers to reach school.

2. Impact of Insecurity on Equity in Nigerian Educational System

Equity in education ensures that all students, regardless of background, have equal opportunities. Insecurity exacerbates inequalities by disproportionately affecting marginalized communities.

- i. Gender Disparities: Girls are often the first to be withdrawn from school in unsafe environments due to the risk of sexual violence or cultural pressures.
- ii. Rural vs. Urban Divide: Rural areas, which often have fewer security resources, suffer more from school closures and teacher shortages.
- iii. Special Needs Students: Those requiring specialized learning environments face exclusion when schools are attacked or underfunded due to insecurity.

3. Impact of Insecurity on Quality of Education in Nigeria

Even when students can access schools, the quality of education is compromised in insecure environments.

- i. Teacher Shortages: Many educators flee conflict zones, leading to reliance on underqualified staff.
- ii. Psychological Trauma: Students exposed to violence may suffer from trauma, affecting concentration and learning outcomes.
- iii. Lack of Infrastructure: Schools in insecure areas are often destroyed, looted, or repurposed for military use, affecting learning conditions.

Implications of Insecurity on School Administration

The lingering insecurity in Nigeria has a devastating effect. However, the implications on school administration includes:

- 1. Reduction of Teachers:** The insecurity problem facing Nigeria has resulted to the death of many resourceful professional teachers. Muhammed and Ogunode (2022) acknowledge that insecurity has led to the death of a teacher at higher institutions. Garba, Ogunode, Musa, and Ahmed (2022) conclude that the effects of insecurity on tertiary education in the Northeast political zone in Nigeria are that it has led to a reduction of manpower in the various institutions in the zone. Many academic and non-academic staff have been killed by bandits and insurgents. Garba,

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 Ogunode, Musa & Ahmed (2022), Ogunode (2020), Ogunode and Musa (2020), Ogunode and Ahaotu (2020) and Needs (2014) have agreed that many higher institutions staff in the country are been killed by insurgents.
2. **Poor Quality of Education:** The poor quality of education in some parts of the country can be associated to insecurity problems. The insecurity menace has affected the school calendar and resulted to inability to complete their scheme of works and syllables. The implication is poor performance in examinations. Ogunode and Godwin (2021) submit that poor quality of education is another effect of the continuous closure of the school in Northern Nigeria. Quality of education is achieved when all the educational resources are used effectively utilized. School time and covering of the expected scheme of work also is very paramount. The continuous closure of the school in Northern Nigeria as a result of attacks by Banditry and insurgence is not allowing students and teachers to cover the designed scheme of work, and when this happens, it will result in poor quality education.
 3. **Ineffective School Supervision:** Insecurity challenges in Nigeria affects school supervision. The essential role of school supervision as key to achieving quality education has been jeopardized by insecurity bedevilling country. supervisors and inspectors can no longer go for supervision of schools as planned due to the insecurity problems in the country. Many of them are afraid of being killed or kidnapped by bandits or Boko Haram members. Ogunode and Adanna (2022) submit that insecurity in Nigeria is preventing the effective supervision of higher institutions. Nigerian roads are not safe from bandits and criminals who are specialized in kidnapping people for ransom. similarly, these perpetrators keep attacking higher institutions with a resultant effect of school closure which in turn affects the academic program and accreditation program of the higher institutions. Ogunode and Adanna (2022) conclude by saying insecurity, Inadequate funding, shortage of personnel, inadequate transportation facilities, opposition from Labour unions, limited offices, strike actions, inadequate supervision materials, and corruption were concluded as the challenges militating against effective supervision of higher institutions in Nigeria.
 4. **Death of Students:** The insecurity problem facing Nigeria has led to the death of many students in Nigerian schools. At the basic level, Ogunode (2020) notes that many primary school students have lost their lives while other students were kidnapped and later released. At the secondary school level, Ogunode (2021) and Mohammed & Ogunode (2022) submit that many secondary school students have been killed and kidnapped by bandits and Boko Haram members. At higher institutions, Ogunode and Musa (2020) note that many students and academic staff of higher institutions have been attacked at different times resulting in their death on campus. The higher institutions' environment is unsafe for students and lecturers. Ogunode, et al. observed that the killing of the academic staff of tertiary institutions by bandits and insurgents are inimical to the development of higher education and has the potential of reducing the strength of academics across the country. The intermittent killing of academic staff across the country is detrimental to the development of higher education. The effects are substandard teaching, brain drain, and poor quality of education.
 5. **Reduction in Private Investment in Education** Insecurity faced by the country is preventing investment in the development of educational institutions in the country and in turn disrupt school administration because, such investment, if embarked upon will be destroyed by the insurgents attacking public and private educational institutions in the country. The government and some state governments have resolved not to embark on infrastructural development of educational institutions for now until when the security issues are over. These actions on a perpetual note, has attributed stoppage and prevent investment in education. Similarly, many private sectors too are discouraged on establishing private schools because of the fear of attacks. Oluyomi, & Grace, (2016) submitted that the Child's learning is affected in that, he/she has limited number of schools to choose from. Government and private owners are unable to open new schools.

Suggestions

Following the numerous challenges of insecurity and its various devastating effects explored in this paper, the following recommendation were made:

- i. **Security Sector Reform:** The Nigerian government has initiated security sector reforms, including training programme and equipment upgrades for security forces. Progress has however, been slow and tainted with issues such as corruption and allegations of human rights abuse which continue to undermine the effectiveness of security forces. There is an urgent need to accelerate the implementation of reforms, prioritize anti-corruption measures, and ensure adequate funding and oversight to enhance the professionalism and accountability of security agencies.
- ii. **Addressing root causes:** The government should focus its efforts on addressing the underlying drivers of insecurity in Nigeria by adopting initiatives aimed at poverty reduction. School administrators should deploy ICT facilities like
- iii. Circuit Television (CCTV), surveillance cameras, Detecting Devices, Geographical Positioning System (GPS)-

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Access, Equity and Quality of Education in the face of... Nathaniel, O. & Imrana, S. P. (2025) enables devices, Satellite Imagery, Automated Personal Data Bank, Data Mining, and Database Tracking Systems.

1. **Policy formulation and implementation:** Federal government should take seriously, the formulation and implementation of more developmental policies of multiplier effect, such as Local government autonomy, to better the lives of citizen in rural areas beyond being easily lured into unlawful activities.
2. **Salaries and Benefits:** Federal government should improve security personnels' salaries while in service and ensure instant settlement of post-service entitlement in avoidance of hardship and frustration could make them instrumental to perpetrators and masterminds of all manner of crimes.
3. **Psychosocial support:** The government should invest in training teachers, counsellors, and community volunteers to provide psychosocial support and trauma counselling to students who have experienced violence, displacement, or loss to promote resilience and emotional well-being among students. Psychosocial support services should also be incorporated into the school curriculum and extracurricular activities to ensure that students can receive counselling and support when they need it.

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