



IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF INSECURITY IN NORTH EASTERN NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

This paper explicated the implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in the face of the challenges of insecurity in North Eastern Nigeria. The paper highlighted the goals and objectives of the UBE programme and how the goals and objectives

Dr. CHRISTINA TANKO AUDU

College of Education Zing, Taraba State

INTRODUCTION

No nation can achieve a sustainable development in the face of widespread insecurity of lives and properties. The supranational issue of insecurity that stem from organized high profile crimes perpetrated through transnational syndication and racketeering has continuously posed threats to survival of nations. According to Akintunde and Musa (2016), security is perceived as a basic human need that contributes to effective learning. Psychologists proposed that security is crucial for human survival. Following the postulation of hierarchy of Needs by Abraham Maslow, the lower needs of man like food, shelter and security must be met before other higher needs like education or intellectual/cognitive needs (Akintunde, 2015). The inability to satisfy the need for security may cause stress in



were being pursued until the challenges of insecurity started affecting the full implementation of the UBE programme in North Eastern States of Nigeria. The paper pointed out that the major areas of the UBE programme that are affected by the challenges of insecurity are increased number of out of school children (school dropped out), destruction of school infrastructure, lack of qualified teacher and reduced teachers' morale, poor attendance to school and lack of learning materials and school furniture among others. The researcher concluded that insecurity challenges are hindering the full attainment of the goals and objectives of the UBE. It was recommended that educational stakeholders should highlight the incidence and impact of attacks on education in conflict and insecurity among key actors and cultivate public support for safe education and promote effective programmes and policies to protect education from attack, including prevention and response as well as encourage adherence to existing international laws protecting education and the strengthening of international norms and standards as needed.

Keywords: Implementation, Universal Basic Education, Challenges, Insecurity, North Eastern Nigeria

individuals and hinder them from pursuing higher level needs. On a general note, security can be seen as the state of safety, freedom from danger and protection from physical harm. By nature, human beings thrive in security and are instinctively driven by the need to maximize available resources to ensure their physical, physiological and psychological wellbeing. This implies that security is not only limited to protection from physical harm.



Security also involves existence of environmental factors that instill peace of mind in an individual in order to empower him/her to function optimally in the society. Poor human relations between teacher and student can hamper students' mental health and cause insecurity. Poor infrastructural designs in schools can expose students to insecurity problems like health hazards and stress. Some female students feel threatened as a result of rampant incidences of sexual abuse and rape in schools and the society (Akintunde, 2015). According to Shuaibu (2015), a safe school is one that fosters peaceful, positive or cordial relationships among students, teachers and administrators. Conversely, insecurity is concerned with feelings of uncertainty, dangers or threats to life. Insecurity is a negative feeling involving fear, anxiety, uncertainty and injustice, among others. When an individual does not have control over a situation but has to rely on the cooperation of others that cannot be guaranteed, the result may be frustration or insecurity. Insecurity is a threat to learning. Prevailing conflict within communities around the schools often has ripple effects on the teaching and learning activities of such schools. Education as the major tool for national development cannot be effective in the face of widespread insecurity. The implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in North Eastern states is being threaten by the widespread insecurity.

The Universal Basic Education Programme

Basic Education is the education given to children age 0-15 years. Basic Education provided by Government, is compulsory, free, universal and qualitative. It encompasses the Early Child Care and Development Education (0-4) and ten years of formal schooling. Early Child Care and Development Education however is segmented into ages 0-4 years, situated in daycare or creches, fully in the hands of the private



sector and social development services while ages 5-6 (Pre- Primary) are within the formal education sector. For purposes of policy coordination and monitoring, the Federal Government instituted a Universal Basic Education (UBE). As stated in the National Policy on Education (2014), the following are objectives of UBE:

- a. developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- b. the provision of compulsory, free and universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age:
- c. reducing the incidence of drop-out from formal school system, through improved relevance quality and efficiency:
- d. catering through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the promotion of basic education for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling: and
- e. ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral, security and civic values needed for the laying of a solid foundation for life-long learning.

The goals of Basic Education are to:

- a. Provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship, wealth generation and educational advancement;
- b. develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and in the performance of their civic responsibilities;
- c. inculcate values and raise morally upright individuals capable of independent thinking and who appreciate the dignity of labour:



- d. inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence, irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, colour, ethnic and socioeconomic background, and
- e. provide opportunities for the child to develop manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capability.

The achievement of these objectives will amount to sustainable national development, where children and even adults desire to be educated, read and acquire manipulative and communicative skills for self-reliance. The UBE programme has lasted for about 22 years now and evidences have also proved that the nation has spent much money on retraining of teachers, supplying of furniture and books and writing materials and renovation of some primary school building. A lot of changes have been observed or witnessed in the Nigerian educational system. For instance, school enrolment has increased tremendously, school infrastructure such as classrooms has also improved as well as furniture, instructional materials and teacher retraining.

Despite the improvement in education as a result of the introduction of the UBE, looking around the streets, motor parks, various workshops and markets, children of school going ages are seen roaming about, hawking and begging, serving as apprentices at various workshops and helping at various shops, even though the Federal Government has provided free and compulsory education for all children of school-going age (Ezeano, 2018). Within the Nigerian society, Ezeano (2018) observed that there are frequent cases of communal crisis, banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, ritual killings and human trafficking, pointing to the fact that the youths who should have partly benefited from the UBE programme are still misfit in the society. Actually such youths have not achieved maximum socio-



cultural and fulfilled lives. Academically, North Eastern Nigeria is not wonderful. There are incidences of examination malpractice and poor achievement in both internal and external examinations. These observed behaviour is putting a question on the achievement of UBE objectives for sustainable development of North East region and Nigeria as a nation. The achievement of the UBE objectives in North Eastern region is further threaten by the rising insecurity in the region and Nigeria in general.

Challenges of Insecurity in North Eastern Nigeria

Insecurity is the state of being subject to danger or injury. The anxiety that is experienced when one feels vulnerable and insecure. Ezemonye (2011) sees insecurity as “a state of being not secure, lack of confidence’. To enable us understand this term, let turn to the meaning of the word ‘insecure’ which the Advance English Dictionary defines as ‘not confident about yourself or your relationships with other people; not safe or protected’.

Northeast Nigeria is one of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. It is made up of Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Taraba, Gombe and Bauchi States. Eight years of insurgency in the Northeast by armed groups and the subsequent counter insurgency by the Nigerian military has affected over 14 million people, with 1.7 million currently displaced predominantly in the north-eastern states of Borno, Yobe, Adamawa (United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA, 2017). The insurgency which targeted schools and other facilities has disrupted livelihoods for millions of households leaving over 7 million people need humanitarian assistance. More than 50% of those affected are children, including many unaccompanied minors or children orphaned by the crisis (OCHA, 2017). According to Warner and Matfass (2017), in the last eight years, more than 20,000 people have



been killed and over 10,000 others, including school children have been abducted. Young boys and men have been forced to join the group as fighters while women and young girls have been held as sex slaves and used as suicide bombers. The resulting humanitarian situation has been exacerbated as majority of the displaced lack access to basic needs like food, shelter, WASH, healthcare and education services. Many IDPS are forced to reside in government buildings such as schools and within host communities or makeshift IDP camps. This has further impoverished an already poor population, thus increasing vulnerabilities.

Targeted kidnapping of school children began in 2014 with the mass abduction of 276 female students in Chibok by Boko Haram insurgents. That event was ideologically motivated, and designed to extort concessions from the government. Recently, abductions have become more profit-driven, involving organized and unorganized criminal groups. The profit dimension to the kidnappings can easily complicate Nigeria's security problems, as they could become more frequent given the high level of poverty and youth unemployment in the region amid the stark absence of legitimate economic opportunities. If education is to survive, it is crucial to urgently change the current dynamics and make schools safe again.

Insecurity is a critical issue that has hampered educational development, industrialization and sustainable development in Nigeria in particular and Africa at large. Nigeria which is perceived as the giant of Africa has witnessed an unprecedented incidences of insecurity ranging from the activities of herdsmen-farmers crisis, boko haram insurgencies, armed robber attacks, kidnapping, political/religious crisis, communal crisis, murder, banditry, Child Abduction/ Trafficking etc. These crisis lead to destruction of vehicles; burning of churches, police stations, schools, hospitals, clinics, shops,



army barracks and residential houses; abduction of expatriates. These challenges have made security a pivotal issue that has culminated in the allocation of country's huge meagre resources to the protection of lives and properties. Yet lives and properties are being destroyed daily.

Effect of insecurity on Universal Basic Education in the North East

The challenges of insecurity brought a great setback to the Universal Basic Education programme in North Eastern States. These effects of insecurity on the UBE programme include the following:

1. Increase dropout and withdrawal from school: Across the country, the number of out of school children is increasing, majorly due to insecurity. In North East, there has been sudden increase in the number of children who have dropped out of school as a result of insecurity. According to African Centre for Leadership Strategy Development (2020) the North-East region accounts for nearly 60 per cent of the 13 million out-of-school children in the country. Data released by the UNICEF (2018) showed that more than 7.8 million children have lost access to education due to insecurity occasion by the Boko Haram terrorists, banditry, farmers-herders clash and activities in North East Nigeria. Parents are afraid of sending their children to school for fear of being kidnapped, attack or killed. Schools and students are increasingly becoming target for kidnappers. The school feeding programme would have helped in keeping children in schools where it is implemented but insecurity is sending these children out of school.

With access to livelihoods constrained, a growing number of parents are unable to meet the cost of education. This coupled with the high level of food insecurity and children having to fend for themselves and adopt negative coping mechanisms, including early marriage for



girls to survive, with all these factors contributing to the increasing numbers of out of school children (Plan International, 2017).

The overall result of increased school dropout is that many children in the state are being robbed of their right to education, an essential ingredient for their future and for the development of the state, which for years has lagged behind that of other parts of the country. Without urgent action to address the lack of access to education occasioned by insecurity, the lives of these children could become locked in unending cycles of underachievement and poverty. The protracted nature of conflicts today is affecting the futures of entire generations of children. Without access to education, a generation of children living in conflict will grow up without the skills they need to contribute to their countries and economies, exacerbating the already desperate situation for millions of children and their families.

- 2. Destruction of school infrastructure:** Many school have been burnt down by either Boko Haram insurgency, herders-farmers crisis or communal crisis. Boko Haram which means “Western education is forbidden” is a major terrorist group in North Eastern Nigeria. True to its name, Boko Haram has targeted the Nigerian education system, assaulting schools, students, and teachers in Northeast Nigeria and disrupting access to education and social services, especially for young people.

School infrastructure in Nigeria’s northeast was not in great shape before the security challenges. The cumulative effect of attacks, looting and wanton destruction of schools, the degradation over time from climate and wildlife (especially for those schools that have stood empty for long periods), and the impact of occupation by armed groups or its use as shelter by IDPs has left education infrastructure in a catastrophic state. Schools that remain in operation across North East states are overcrowded and unable to



meet the needs of the host population and the IDP. United Nations Children’s Fund, UNICEF and European Union, EU (2021) reported that no fewer than 2,295 teachers have lost their lives while 1,400 schools were destroyed in North-East Nigeria since 2009 and as a result of insurgency. With almost 1,400 schools destroyed, damaged or looted, the crisis has further devastated an already bad education system characterized by a severe lack of infrastructure, learning and teaching materials and overcrowded or classrooms. One third of all schools in North Eastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa are holding classes outside with primary schools being the worst affected (46% have classes under trees or outside. Many of the classrooms being used are in a very bad state of repair and some may well pose a safety risk to children.

In addition, government security forces have also used schools for military purposes, further reducing children’s right to education. This did not only places schools at risk of attack but is contrary to the Safe Schools Declaration, which Nigeria endorsed in 2015. The declaration urges parties “not to use schools and universities for any purpose in support of the military effort.”

3. **Lack of qualified teachers and reduced teachers’ morale:** In the education sector it is teachers who bear the brunt of any humanitarian crisis. It is sometimes forgotten that they too are often displaced or part of the affected population and at the same time are faced with more difficult and challenging conditions at work as they deal with troubled children and overpopulated classrooms in temporary sites. For northern Nigeria the context is even more serious, as the education system and teachers themselves were targets of the insurgency.

The absence of qualified teachers means that those still working are overburdened with the workload of overpopulated



classrooms. They are also hampered by the lack of scholastic materials and equipment as such items were destroyed during attacks on the schools. Over 2,295 teachers have been killed and 19,000 others displaced in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in the last eight years (UNICEF, 2017).

Teacher's morale in the northeast is at rock bottom. Low salaries, poor conditions, a lack of recognition and the impact of the security crisis itself have all taken their toll. Teachers struggle in overcrowded classrooms, with few materials and little support. Teacher's attendance is poor in places. Despite these exceptionally touch conditions many teachers continue to "try their best" (in the words of one parent). In the high security LGAs schools are mostly staffed by volunteer teachers, some having received little or no recompense for their efforts. These areas are of particular concern and efforts are needed to maintain and strengthen the teaching cadre whilst the security situation prevents the return of the regular teaching force.

- 4. Lack of learning materials and school Furniture:** There is gross shortage of teaching and learning materials in school. In an assessment conducted by Assessment Capacities Project, ACAPS (2017) shows that 43% of school's report that none or only a few children have adequate teaching and learning materials. As these materials are the responsibility of the pupil or parents this is not a surprising statistic given the issues of poverty in the region. Poverty rates in the country remain very high, with 70% of the population living below international poverty lines⁹. It is particularly worse in the northeast where 78% of the population in Adamawa, 61% in Borno and 82% in Yobe living below the poverty line (UNICEF, 2017). It becomes very difficult for parents to pay for educational materials for their children. This is also echoed when it comes to



textbooks available to students. 84% of primary schools and 100% of the Junior Secondary Schools assessed in High Security LGAs had no textbooks for students (ACAPS, 2017).

According to Assessment Capacities Project, ACAPS (2017) Almost 50% of the schools in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa state lack school furniture (desks, chairs, mats, etc.), with 25% having some furniture but most classroom being without. In many in these states children are found sitting on rocks, tree trunks or the floor as was the case for most of the classes taking place outside. In a few cases furniture was partially removed from classrooms to make space for more students. Only senior secondary schools have significant amounts of furniture with primary and junior secondary both badly affected (though which is worst off varies from state to state).

Recommendations

If education is to survive, it is crucial to urgently change the current dynamics and make schools safe again. This crisis requires swift and comprehensive action, both in prevention and supporting victims to minimize long-term damages. While the scope for improvement is vast and complex, here the researcher outline four focus areas recommendations that if addressed might garner meaningful traction toward avoiding future school kidnappings and averting the further dismantling of education in North East Nigeria:

1. Governments at all levels should adopt a comprehensive strategy to deal with the persistent state of violence, including a coherent plan to regain control of Nigeria to ensure a safe space for education. Schools are only safe in so far as the larger society is safe. Nigerian policymakers, school leaders, and communities must effectively and creatively come together to



help reverse the current economic and education dynamics to avoid a catastrophic collapse.

2. Nigerian government should reevaluate and revamp the Safe Schools Initiative: The Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) was launched with much fanfare in the aftermath of the globally publicized abduction of the Chibok girls by Boko Haram in 2014. After a promising start including several tens of millions of dollars pledged by a coalition of the Nigerian government, international donors, and Nigerian business leaders; a plan to relocate students in high-risk areas; and strategies to strengthen education in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) it remains unclear how impactful the program has been so far.
3. Educational stakeholders such as UN, World Bank, UBEC and PTA should provide infrastructure and learning materials to revamp education in North East.
4. More qualified teachers should be employed to caution the high shortage of teachers.

References

- African Centre for Leadership Strategy Development (2020). North-East is home to 60% of Nigeria's 13m Out-of-School Children. Retrieved on 10/11/2021 from <https://www.vanguardngr.com>.
- Plan International (2017). A Child Protection and Education Needs Assessment in Selected Communities in Borno and Adamawa States. Retrieved on 4/11/2021 from <https://www.hrw.org>.
- REACH Initiative (2017). Not Ready to Return: IDP Movement Intentions in North-Eastern Nigeria. Retrieved on 4/11/2021 from <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets>.
- UNICEF (2017). More than half of all schools remain closed in Borno State, epicentre of the Boko Haram crisis in northeast Nigeria. Retrieved on 4/11/2021 from <https://www.unicef.org/media/media>.
- United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2017). About the Crisis. Retrieved on 4/11/2021 from <http://www.unocha.org/nigeria>.



Warner J. and Matfass H. (2017). Exploding Stereotypes: The Unexpected Operational and Demographic Characteristics of Boko Haram's Suicide Bombers. <https://ctc.usma.edu>.