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Educational Security in Nigeria: Implications, & Strategies for Preventing the Collapse of Our Educational System

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Abstract		Original Research Article

This paper sought to discuss the ills of insecurity in our Educational Sector, it identified unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, marginalization, political factors, international influence, and communal crisis as the bane of insecurity in Nigeria. This paper also identified loss of manpower in educational institutions, poor quality of education, destructions of infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, closure of educational institutions, discouragement of educational pursuit by children, internal displacement of learners, reduction of private investment in education and inadequate funding of education as the impact of insecurity on school administration in Nigeria. The study showed that education, among other things, can deliver the following to our society: Economic growth and productivity, human capital development, and building a whole and informed human being. However, criminal elements have continued to work assiduously at ensuring that the educational system is scuttled, some of them hinged their reasons on Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, population growth, and religion, culture, greed, Smoking, drinking of alcohol, theft, drug addiction and the abduction of humans for ransome are the real causes. Most surprisingly, the government, through the law enforcement agencies, have shown weakness and lack of capacity in the face of this menace. In the light of the above, the following recommendations were made: All the schools should develop an emergency action plan, An emergency communication line should be built to communicate with the necessary units and organizations to receive timely support and help in threatening situations, All students, academic staff and other personnel should be trained about security issues made to be aware of their roles in securing the educational environment and infrastructure, In each school a security committee composed of the members of students, parents, media, health and security organizations, etc., should be constituted, and effective policies should be developed cooperatively, the legislations and regulations about school security should be reviewed and refined to maintain deterrence for threatening behaviors, The physical conditions of the schools should be renewed. Cameras with night vision should be placed outside and inside of the school buildings and Proper identification, inspection and maintenance of property and infrastructure belonging to our schools should be encouraged.

Keywords: Educational Security, Nigeria, Systemic Collapse, Policy Strategies, School Safety, Education Reform, Threat Mitigation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a foundation for the development and progress of any society. It is a base upon which the whole building of human development stands, because it molds and frames the human mind and prepares her for engagement in every milieu.

Passing down knowledge is inarguably one of the greatest social assets of mankind and as such can be said to be the only key to success in the life of an individual. Education starts at birth and one can gain it till life ends. It aims at developing a healthy and prosperous society which possess knowledge, rights, awareness, courage, abilities and many other attributes. Kalu (2024),

Education is a continuous and secure process of acquiring /imparting skills, achieving goals which not only helps us in obtaining knowledge but also to succeed in life. Getting proper education is necessary for success in life just like the food is necessary for the healthy human body. Good education is constructive in nature which is very helpful in future life, it also helps society live a peaceful, and growing life together. Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus (1992), Ubong (2016)

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Over the years and particularly in the past fifteen years, Education in Nigeria has been bedeviled by various forms of insecurity ranging from decaying infrastructure without proper maintenance or commensurate replacement of same. Massive exodus of teaching staff to other nations where the grasses seem greener, poor budgetary allocation to Education, loss of drive by the remaining teaching and even non-academic staff due to poor remuneration which sometimes accumulates in arears for months, the use of curricula that are outdated and do not meet the needs of the 21st Century, little or no chances for the staff to get trained and/or improve themselves through continuous professional trainings.

In the existing structures, terrorists and other disgruntled elements have unfettered access and go in and out at anytime of their choice and cause mayhem, being sometimes able to abduct hundreds of students/pupils without being questioned even in places with several control posts where different law enforcement agencies conduct stop and search operations. This is not to talk about the general effects of the chronic corruption which the nation has become identifiable with in which no sector is spared.

Efforts by the government and the law enforcement agencies to curb this menace have proved to be grossly inadequate. The most productive of the efforts has been the safe School Project which is being fronted by the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and assisted by other law enforcement Agencies

On the other hand, the huge sums (budgetary allocation) used for the security of educational assets have not produced a commensurate result; many times, there have been accusations and counter accusations as to whether the money was utilized for the intended purpose. this is not to forget the fact that it will take the unscrupulous elements just a little fraction of the efforts to destroy all that had been built.

The government's body language shows complicity, weakness or lack of capacity or political will to fight this deadly scourge. They seem to be cooperating, and romancing with the criminals for fear or lack of the will to fight them, while endangering the lives of the majority of Nigerians

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Education fosters a skilled workforce, which is essential for economic competitiveness and growth. Countries with higher educational investments experience sustained economic development (Gulbakhar, 2024). Education is a foundation for the development and progress of any society. It is a base upon which the whole building of human development stands, because it molds and frames the human mind and prepares her for engagement in every milieu.

Passing down knowledge is inarguably one of the greatest social assets of mankind and as such can be said to be the only key to success in the life of an individual. Education starts at birth and one can gain it till life ends. Its main aim is to develop a healthy and prosperous society which possesses knowledge, rights, awareness, courage, abilities and many other attributes. Kalu (2024), Achumba et al. (2013)

Research indicates that increased educational enrollment rates correlate positively with long-term economic growth, particularly in developing nations like Indonesia (Meilisa et al., 2024). Effective investment in human capital leads to improved employee productivity and motivation, which directly impacts company performance and income levels (Tsiklashvili et al., 2023).

SECURITY/INSECURITY IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Security is seen as assured freedom from poverty or want, precautions taken against theft, espionage on a person or thing that secures or guarantees protection. Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus (1992).Fischer and Green (2004), saw security as a stable, relatively predictable environment in which an individual or group may pursue its ends without disruption or harm and fear of such disturbance or injury.

Insecurity on the other hand according to Achumba et al. (2013) is an absence of protection or safety. These scholars argued further that insecurity entails peril; deathtrap, ambiguity; dearth of fortification, and lack of security. Scholars tend to discuss the problem of insecurity from two major perspectives.

Financial considerations in education encompass various aspects such as funding sources, financial management, quality of education, and the impact of financial decisions on educational outcomes. The literature highlights the importance of financial support from both state and non-state sources, emphasizing the need for effective mechanisms to ensure sustainable economic growth in educational services.

Additionally, the influence of financial management factors on the quality of education in public secondary schools is underscored, with a focus on factors like teachers, infrastructure, and learning materials. Overall, financial considerations play a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape, impacting resource allocation, quality of education, and overall system sustainability.

3. OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT STATE OF NIGERIA'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Education can improve not only an individual and a family but also society at large. Education leads to a successful career; it produces creative minds and optimistic thinking. It helps one achieve the unbelievable. Education builds self-confidence, gets a boost, and produces responsible individuals with flexible thoughts and ideas.

It fosters critical thinking, helps one adopt the right values and morals, and leads to self-reliance, growth across all parameters, survival during adverse conditions, better communication skills, financial literacy, and security. Education nurtures a problem-solving nature, creates a better world of "Humans," fosters an innovative world, and contributes to societal development and a sustainable ecosystem. Education keeps children and youth occupied, creates and spreads awareness, enhances productivity,

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introduces discipline, promotes equality, and eliminates poverty.

Education can lead to higher income, economic growth, and a higher chance of employment. It encourages a healthy lifestyle, socializing, skill development, advancements in one's career, eliminates child marriage, reduces maternal death rates, empowers women, preserves society, and reduces crime. Education allows you to pursue your dreams.

Education helps individuals to develop basic and critical skills like decision-making, mental agility, problem-solving, simulates social interaction, develop general knowledge, learn about sports, culture, arts and creativity, teaches how to take responsibility for one's success and failures, introduces children to competition in real world, planning, productivity and discipline, critical thinking, discovering of talents and purpose, it teaches equality and social mobility, problem solving skills, independence.

It broadens knowledge scope, teaches specialization, it is important for employability, teaches new skills and innovation, fights loneliness, allows parents to work during the day-time, it can introduce role models and logical thinking. Investing in education and human capital yields significant long-term economic benefits, enhancing productivity, innovation, and overall economic growth.

Despite the above inherent benefits of education, some groups of individuals have vowed that education will not thrive in Nigeria. These groups range from corrupt government officials, a lack of commitment by the government, deploying ill-trained/ill-equipped law enforcement agents to fight armed hoodlums, insincere citizens who do not seem to have a stake

However, in Nigeria as at today, the educational system has come under attack. It is characterized by Infrastructural decay, outdated, unbalanced curriculum, which is sometimes abstract and lacking real/practical application, brain drain, religious extremism and corruption, Insecurity and Safety Concerns, Funding issues, Brain Drain and Teacher Shortages, Socio-Economic Barriers, Curriculum and quality issues.

Lots of efforts are currently being made to combat these threats to our education system, but the problems are far from over, as they have been met with strong resistance by the negative forces. The most prominent or impactful of all the efforts is the Safe Schools Project, which is defined as the sheltering of students from violence and bullying, as well as exposure to harmful elements such as drugs, guns and gang activity.

4. CHALLENGES OF EDUCATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

1. Infrastructural Decay

Poorly Equipped Schools and Lack of Basic Facilities: Much of the infrastructure in our schools is either outdated or poorly managed and does not align with the 21st Century. Some schools have not undergone any major maintenance in decades, resulting in a lack of essential resources, including learning aids and research materials.

Many modern-day activities cannot occur in such environments; when they do, it comes at a very high cost. Some classes take place under leaking roofs, on bare floors, and without toilets. The science laboratories and libraries in these schools may not have been upgraded, updated, or refurbished in over ten years; this is not to mention the absence of a computer laboratory. One might wonder what students are learning and how they will cope with graduates from other schools.

Inadequate Funding and Mismanagement of Resources: The unavailability of infrastructure, instructors, teaching and learning aids of all sorts are all traceable to poor funding of our schools, when adequate funds are made available, lots of requirements in our schools will be met

Lack of Maintenance Culture: Closely related to the issue of poor funding is the lack of maintenance culture, we have an endemic poor maintenance culture especially in the public sector where people will prefer to see a property or facility collapse completely till it becomes unusable which huge contracts will be awarded rather than wield in and effect repairs on it at an earlier with a much little sum of money.

There is a total administrative issue where persons other than those to whom public property management are entrusted are not allowed to render any help of any sort in the management of such property except in very few circumstances where as a result of neglect, a community chooses to take their fate in their hands.

2. Insecurity and Safety Concerns

Kidnapping, attacks on Schools by Criminals, especially the Boko Haram Insurgency: The abduction of human beings for ransom has gradually become accepted as a norm, which is attributable to the failure of the law enforcement agencies and general leadership. States even get involved in negotiating ransoms

Inability of the Law Enforcement Agencies to Deliver: Our law enforcement agencies have equally not delivered on their mandate regarding ensuring the safety of lives and property. Even in a few instances where arrests have been made, there have been few or no convictions. all we hear is re-integration of criminals into society and directly into the Armed forces who later cart away with weapons

Hunger and Greed and Religious Extremism: A few of the criminals were driven into crime by hunger while the very many of them are driven by greed and lack of reasonable role models as well as the absence of legal system where offenders are punished regardless of their connections or how highly placed they are in the society.

3. Brain Drain and Teacher Shortages

Migration of Skilled educators to other Countries: Generally, educators are barely recognized and this has become the trend over the years, under such circumstances, especially over the past 10 years, there has been an exodus of teachers to other nations where their services are recognized and rewarded

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Poor remuneration and Welfare Packages: The pay package and welfare available to educators (teaching and non-teaching staff alike) is really awful to say the least. It is practically impossible to survive on such pay level, no wonder many of them resort to cutting of corners just to survive

Unfair treatment by some Parents: Because of the poor recognition accorded this group, some unscrupulous parents and guardians threaten, harass and even assault school staff

Lack of Qualified Teachers: As doing the job is no longer economically viable, the positions are filled up with persons who failed in their business or those who were neither trained for nor have real interest in teaching and its ancillary services

4. Curriculum and Quality Issues

Outdated Curricula and Lack of Alignment with Global Standards: The curriculum used in our schools are sometimes not in tandem with present day realities, rather than update them, they introduce even things that are not relevant at the time and season we are in. Sometimes, the issue is with implementation of the existing curriculum, rather follow through the implementation, suddenly, the old one is suspended & a new one introduced.

Poor Learning Outcomes and Low Literacy Rates: This is a result of the near full theoretical background of our curriculum, the learning outcomes remains same as the inputs. The untrained tutors will only impart in the pupils a similar outcome.

Lack of training opportunities for teachers: There are little or no training opportunities for teachers for teachers, this limits the level of knowledge and skill that they can acquire. Many of them would not have heard about the recent trends in teaching and learning

Geographical Biases in The Admission, Recruitment and Promotion Processes: The bias in the admission process in the unity Schools (Federal government Colleges) is another killer of the educational system in Nigeria where in the guise of assisting educationally disadvantaged states a candidate from Niger State who scores 73 in the same examination will be given preferential admission over the counterpart from Anambra State who scored 130 from the same examination. Such a process is capable of killing the system because it will match round pegs into square holes.

5. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BARRIERS

Poverty and inability to afford Education: The high cost of studying in certain institutions in virtually all parts of the Federation is a typical hindrance to educational attainment by the citizens. Most people who live on monthly income from the government or the low end in the private sector can hardly afford the cost of training their children in fairly good schools.

Gender disparities and cultural biases: In some cultures, it is considered a waste of resources to send the girl child to school; those trapped in that quagmire intensify efforts at spreading such negative practices to other areas to ensure that they are not the only losers

Poor Education for the Girl Child

Religious/Cultural Considerations: The idea of not sending the girl child started with a religious practice and gradually became a norm. Regardless of improvements in school enrolment for the girl child, which was consequent upon the successes recorded in cultures where the girl child

6. CORRUPTION

Over-invoicing of Projects: Over-invoicing of contracts is one sharp way of looting the treasury and indirectly killing the educational system in Nigeria. The money that is meant for say five-project is spent between two and three, and the trend has continued over time

Use of Unqualified Contractors and Certification of Substandard Jobs: This reflects an extension of the corruption in our educational system. Unqualified contractors who lack the necessary skills, personnel, or equipment are hired because they succumb easily to the pressures of corrupt officials. This situation is even worse than over-invoicing, as it significantly shortens the lifespan of the project.

Use of Sub-Standard Materials in Contract Execution: The same unqualified contractors agree to use sub-standard materials for the projects, knowing fully well that the officials of the Ministry who are partners in crime, will certify the work regardless of how bad it looks

Non-Prosecution of Such Deviants: The above sharp practices has continued unabated because the same people who are supposed to push for their prosecution are accomplices to the crime and turn a blind eye to their offences.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL INSECURITY

Economic Impact: These insecurity challenges have led to a reduction in the investment in education, led to the kidnapping and killing of students, academic and non-academic staff, discouragement of youth from going to School and the destruction of infrastructural facilities in Nigeria. It has a ripple effect, firstly, many are discouraged from going to school, investment in education, ancillary activities/services related gradually come to a halt, causing further unemployment, loss of knowledge and eventual low productivity while basic consumption remains constant.

Social Consequences: The poor investment and its attendant apathy will lead to increased unemployment, crime and social unrest, it even connotes victory for those who are campaigning against Western Education and unfortunately, the children of most of such campaign leaders are studying abroad in some of the best schools while they deceive their naive, uninformed and ignorant followers who after being misled by such folks still wait for their children to come and lead them and their children

Global competitiveness: Nigeria's inability to compete

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internationally due to a weak educational foundation is clear. The aforementioned situation leads to low productivity and lack of development as people leave crucial issues like technology, science, technology, research and development and focus more on religious dominance and intolerance. This makes the economy import dependent; this depletes her foreign exchange while new additional earnings in foreign exchange are not coming. Worse still like in the case of Nigeria is that so much of the remaining foreign exchange is use to pay for school fees abroad while the schools at home abandoned. Brain-drain equally make the nation to lose her best brains to other nations

8. IMPACT ON STUDENTS AND TEACHERS' SAFETY AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION

These insecurity challenges have led to a reduction in the investment in education, led to the death of students, academic and non-academic staff, and discouragement of youth from going to School and the destruction of infrastructural facilities in Nigeria. Not only that, as at 17 August 2023, More than 1,680 school children have been kidnapped in Nigeria, with fear of attacks stopping some children from ever attending school, often leading to the mass withdrawal of children from school and school closures.

For example, in Katsina State alone, in the North-Western part of the country, nearly one hundred schools remain closed due to insecurity, affecting the education of thousands of children. Actions like these are capable of causing brain drain, which will put the economy in a serious reverse mode, and educational and research activities will be brought to a halt

9. STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING THE COLLAPSE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

1. Increased Funding

*Increased Budgetary allocation to Education and Security in line will acceptable global standards

*Transparent Management of the Resources voted into the educational sector including the bidding and selection process, project inspection and certification approval and payment

*Increased allocation on Infrastructural Development, including a convivial and secure learning environment, learning tools etc

2. Better remuneration for Teaching and non-teaching staff

*Payment of Living wages to Staff

*Granting of good welfare packages to staff in the educational sector; this includes housing, health, research, transport and other basic allowances

*Providing Educational loan for staff in the Educational Ministry including educational housing, motor vehicle loans,

3. Enhanced security Measures

*Protection of Students and Staff through collaboration with Community and Security Agencies

*Implementation of the Safe Schools Initiative Spear headed by the Nigeria security and Civil defence Corps and supported by other law Enforcement agencies.

*Inculcating security awareness to everyone through continuous advocacy, having a means of identification, communication system, access control, installation of CCTV Cameras and positioning of armed guards

4. Teacher training and Retention

*Provision of Training centres for in-house training programs, authorization for trainings outside the institutions including refund of the cost of such trainings

*Approval of compulsory and continuous Professional Development programs; this is an extension of the position above, whereby each staff must undergo certain levels of trainings from time to time and it has to be related to their field.

*Refund of Off-shore training Expenses; this should be adopted though it has to come with a proviso as to the minimum length of time the organization will receive services from such a staff.

5. Curriculum reform and modernization

*Updating the Curricula to meet global standards and Technological advancements

*Emphasizing on STEM Education and Critical thinking Skills

*Incorporating the learning of Practical skills into the Curriculum

6. Public Private Partnerships

This involves s a collaborative effort between the public and private sectors involving:

*Collaboration with NGO's, businesses and International Organizations to support Education in investments, trainings, exchange arrangements.

*Entrusting the management and maintenance of School facilities to the sponsoring Organization as well as host communities by conferring more powers on the stake holders.

*Making all the parties, participants during inter-house sports and other activities in the different schools including graduation activities, during which sharp brains can be picked for further immediate engagement

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7. Community Engagement

*Encouraging Community involvement in School management and Security

*Advocacy on the importance of Education at all levels

* Where free education is not practicable, some students from the host communities should be offered scholarships.

11. CONCLUSION

The need for educational school security cannot be overemphasized and should be a subject of national discourse. A national emergency should be declared on education because a nation without well-educated and knowledgeable youth is at risk of ruin. The importance of having a well-planned and secure school system is crucial and cost-efficient. It must therefore be taken as a priority. Hogan Guards provides free risk assessment to help determine organizations' vulnerability to attack, as well as technological solutions and security personnel to improve safety.

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