

Insurgency: A Threat to Quality Assurance in Nigeria Secondary Education System

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Abstract. Quality education is the basis for national development; this is because education is an instrument par excellence for achieving national objectives. Secondary education is a transition stage of education that bridges between primary education and tertiary education. Secondary is intended to equip recipient with literacy and other basic skills which are needed for useful living in the society and for higher education. However, these feats are still mirages due to insurgency. Insurgency has undermined the journey to achieve quality secondary education through the various ills associated with it which include closure of schools, reduced school attendance, unsafe school environment, killing of teachers and students and destruction of school buildings and facilities among others. The paper attempts to examine how quality assurance in secondary education could be attained in the midst of insurgency. The conclusion and recommendations were also made in the paper.

Keywords: Insurgency, quality assurance and Secondary Education

1. Introduction

Education is one of the fundamental human rights of every Nigerian citizen. Nations of the world have used education as a potent tool to address the challenges facing their nations and for economic advancement. However, for education to serve its intended purposes, it has to be of quality. In Nigerian education system, certain factors have posed threats to quality in education especially in secondary school education. One of such factors is insurgency. In this presentation, the interest is to examine how insurgency poses threat to quality secondary education in Nigeria and to seek ways of redressing the challenge.

Clarification of basic concepts for better understanding of the issue under investigation. It will be imperative to clarify some of the basic concepts treated in the study.

Insurgency: Is a rebellion against authority when those taking part in the rebellion are not recognized as belligerents (Hornby, 2006). It is equally seen as a violent move by a person or group of persons to resist or oppose the enforcement of law or running of government or revolt against constituted authority of the state (Powell & Abraham, 2006). Simply put, one can say that insurgency is the unlawful use to advance a course of ideology which is politically motivated.

Quality Assurance: This is the systematic review of educational programmes and processes to maintain and improve their quality, equity and efficiency. It consists of all planned and systematic actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that a product or service (in this case secondary education will satisfy given requirements or expectations (Thom-otuya & Inko-tarish, 2016). Quality assurance (QA) requires continuing evaluation of factors that affect the adequacy of the design or specification (Babalola, Adedeji & Erwat, 2007).

Secondary Education: This is the type of education children receive after primary education designed for learners between the ages of 12 and 18 years and before tertiary education. Secondary education prepares youth for meaningful living in the society and for higher education.

2. Concept of Quality Education

Quality as a concept is the degree to which a procedure, a commodity or a service meets the requirements for which it was established or needed. In the views of Zwalchir (2009), quality is

synonymous to effectiveness. This means that quality education is an effective type of education that can be skillfully used to accomplish national objectives. In the same manner, Brennan and Shah (2000) averred that quality education provides the outcomes needed for individuals, communities and society to prosper. It equally allows schools to align and integrate fully with their communities and access a range of services across sectors designed to support the educational development of their students.

European Communities (2020) saw quality education as the type of education that enables people to develop all of their attributes and skills to achieve their potentials as human beings and members of the society. Quality education is necessary because education is at the heart of both personal and community development. The mission of quality education is to enable citizens without exception to develop all of their talents to the full and to realize their potentials including responsibility for their own lives and achievement of their personal aims.

A good quality education is one that provides all learners with capabilities they require to become economically livelihood, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being. The learning outcomes that are required vary according to context but at the end of the basic education cycle must include threshold levels of literacy and numeracy, basic scientific knowledge and life skills. The key characteristics of quality education as identified by Kaagan and Mashal (1985) include academic knowledge and the ability to communicate and cooperate as well as to follow up learners individually. However, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) (2015) identified six key elements that influence the quality of education to include:

- The teacher and teaching methods
- Educational contents
- Learning environment
- Preconditions for learners
- Funding and organization

In similar view, Motwani (2018) commenting on three (3) important changes that must be in order to achieve quality education identified the following:

- Focusing more on the weakest learners
- Providing best teachers to disadvantaged kids
- Empowering parents and communities to hold schools with proper learning resources.

The Global Partnership for Education (2016) concluded this by noting that rethinking what is

considered to be effective teaching and how to facilitate it, is an integral part of ensuring quality education for all learners.

3. Concept, Objectives and Nature of Secondary Education

Secondary education is the second in the tripod of education in Nigeria, the first and third being the primary and tertiary education (Nwakpa, 2017). It is the type of education received by children aged 6 years to 12 years after successful completion of primary education. This is the reason which secondary education tagged post primary secondary education is the bridge between the primary schools and tertiary institutions and as such it is critical to the education of the child (Ige, 2012). The broad aims of secondary education as stipulated in the Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE) are to:

- Prepare recipients for higher education and
- Prepare recipients for useful living in the society (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013).

Specifically, secondary education aims at:

- Providing all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of higher level irrespective of sex, social status, religion or ethnic background.
- Offering diversified curriculum to cater for differences in talents, opportunities and future roles.
- Providing trained manpower in applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades.
- Developing and promoting Nigerian languages, arts and culture in the context of the world's cultural heritage.
- Inspiring students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence.
- Fostering national unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity.
- Raising a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens and providing technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development (FRN, 2013).

A cursory analysis of the broad goals of secondary education shows that secondary education is expected to prepare and supply students to various tertiary institutions of learning and also equip the students with necessary and relevant skills that will enable them work, live useful lives and to contribute to the development of the country through being economically viable.

The indispensability of secondary education will well be seen when one considers the fact that education provided at the primary level is insufficient and inadequate both in content and quality to provide recipient permanent literacy, communicative and numeracy skills expected at the end of primary education (Ige, 2012). There is need for a higher or intermediate level of education with more elaborate curriculum content to expose learners to the necessary skills which are not possible with only primary education.

Commenting on the contribution of secondary education to nation building, Tabotndip (2000) stated that secondary education provides the beneficiaries both with literacy and basic skills which the individual can use for himself or in the industries and government establishments while performing a task for living. Also it is a foundation for higher manpower skills being offered in tertiary schools as well as serves as a source of fueling and refueling tertiary institutions and other stakeholders. In the same manner, after secondary education, the individuals develop a deeper awareness, understanding and control of oneself which enables them to fit well into the society with a high sense of belonging. In short, secondary education is an essential ingredient towards achieving nation building.

4. Insurgency and Quality Assurance

Insurgency according to Brock (2012), is the aggression unjustly carried out by individuals, groups or states against human beings which includes forms of unjustly terrifying, harming, threatening and killing of people and banditry. Simply put, one can see that insurgency is a kind of infringement on people's fundamental right of freedom. It is equally worthy of note that education is one of the fundamental rights of any citizen irrespective of age, gender, location or religion. However, this basic right (access to education) has been violated by the occurrence of insurgency in some parts of the nation. In some states especially in the Northern zone, secondary education is more or less non-existent due to insurgency attacks. Even in places where education seems to be accessed, the quality of such education is in doubt because of fear of insurgency and the level of damages that have been caused by insurgency.

Education that is of quality is expected to be a mechanism that helps individuals reach their best potentials and enter into a social environment as highly productive and successful members of the

society. However, this feat has not been attained in Nigeria due to the occurrence of insurgency. A lot of learners are disoriented and traumatized due to losses of their loved ones and the dangerous attacks they witnessed during insurgency aside those who are being killed. With this frame of mind, such individuals cannot be productive and successful.

In another line of discourse, Ajuonuma (2007) stated that quality assurance is about the effectiveness and efficiency of any programme or procedure. This means that quality assurance in secondary education examines the effectiveness and efficiency of secondary education. However, in the submission of Kaagan and Marshal (1985), attributes of quality secondary education include:

- Ensures provision of equitable and inclusive education
- Ensures to follow the best example
- Ensures provision of quality educational environment
- Ensures to provide long lasting results
- Ensures provision of the best knowledge.

A cursory look at these yardsticks enumerated by Kaagen and Marshal (1985), one could easily see that the secondary education presently obtained in Nigeria especially in the North East is a far cry from quality due to incessant insurgency. Learners are not equitably accessing education as others in other zones. In the same vein, quality learning environment and learning experiences are not ensured due to truncation of academic activities (Pankut, 2014) and destruction of school building and facilities (Peterson, 2009).

A lot of ills are associated with insurgency as it relates to quality education. Some of the ills include denial of access to education through closure of schools (Jones & Naylor, 2014). Insecurity of school environment (CARE, 2009), reduction in school attendance and proliferation of many internally displaced persons (IDPs) (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2015).

Similarly, UNICEF (2000) defined quality education to include:

- Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn and supported in learning by their families and communities.
- Environment that is healthy, safe, protective and gender sensitive and provide adequate resources and facilities.

- Outcomes that encompasses knowledge, skills and attitudes and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

A comparison of quality of secondary education (vis-à-vis insurgency in Nigeria) and the yardstick outlined by UNICEF, one would see that the quality of education is undermined. This is because at the instance of insurgency, schools are shut down, some teachers and students are killed and some of those left are internally displaced, unhealthy (due to trauma and starvation) and unwilling to go back to school due to fear of attack. In most cases, school buildings are destroyed and schools are turned to refugee camps. This ugly scenario causes leakages to quality education (Uvah, 2005).

5. Enhancing Quality Assurance in Secondary Education / Recommendations

Quality assurance is a way of preventing mistakes and defects in education delivery and avoiding problems that hinder the educational objectives (Hoffman, 2014). In the views of European Commission (2020), quality assurance also involves the review of educational programmes and processes to maintain and improve their quality, equity and efficacy. This means that quality assistance is geared towards achieving quality in education delivery. In modern day education, schools are challenged to do more with fewer resources as they try to meet the complex and changing demands of society (Johnson, 2007). In the new dispensation, traditional mode of instruction, assessment procedures and management of secondary education are no longer adequate or viable to deliver quality education especially in the midst of opposing situation like insurgency. This calls for a rethink and a redress of the modus operandi of secondary education if quality must be assured. Sequel to this demand, the following steps need to be adopted to foster quality secondary education in Nigeria in the midst of insurgency:

- There is need to train and employ more highly qualified and dedicated teachers to man the various secondary schools.
- The government should tackle the root causes of insurgency in Nigeria to eliminate the attacks on schools.
- Financial resources should be provided for secondary education to rebuild the destroyed schools to enhance quality learning environment.
- Safe school initiatives should be redressed and sustained especially in zones that are heavily insecure.

- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) should be fully integrated in the management and administration of secondary education.
- There is need to reconsider fitness and relevance of the curriculum of secondary education to the needs of the nation.

6. Conclusion

Secondary education is pivotal to national development. The objective of secondary education is to prepare individuals for useful living in the society and for higher education. Despite these laudable objectives of secondary education, these goals have not been fully attained due to insurgency. The numerous insurgent attacks in Nigeria have undermined the quality of secondary education obtainable in Nigeria. Therefore, some measures should be put in place to salvage the quality of secondary education in Nigeria.

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