

# REFOCUSING SECURITY IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS FOR PEACE IN NIGERIA

**STELLA OFOR-DOUGLAS, Ph.D**

*Department of Educational Management,  
University of Port-Harcourt, Port Harcourt,  
Rivers State.*

## **Abstract**

*This paper reviews the various ways in which universities in Nigeria can refocus their security measures in order to ensure that there is peace in Nigeria. Refocusing means to focus on something again in order to ensure quality and efficiency. Security simply refers to the state of being free from danger, threat or harm. Higher education is education offered in the university, colleges of education, polytechnics and among others that is obtained after the secondary school level. Peace is a concept of social friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. The aim of refocusing security in universities is to ensure quality university education. The purpose of the paper is to suggest various ways in which universities can refocus their security measures in order for peace to reign in the university and the Nigerian society at large. The causes of the insecurity problems in universities in Nigeria were identified by the researcher and they include peer pressure amongst the students and lack of adequate facilities in the hostels, libraries, etc. The researcher posed on the following consequences caused by insecurity in the university and they include disruption of academic activities and reduction in the quality of university education. In conclusion, we should understand that peace is a vital tool needed to ensure quality education in higher education. The researcher proffers the following as a way forward: Adequate facilities should be provided for the students in the hostels, library etc., Peace Education should be included in the curriculum of Higher Education, and there should be a students' forum for students to express their various views.*

**Keywords:** Refocusing, Security, Higher Education, Peace

In Nigeria, there are 91 public universities and 61 private universities. This study focuses on public universities (federal and state universities). Individuals are bound to live as a social unit in the university but the reverse is the case in Nigerian universities which is characterized by violence and other social vices which poses a threat to members of the school community. Every country aspires to make higher

education its human resource for economic growth and to compete with other nations globally for academic excellence. This cannot be achieved if there is presence of insecurity in the university.

Omoyibo and Akpomera (2013) define security as a concept that is prior to the state, and the state exists in order to provide that concept. Similarly Wikipedia (2020) opined that security is the state of harmony characterized by lack of violent conflict and freedom from fear of violence. Vegher (2013) emphasized that peace and security have universally been recognized as necessary conditions for development in any society. The saying, "Where there is peace, there is progress" is not just a mere saying. Nigeria like many other Africans has contended with issues of peace and security over the years. These include civil wars, ethnic crises like Tjukun-Tiv crises, religious crises, political crises, Niger Delta crises, Boko Haram crises and at present Fulani herdsmen crises. Other problems in the same direction include criminal activities like armed robbery, thuggery, kidnapping, assassination, ritual killings and cultism. The researcher admitted that such acts have created instability in the country and have brought setbacks to the nation's development.

Olive (2010) noted that security places individuals at the center of security equation, thereby bringing in the concept of human security which combines elements of national security, economic development and basic human rights. Insecurity is a condition in which people have no confidence in the institutions and leadership that should protect their lives, property and provides for their well-being. Consequently, they live in trauma, fear, anger, despair, suspicion and mistrust. Insecurity also represent an atmosphere or a state of mind characterized by self-doubt and vulnerability. It is a situation in which the citizens do not feel safe, in which crime rate is high and where the inhabitants feel vulnerable. This means that insecurity represents a situation that encourages instability, crime, lack of economic development and deuteriation in the well-being and quality of life of the people. Joshua, Gbletan and Azuh (2016), said some of the indications of insecurity implies a state of vulnerability to attacks, danger or threats to a people their properties, cherished values and the inability of the nation to protect its citizenry. Peace and Peace Education (Teaching peace and managing peace teaching towards the culture of peace).

Peace is a vital element of progress in any institution. This is why the researcher wants to critically discuss how peace can be generated in institutions of higher education in Nigeria. Refocusing means changing emphasis or direction on something already in existence. It also means putting more effort into a particular activity, with the belief that it will make it more successful than the way it was existing before. Usen, (2015) opined that no society can effectively experience peace and enjoy sustainable development with out education. She mentioned that one of the cardinal philosophy' sof education in Nigeria is the development of a just and egalitarian society. She then pointed out that the insecurity challenge in Nigeria has indeed become a formidable one. From the researcher's view, education is the key factor required to develop skills

and gain knowledge in order to transform an individual to become a useful member of the society. Through education, societies produce the right type of citizens with sufficient skills and competencies to confront their problems and meet their aspiration (Ozochi and Ene 2018). The aim of refocusing security in universities is to ensure quality university education in a peaceful atmosphere. Peace is a concept of social friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. Peace brings about co-existence among students, teaching and non-teaching staff and the university community together. Peace is a situation or period of time where there is no war or violence in a particular area or place (Hornby, 2016). Omirin and Fadekemi (2015) maintained that Peace Education as the type of education that impacts in learners all norms, values and attitude that could bring about a conducive environment for human living. Oluwatoyin (2016) assert that Peace education is the process of equipping learners with tools for developing knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed for resolving differences and conflicts in non-violent ways and in living peacefully with oneself, others and the environment. Ikechukwu (2014) identified peace education as a process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioral changes that would enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural to resolve conflict peacefully and to create the condition conducive for peace. Asamonye, Osuagwu and Kalu (2014), also defined peace education as a deliberate attempt to educate children and adults in the dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peace-making skills in homes, school and communities throughout the world, using all the channels and instruments of socialization. She further opined that peace education is about the creation, sustenance and management of positive attitudes to peace among and between different levels and segments of the society. Peace is the expression of love, cooperation, unity and harmonious co-existence. It is the absence of war, injustice, violence, greed and bad governance. Peace education will enable students to adopt a positive attitude regarding the different issues they face in life and help develop skills necessary for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Peace education is important for cultivating the culture of peace. Peace education can be taught formally or informally through media, workshops, conference, adult literacy programmes and family education. Wikipedia (2019) sees the concept of peace as a political condition that ensures justice and social stability through formal and informal institutions, practices and norms. Peace includes national and emotional integration which implies a feeling of oneness among people (Maya, 2015). This emotional integration may go beyond all cultural differences and synthesis in terms of the different religions, castes, linguistic communities emotionally into a single unit. Peace is a broad process involving the upliftment of human consciousness and building of a truly human community at all levels, not out of compulsion.

### **Classifications of Peace**

Maya (2015) classified peace into various categories, thus:

- Negative Peace: Negative peace is the nonexistence of violent behaviour. A ceasefire (negotiation or cease fire) is an example of an action for negative peace. To generate negative peace, we have to look for ways to reduce and eradicate violence.
- Positive Peace: Positive peace is the absence of structural violence. It is the presence of social justice, and the absence of structural violence characterized by the presence of harmonious social relations.
- Cold and hot Peace: In cold war, there is mutual antagonism without actual engagement. In hot war, there is a condition of mutual hostility and active physical engagement.
- Inner Peace: Inner Peace involves peaceful mind and lack of fear. Peace of mind is generally associated with bliss and happiness.
- Outer Peace: Outer Peace has different dimensions or levels of peace such as social level, national level and international level. Peace in the family, peace in the society, peace in the nation, peace between nations and peace with this universe is the need of the hour. The concern for equality and social justice plays a significant role in maintaining outer peace.

Higher education is the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as universities and inter-university centers such as the Nigerian French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs) and Colleges of Education, Monotechnic, Polytechnics and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers, Institutes (NTI).

1. The National Policy on Education enunciates the objectives, standards, structures, strategies and management guidelines for achieving the national education goals in Nigeria. The policy must be operated within the framework of the overall philosophy of the nation.
2. **The overall philosophy of the nation** includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice and
  - b. to promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding.
3. **Nigeria's philosophy of education** is based on the following set of beliefs:
  - a. Education is an instrument for national development and social change:
  - b. Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria:
  - c. Education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society:
  - d. Education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, color, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges; and
  - e. Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society;

4. This philosophy of Nigeria is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

Most Nigerian tertiary institutions continually battle with social vices on their campuses. These vices are identified as key factors in academic performances of students and extra cost for governance. Common vices in tertiary institutions in Nigeria include cultism, alcoholism, rape, robbery, hooliganism, drug addiction, examination malpractice, prostitution (Whawo, 2015).

These social vices have their direct impact on both students and the institutions. They are as follows:

- It affects both the perpetrators and the victims psychologically, physically and academically;
- It affects the image and rating of the various institutions negatively;
- It also affects academic achievement;
- Often when fatal situations are recorded authorities are forced to close down schools leading to loss of time, waste of resources and lives and property (Nwideduh, 2003). This is a serious challenge for authorities of institutions of higher education and must be tackled to stem deteriorating standards in schools. If the mission and vision of higher institutions are to be achieved as cited in (Agi, 2017).

The goals of higher education shall be to:

- Contribute to national development through high level manpower training;
- Provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians;
- Provide high quality career counseling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work;
- reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labor market;
- Promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service
- Forge and cement national unity and
- Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Tertiary educational institutions shall pursue these goals through:

- quality student intake;
- quality teaching and learning;
- research and development;
- high standards in the quality of facilities, services and resources;
- staff welfare and development programmes;
- provision of a more practical based curriculum relevant to the needs of the labor market;

- generation and dissemination of knowledge, skills and competencies that contribute to national and local economic goals which enable students to succeed in a knowledge-based economy;
- a variety of flexible learning modes including full-time, part-time, block release, day-release, and sandwich programmes;
- access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund);
- Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) that is well structures, coordinated and supervised;
- Maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate regulatory agencies;
- an all-inclusive credible admissions policy for national unity;
- supporting affordable, equitable access to tertiary education through scholarships and students' loans;
- inter-institutional co-operation and linkages; and
- dedicated services to the community through extra-mural and extension services.

#### **Forms of Insecurity in Universities in Nigeria**

Some of the forms of insecurity that are rampant in Nigerian universities include the following:

- Cultism
- Riot
- Rape
- Student-community clashes
- Kidnapping of Lecturers and Students, etc.

#### **Factors that Cause Insecurity in Universities in Nigeria**

The following are the factors that can lead to insecurity in Nigerian universities:

- Inadequate facilities, hostels, libraries, etc.
- Issues of carrying capacity, where universities are over admitting students for their own gain to make more money for the school at the expense of the students.
- Not giving the students his/her chosen course upon admission
- Issues of bribery and corruption
- Admission racketeering, exchange of scores, etc by lecturers and non-academic staff,
- Lecturers demanding for money and sex for grades.
- Incompetence on the part of the administrators (most of whom are seeking for cheap popularity and therefore are not firm while dealing with the students; some would want to use the students who are well-connected with people in government to retain

their positions or even to attain other more important positions and as a result, allow the students to dictate what should happen or should not happen in the school.

- Bad influence in school by peers/ Negative Peer Pressure. This has given rise in recent times to proliferation of secret cults in many universities.
- Accommodation, food, water, electricity and intra-campus transportation, academic issues, students' activism, secret cults, staff union.
- Strike by Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), National Association of Student Union (NASU) and Non-Academic Staff Union. (NASU).

Nwafor (1998) cited in Ofor-Douglas (2008) provided the following problems of not having peace in higher institutions:

#### **1. Accreditation**

In most countries of the world, colleges and universities are approved by national ministries of education. Most states in this country have provisions, sometimes perfunctory, for the approval of colleges and universities. But the accrediting agency that designates these institutions which have met required standards of quality is unique to this country.

#### **2. Articulation Between the Secondary School and Higher Education:**

One of the common needs in educating children in the upper classes of the primary school is to provide curriculum opportunity to help each child grow continuously in basic academic skills, in understanding power of expression, in emotional stability, and in working with others. In the Nigerian educational system, this opportunity for continuous growth in academic and practical skills from primary to secondary, and from secondary to tertiary education is, in the main, absent because of lack of articulation between the three levels.

University admission requirements are made, unmindful of what goes on in the secondary schools in the country. What dominates the educational scene at this level is the passing of the West African School Certificate Examination. For instance, there are many students who never did any of the commercial and business subjects at the secondary school level, but gained admission into institutions of higher education to do Business Education courses. There are also students who are French majors in higher educational institutions in the country who never did French at the secondary school level. More ridiculous but lamentable is the fact that thousands of students in Nigerian secondary schools know very little or nothing of the admission requirements leading to various courses in the universities for which they send in applications for admission. Nwafor also pointed out that the situation is not made easier when universities, admission requirements are released, which indicate that the position of WASC with passes at credit level in at least five subjects or GCE O/L in five subjects (which must include English language) merits a secondary school student a chance to seek entry into universities. This gives secondary school students the impression that once onehe is

able to secure five or more credit passes in any subjects, one is eligible to pursue any courses in the Universities – from Linguistics to medicine and archaeology.

The consequences of this are not far to see as Students gain admission into the disciplines they are ill-prepared to face. As a result, they either fail badly their first sessional examinations; or if they succeed, they seek ways and means of switching over from one department to the other. Each time they succeed in switching over, they lose one academic year in the process. This pitiable situation need not exist if there has been a tidy connection between the secondary and the tertiary levels in the system of education in Nigeria. Secondary school students who studied in ill-equipped laboratories got admitted to universities where Chemistry 101, Physics 101, Biology 151, and so on, required prior knowledge of advance work in each of these areas. Students who know nothing about Psychology at the secondary school level are admitted to major in Psychology, and so on. No wonder then some, if not all the universities have mounted or are contemplating to mount remedial courses to combat this in equilibrium.

Despite the fact that these remedial courses cost money, time and energy, the problems remain unattached. For as long as the secondary schools and the universities remain aloof from each other, the wall of separation between academic excellence and practical skills shall forever be wider.

### **3. Admission into a university and Choice of Profession:**

Majority of people want university education for purposes of solving personal and communal problems. Most Nigerian youths, and even adults, struggle to gain admission into institutions of higher learning without clarifying their objectives first. Nwafor, strongly believe that if the seekers of higher education had planned ahead, they would have been admitted into areas where they can perform brilliantly, and later obtain satisfaction from working in their chosen fields after graduation.

It seems that the present attitude is to enter institutions of higher education by all means, irrespective of what one wants to do afterwards. This attitude breeds a lot of confusion into planned development of human resource when one gains admission into the universities or similar institutions. Some of these rumors are, first, that one can gain admission by means of corrupt practices such as monetary gifts or “gifts in kind”; secondly, that “good-fatherism” is an element in successful admission; thirdly that one has to lobby as many university personnel as possible to act as go-betweens. By launching out on these speculative maneuvers, the applicant often loses sight of the most important element in the process of seeking entrance into the higher institutions and that is: careful understanding of the admission requirements of the institutions in general, and the requirements of the areas of their majority study in particular

I am not making excuses for anyone, but the truth is that for one to gain admission into any university, anywhere, one must fulfil the admission requirements as approved by the senate of the university of one’s choice. This is the first and inescapable bundle



which must be cleared. Therefore, there is need to refocus security in higher institutions for peace in Nigeria.

### **Consequences of Lack of Peace in Higher Education**

The researcher gave the consequences of not refocusing peace for higher education. They include the following:

- **Disruption of academic activities:** Where there is insecurity in the university, academic activities will not be able to progress as both the staff and students will be afraid of the danger the insecurity problem might cause to their lives and property. This will cause them to avoid the university environment in order to ensure their safety.
- **Shortened academic sessions:** Insecurity will no doubt lead to the abrupt end of academic session. Staff and students would be advised by the university authority to go home for their safety so as to tackle the insecurity problem. Thus the academic session would be cut short and the students would spend more time in school in order to catch up with the work they missed.
- **Decrease in the quality assurance of the university:** Quality assurance in the university refers to ways of preventing mistakes and defects in the university system so as to achieve the goals of the institution without error. Insecurity in the university would not aid the university in achieving its institutional goals as it is characterized by defects and destruction.
- **Problem of partnership attraction:** Insecurity also instills fear in potential partners of the university thus making them withdraw from partnering up with the university. For example, a university with cultists who engage in violent cultist activities such as killing members of rival cult groups or killing innocent students will not attract partners who will aid in the funding of the university.
- **Wastage of resources:** Insecurity in the university would lead to a wastage of resources, both human and material. Insecurity is characterized by destruction and death thus a university that faces insecurity issues would be having rampant cases of loss of lives and destruction of school property. For example, where there is a riot, violence would be the order of the day and school properties, lecturers' cars, etc., will be destroyed. Some students may also lose their lives or get serious injuries as a result of the riot.

### **Ways in which Universities can Refocus Security for Peace**

The following include ways in which universities can refocus their security measures to achieve peace within the university. They include:

- The introduction of courses like Peace and Conflict Studies into the university's curriculum as a general course for all students would enable Nigerian universities to attain peace.
- Adequate facilities in hostels, libraries, etc., should be provided to avoid complaints and riots from occurring.

- Entrepreneurship programmes should be provided to keep students busy.
- Seminars should be held in the universities, teaching and informing the students to stay away from cultists and cult activities.
- Students should be made to sign an undertaking in their first year as undergraduates to refrain from engaging in violent and illegal activities. If they violate the undertaking, they should be expelled immediately.

### **Conclusion**

The objective of this discourse has been the necessity to refocus security in higher institutions for peace in Nigeria. Thus, the study examined the problems that bring about violence in the university and the consequence of these problems. It is of great importance that higher institutions understand that peace is a vital tool needed to ensure quality education. It argues that as violent activities continue, there is imperative for higher institutions to review their internal security architecture and place peace as its number one priority. This is simply because wherever there is peace there is progress. Although some measures have been taken by higher institutions to ensure peace, the truth remains that there is a lot more to be done if these higher institutions want to develop and compete globally.

### **The Way Forward**

The following if well placed will refocus security in higher institutions in Nigeria.

- Human and financial resources must be provided for the institutions of higher education to actualize the goals and objectives of peace within the campuses.
- There should be a student's forum where students can express their views and management should be able to find immediate solutions to their problems.
- There should be adequate facilities in the hostels, libraries etc.
- The environment should be made conducive for students in order for them to learn well.
- Members of the public are advised to be security conscious by closely monitoring the activities of their children. Also, the heads of both private and public schools are enjoined to increase security within schools and around the school environment.
- Promotion of peace education in the curriculum of various institutes of high education.
- The administrator should increase interest in the role of higher education in promoting peace and security in the universities.
- Students should be checked for dangerous items as they enter and exit the school by security personnel at every point of entrance to the university premises. Suspected ones should be checked immediately to maintain peace in the university.
- Provision of adequate facilities in the universities.

- The freshers and old students should be properly oriented and counselled by guidance and counseling counselors in the various universities to ascertain their level of emotional, psychological and social life. The ones that are depressed if found or noticed in their various department and faculties should immediately seek the help of a counselors to redressed and curb the issue.
- Students should be thoroughly searched for contra banned items (guns, knives, drugs, etc.) before entering into the hostels and lecture halls.
- The university administrators with the chief security officers should liaise with the host communities – (communities’ relationship) before and after the establishment of the universities in the host communities so that they would be part of the university system to maintain peace even around the university premises. Also made to enjoy the university facilities like the health center, the school halls for some of the upcoming event etc. to maintain peace in Nigerian universities.
- Students have to sign an undertaking before being admitted into the university. They should be aware that damaging any property in the school or hostel will be replaced by them.
- Dean of student affairs and the students should be having a forum from time to time to discuss and iron out their differences.
- Where there is protest or demonstration in the campus by staff or students, the university authority should advice the police not to use fire arms to tear gas the staff or students, so as to avoid loss of life and further escalation or evoke more problem in the universities.
- The danger of violence in the university should be incorporated into the student’s handbook and the consequences that will follow. This should be spelt out specifically and if possible, the VC should read them out openly to the students in a forum.
- There should be suggestion boxes displayed on various departmental faculties.
- The management should have grapevine in all departments, faculties and among students together information. Such information gathered should be kept top secret. and any ongoing rumor should as a matter of urgency be addressed in a forum before the issue gets out of hand.
- Incompetent staff of the university both academic and non-academic should be investigated and disciplined by the university disciplinary committee.
- The input in higher Education needs to be well refined, molded, built and transformed and turned out as output to the larger society as educated graduates.
- Re-orientation of students from negative peace to positive peace orientation in the universities is paramount.
- Peace studies should be manned as a course in the University separately from conflict resolution as a course.

- Enough assignment should be given to the students, group work and individual presentation and inter-departmental competition and award should be given to them as a way to motivate them.
- The best graduating students should be given scholarship or immediate employment for him to serve as a role model to others.
- Adequate two-way communication should be the key watch word for peace to reign in Nigerian university system.
- More facilities that are needed for the university should be provided in order to dissuade students from engaging in all forms of protests, demonstrations and violence in the campus. In this light, the inter and intra curricular activities like games should have adequate facilities for students to engage in sports.

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