

An Examination of Safe School Initiative Programme Implementation in Nigeria

Okani Doris Ugo-onyeka

Ph.D, Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja,
Nigeria, okanidoris@gmail.com

Abstract: The paper examined the challenges militating against Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria. Employing secondary data that were collected from online and print publications, the paper established that funding problem, insecurity, corruption, poor stakeholders participation and poor monitoring and evaluation system are some of the challenges militating against Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria. Based on this finding, the paper recommends that the Federal government should increase the funding of Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria. The Safe School Initiative Programme implementation policy and documents should be reform to specify the unique roles of the Federal government, State government and Local government in the implementation process. Technological resources should be deploy to monitor financial resources allocated for the Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria. The Federal, state and local government should participate the local and religious institutions for effective implementation. Government should curtain the insecurities problems in Nigeria by investing more in security apparatus of the country to support smooth Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria.

Keywords: Safe School Initiative Programme, Implementation



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1.0 Introduction

The insecurity in Nigeria has led to attacks on educational institutions, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. This insecurity has resulted in the abduction of students from various educational institutions in the region. Students, teachers and school administrators have been kidnapped and killed. For instance, it was reported that there was an abduction of secondary school girls in Chiko in the North-East. The committee found that some school girls from GSCE Chibok were abducted on the 14th of April, 2014 and that during the siege, 119 girls escaped, 276 were abducted while 57 of them managed to escape from the abductors when they were moved through a Zig-Zag route (Adetoyo, 2014; Muhammad, 2021). The above development has created serious concern among stakeholders in the education sector. As a result of the prevalence of abduction, Gever (2016) noted that different groups have carried out different protests under the dominant theme of 'Bring

back our girls.’ The campaigns have even gone viral on social media. One popular outcome of the Chibok girls’ abduction is the Safe School initiative. The above development shows that security is absent in Nigerian schools. Scholars like Ayeni and Beji (2018, p. 17) aptly capture what security is all about when they describe security as a state of not being financially, emotionally, psychologically and materially threatened. The role of security is germane for both teachers and students in schools to ensure that people do not develop disaffection in going to school to carry out their day-to-day activities.

In May, 2014, in response to the mass abduction of school children in the North Eastern States of Nigeria, according to Shaba, (2015), the Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) program was launched by the Government of Nigeria and the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, alongside with the Nigerian Global Business Coalition for Education and private sector leaders in Abuja (GCPEA 2022). The North-eastern Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented level of insurgency from 2009 till date onward, leading to a declaration of a ‘State of Emergency’ in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States in 2013. The first four months of 2014 saw a further escalation of the humanitarian and security situation. It is projected that out of the estimated 11 million Nigerians who live in the three states under a state of emergency, up to six million have been affected by the insecurity, with four million people in Borno state alone. As many as 1,500 individuals, including women and children, were killed in the first three months of 2014. Access by people and organizations to the affected communities is becoming increasingly difficult and, as a result, the populations most affected are often not reachable. The militant group, Boko Haram, has carried out violent attacks in the north-eastern parts of Nigeria. Thousands of Nigerians have been killed, and many more have been forced to flee their homes. Schools have been the primary target of the attacks. Since 2011, Boko Haram, whose name means ‘Western Education is Forbidden’, has expanded its attacks to the direct target of schools. It has resulted in the killing and abduction of hundreds of teachers and students and the destruction of school buildings and teaching materials. As a result of increased attacks on education, all schools in Borno State were closed from the 14th March 2014, and roughly 253,000 children were out of school in the 2013-14 school year (Borno SUBEB) (Muhammad, 2022; Shaba, 2015; Ugwu, 2014).

Shaba, (2015) observed that by the end of 2014, Adamawa, Yobe and Borno State Universal Basic Education authorities have reported a total of 338 schools destroyed. Also, at least 196 teachers and over 314 learners killed and more than 276 learners abducted. The situation has further fuelled the perception of schools as ‘danger zones’ and threatens the gains achieved by targeted school enrolment drives in northern Nigeria. In order to Safe the schools and ensure children are going to schools, the Nigerian government, private sector and international partners launched the Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) in May, 14, 2014. One of the cardinal goal of Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) programme is to provide security to educational institutions across the Northeast Nigeria and to ensure safety of children in the schools. The implementation of the Safe School Initiative Programme in Nigeria is facing several challenges. It is based on this that this paper examine the challenges militating against Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Safe School Initiative

In simple terms, the Safe School Initiative is an intervention aimed at ensuring that every child is offered a safe place to learn, play and realize their full potential, especially for children in emergencies and conflict. In essence, the intervention is to protect Nigeria children in schools from the insurgent attacks in the form of kidnapping, hostage taking, rape and outright killing by the hoodlums. Safe schools offer supervision, services and teaching to save children’s lives in the short term and help them develop in the long term. Safe school initiative was borne out of a series of research, campaigns and programmatic activities in collaboration between Their World and the

Global Business Coalition for Education to institutionalize safe schools and learning environments in times of conflict and emergencies (Their World, 2018; Manjo, 2024).

Safe School Initiative programme can be viewed as a programme designed for school (education) sustainability in Nigeria. It is a programme to provide a safe school environment to support the smooth implementation of teaching and learning in the schools. Safe School Initiative programme is an organized and planned educational programme to solve the problem of insecurity in educational institutions across Nigeria, especially in North-east Nigeria. Safe school initiative programme is a programme designed and formulated to provide a safe school environment for teachers, students and school administrators and to support them to carry out the task of teaching, learning and provision of academic services. Safe School Initiative programme is a special programme with the aims of protecting students from violence, bullying, harassment, kidnapping, and exposure to weapons and threats and guaranteeing a peaceful environment for the implementation of teaching and learning (Muhammad, 2023; Ogunode, Ayeni, & Daniels, 2024).

Manjo (n.d) cited Chester (2015), who observed the Safe Schools Initiative as a response to children and schools affected by militants in the North Eastern states of Nigeria. The safe school initiative entails a combination of the transfer of secondary students to other states; support to education in internally displaced persons camps; and pilot safe schools models including community mobilization. The management of safe school initiatives in schools in Nigeria involves a synergy approach between the school authority, community members, parents, government and other stakeholders in the school system. The safe school initiative also involves a combination of three main management approaches i.e. school-based interventions, community-based interventions to protect schools and special protection measures for some risk populations. Nigeria's minimum standard for safe school defines safe school as a system that promotes the protection of students from violence, exposure to weapons and threats, theft, bullying and the sales or use of illicit substances on school grounds. It further defines school safety as school and school-related activities in which learners are safe from violence, bullying, harassment and substance use (NMS, 2021).

The benefits of the Safe School Initiative Programme according to (Ogunode, et al (2024) include the following;

1. Provision of safe school environment;
2. Ensure smooth implementation of educational services;
3. Guarantee completion of educational system;
4. Reduction in educational wastage such as school closure;
5. Support achievement of educational objectives;
6. Promote students' academic achievement and outcome;
7. Provide a healthy and stress-free learning and teaching environment for both teachers and students;
8. Support implementation of teaching and learning programme;
9. Support the execution of extra-curriculum activities in schools; and
10. Ensure effective school administration and management.

The essence of the Safe School Initiative Programme is to achieve human security for students, teachers, and other stakeholders of Schools. It should be noted that the human security that the Safe School Initiative Programme strive for is yet to be achieved by the larger society where Nigerian schools exist.

3.0 Method

Examination of Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria is a position paper that adopted a systematic literature review-based method. The method allows to collect and review the related previous literature from various online sources. With the aid of digital platform, the researcher collected secondary information to generate knowledge on this topic from 2015-2025. The position paper followed qualitative narrative design method. The researcher has visited different online sites to collect the previous literature and analyze the literatures on the Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria. The previous findings are critically analyzed and presented in different themes on Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria (Adapted from Ogunode, 2025d).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion

This output of the literatures on the Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria presents an in-depth study and result the can infer conclusion on the topic. The study includes; online publication; conference paper, journals sorted from reputable international journals such as CEON, Elsevier, Hindawi, JSTOR, IEEE, Learn Techlib, SAGE, Nebraska and Springer.

Exclusion

Also, the literature review excludes information from edited books, preprints, monographs, information below 2015 and book chapters (Adapted from Ogunode, 2025d).

4.0 Result and Discussion Challenges Militating against Safe School Initiative Programme in Nigeria

There are many challenges facing implementation Safe School Initiative Programme in Nigeria. Some of these problems include; funding problem, insecurity, corruption, poor stakeholders participation and poor monitoring and evaluation system

Funding problem

The funding challenges facing safe school initiative programme implementation in Nigeria have been a major obstacle in its success. The lack of adequate funds has resulted in delays and limitations in the scope of the programme (Ogunode, Olowonefe. Jegede. & Musa, 2022). Despite the government's efforts to secure funding from various sources, the demand for resources far exceeds the supply. The insufficient funds have directly impacted the implementation of the programme, leading to inadequate training for teachers and staff, limited resources for the provision of basic amenities, and inadequate infrastructure for school safety. This has also resulted in a lack of awareness and education on the importance of safe schools, which has further hindered the success of the initiative. The consequences of inadequate funding for safe school initiative programme implementation in Nigeria are grave. The safety and well-being of students and teachers are at risk, as they do not have access to proper facilities and resources. This can also lead to higher drop-out rates, affecting the overall education system in the country (Idris, 2018; Uloko, & James, 2022).

Insecurity

The implementation of the Safe School Initiative Programme in Nigeria has been greatly affected by the issue of insecurity. This problem not only poses a threat to the safety and well-being of students and teachers, but also hinders the successful execution of the programme (Kirsch 2018). The constant fear of attacks and violence in schools has resulted in low enrollment rates, inadequate infrastructure, and a disrupted learning environment (Ogunode 2024 etal; Musa, 2022).

Corruption

The Safe School Initiative (SSI) programme was developed as a means of ensuring the safety and security of students in schools across Nigeria (Ihekoronye, & Opara, J2021). The major challenges facing this programme is corruption. Corruption in Nigeria has been a long-standing issue and it has had a detrimental effect on various sectors, including the education sector. The main ways that corruption impacts the SSI programme is through the mismanagement of funds (Voice of America 2018). The government allocates a significant amount of resources towards the implementation of the programme and to ensure the safety of students. However, corrupt individuals often siphon off these funds, leaving a significant gap in the resources available for the SSI programme. This directly affects the success and effectiveness of the programme in ensuring safe schools for students. Moreover, corruption also affects the quality of infrastructure in schools. The SSI programme aims to provide safe and secure buildings for students to learn in. However, corrupt practices such as bribery and embezzlement lead to the use of substandard materials in the construction of school buildings, making them susceptible to collapse and endangering the safety of students (Ayeni, Andeshi, & Uzoigwe, 2022; Premium Times 2020).

Poor Stakeholders participation

The implementation of safe school initiatives in Nigeria is currently facing numerous challenges, particularly in relation to the involvement of poor stakeholders. These stakeholders often face significant socio-economic barriers that hinder their ability to fully support and participate in the program. This, in turn, has a negative impact on the successful implementation of the program. One major challenge is the lack of financial resources among poor stakeholders (Ogunode, & Akimki, 2023). Many of these stakeholders are unable to contribute financially towards the safe school initiative, making it difficult to fund vital resources such as infrastructure, training, and equipment. Without sufficient funding, the program struggles to reach its full potential and provide a safe learning environment for students. Stakeholders often face a lack of representation in decision-making processes. This can be due to a range of factors, including low education levels and limited access to information. As a result, their perspectives and needs may not be adequately considered, leading to ineffective or even counterproductive strategies being implemented (Ogundele & Ogundele, 2021; Ogunode, Ayoko, & Orifah, 2022).

Poor monitoring and evaluation system

The Safe School Initiative (SSI) was implemented in Nigeria to promote a safe and conducive learning environment for students (Manjo, 2024). However, poor monitoring and evaluation have been identified as major challenges hindering the successful implementation of this program. Without proper monitoring and evaluation, it becomes difficult to keep track of the progress made and identify areas that need improvement. This can result in the program not achieving its intended goals and objectives. Without a comprehensive evaluation, it is challenging to assess the effectiveness and impact of the program. This can lead to the mismanagement of resources and a waste of valuable time and effort (Ayeni, Sani, & Haruna, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to address the issue of poor monitoring and evaluation in order to ensure the successful implementation of the Safe School Initiative in Nigeria (Ogunode, Samuel, & Pajo 2020).

4.1 Findings

The findings revealed that funding problem, insecurity, corruption, poor stakeholders participation and poor monitoring and evaluation system

4.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper assessed the challenges militating against Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria. The paper concluded that funding problem, insecurity, corruption,

poor stakeholder participation and poor monitoring and evaluation system are some of the challenges militating against Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria.

Based on this finding, the paper recommends that the Federal government should increase the funding of Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria. The Safe School Initiative Programme implementation policy and documents should be reform to specify the unique roles of the Federal government, State government and Local government in the implementation process. Technological resources should be deploy to monitor financial resources allocated for the Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria. The Federal, state and local government should participate the local and religious institutions for effective implementation. Government should curtain the insecurities problems in Nigeria by investing more in security apparatus of the country to support smooth Safe School Initiative Programme implementation in Nigeria.

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