INSECURITY AS A DEBILITATING THREAT TO THE FLOURISHING OF BASIC EDUCATION IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract
Basic education is the foundation of the all-round well-being, growth, and development of any nation or society. Failing to pay serious attention to this level of education invariably portends societal disaster, as the society ultimately reaps a generation of youths prone to incivility. Violence and social vices concomitant with such incivility often culminate in insecurity. In an atmosphere of insecurity, the teaching–learning process cannot take place, let alone flourish. This paper revisits the much-talked-about security situation in Anambra State, southeastern Nigeria. It examines the extent to which the status quo has affected basic education in the state. The study acknowledges that the government has taken some measures to address the situation but maintains that more can still be done to adequately position this crucial level of education on a firmer and more sustainable footing.
Key words: Insecurity, Basic Education, Debilitating Threat, Anambra State

INTRODUCTION

Babs Fafunwa (d. 2010), the first Nigerian to earn a Ph.D in Education (as early as 1955), and from the United States of America, was ingenious. In his words, "Education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives" (Fafunwa, 1967, in Ezeani, 2013). It is strongly embedded in Fafunwa's philosophy of education that education as a process should inculcate, as well as transmit culture to ensure the continuity and growth of the society, and disseminate knowledge as a tool for both "social control" and ensuring "national direction" for any given society, like Nigeria.

Thus, education is essentially aimed to nurture the young into men and women of character, armed with requisite competencies and skills for contributing their respective quota in social reconstruction and harmony, ultimately leading to societal growth and development. It goes without saying that the formative years of a person (say ages 1–12, 13) are crucial to what and who each of us becomes in life. Any shortfalls in the education process in this stage have far-reaching, at times, irremediable effects. Any surprise then, that basic education (Basics 1–6 and JSS 1–3) as obtains today in the Nigerian Education System demands the pivotal attention and concern of all stakeholders in the education industry. This paper casts an expository cum critical glance at how seriously we have accepted and implemented the foregoing hard truth in Anambra State, especially as it relates to the insecurity and the operations of basic education in our environment.

Literature Review

Some studies have been done on the impact of insecurity in the South-Eastern Geo-political zone of Nigeria on education. In 2020, Obi, Onuselogu and Ughamadu carried out a research on managing conflict and security challenges in 21st century secondary schools in Anambra State. Adopting a descriptive survey design, and with validated questionnaire as instrument for data collection, findings, after data analysis, showed that kidnapping, cultism, raping female students, among others, were some of the conflict and security challenges confronting secondary schools in Anambra State.

In 2021, Manafa and Ohamobi did an "Evaluation of the security management practices in public secondary schools in Anambra State." Simple random sampling technique was used to select Aguata and Otuocha Education Zones for the study. Findings revealed that, among others, sufficient security devices were not available in the schools; inadequate fund and lack of effective communication networks negatively impacted security in the school environments.

Earlier in 2021, at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka**,** Okafor, O.E. presented a paper titled *"Insecurity and girl child education of secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria."* Again a survey research design was employed aimed at examining the relationship between insecurity and girl child education. Analysis of data collected through questionnaire revealed, among other things, a statistically significant relationship between character training and cultism. The conclusion of the study was that "cultism, rape and abduction have altered the girl child education of secondary schools in Anambra State."

In 2023, Uwaezuoke, M.-R.I. discussed *"Security education in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria for achieving sustainable development goal".* The study investigated security education in public secondary schools in Anambra State towards achieving sustainable development goals. Using a self-designed questionnaire as instrument for data collection, and after data analysis, it was revealed, among others, that get-rich-quick syndrome, cultism, joblessness and bad governance constituted the perceived causes of insecurity in Anambra State.

A major recommendation of the study was that guidance and counselling services should be intensified for students in secondary schools as a measure of re-attuning their minds "to embrace hard work and shun illegitimate money-making practices".

In 2024, Chukwujama, G.C. studied *"Insecurity in the South East and its possible solutions: using Anambra State Nigeria as a focus, 1999–2023."* The study aimed at examining causes and effects of insecurity in the South East, using a descriptive survey design, and collecting data through validated questionnaire and oral interviews concentrated on Anambra State. Analysis of the data collected showed that a number of factors contributed to insecurity in the state, including activities of non-state actors and youth unemployment. The study concluded that this phenomenon is complex and multifaceted, "requiring immediate and sustained interventions".

Again in 2024, Anasodo, R.O.; Chioke, S.C.; and Obiaju, J., discussed *"Empirical understanding of the problem of insecurity in Anambra State from 1999 – 2024." The aim was to investigate the persistence of insecurity and recommend measures* for arresting it in the state. Employing questionnaire as instrument for data collection, the researchers established five key causes of insecurity, recommending appropriate five respective panacea. Concluding that "Nigeria has retrogressed in all areas because the political gladiators has (sic) refused to tackle the problem of insecurity", the study recommended that *"Anambra State should run a responsive government that effectively tackles the factors that led to the wanton rate of insecurity in the state through well implemented: poverty alleviation programmes, education for all initiative, mass employment of qualified but unemployed graduates, and revitalization of the security operatives in the state."*

To summarize, all the studies thus reviewed have significant connections with our discourse. And they are of good service to projecting the value and import of the study. However, so valuable as they are to exposing the security situation in Anambra State and its impact on education, none of them handled exclusively the setback which basic education has suffered in the state due to insecurity. This is the gap which the present study aims to handle, rather critically.

What is Education/Basic Education?
Education is a very familiar word, seemingly simple but dense with meaning. It's root is in Latin language, originating from the Latin word "educo-educare-educavi-educatum" which, translated in English, is "to bring up", "to lead out", and interpreted as "to lead out from ignorance", "to bring forth potential". This root thus highlights the idea of education as a process of drawing out or nurturing the latent potentials within somebody or an individual. Ezeani (2013) accordingly defines education as a "systematic process of giving (by teachers) and receiving (by learners) of instruction."

We are therefore right to aver that education is an action-packed involvement, coordinated by one who previously had acquired the art through a rigorous training, for effecting specified changes in the learners, preparing the learners as change-agents in society. Hence, UNESCO (2000) puts it succinctly that "education refers to the total process of developing human ability and behaviour." We can conceptualise it as that organised, sustained act of instructing designed to transfer a combination of knowledge, skills and understanding which are valuable for active participation in life.

In line with the foregoing, Abubakar (2013) conceives education as that systematic procedure which deals with mental, physical, psychological and social development of citizens of a given society, of course involving both transfer and transformation of culture. It is the total process which gives people "new eyes to see both the problems and possibilities (concerning their situation) and set the stage for taking creative action" (Palmer, Zajonc and Scribner, 2010).

The starting point of education as here conceptualised is known as basic education in the Nigerian system of education. And, as the name indicates, it is at the basis, the foundation of all levels of the formal education structure in Nigeria.
Basic education in Nigeria thus refers to the foundational education provided to children from primary school to junior secondary school. It is a critical stage in the education process which is calculatedly aimed at laying the

groundwork for all future learning and all-round development of the child. Today, in the Nigerian context, basic education spans the six-year period of primary school through the first three years in the secondary. While primary education tends to focus on the acquisition of basic literacy, numeracy and social skills by the child, the junior secondary education builds on the foregoing, introducing more subjects in the form of an enlarged curriculum, which in turn prepares the students for senior secondary or vocational training. As important as this level of education is, as we have seen, it is sad to note that its operation/development is encumbered by a plethora of problems including teacher shortage, infrastructural deficit and mismanagement of funds and resources through corruption. But the latest and most threatening of these debilitating phenomena is insecurity.

Insecurity as Hindrance to Basic Education
 It is a general problem in the operation of education in general and basic education in particular across Nigeria. Areas mostly affected, however, are the North-East and North-Central geo-political zones via Boko Haram activities and the attendant destruction of lives and property, kidnapping and other forms of banditry.The South-East geo-political zone, within which is Anambra State, has had its fair share of disruption of the education process through some forms of insecurity quite different from what is happening in the two Northern zones mentioned.
From our knowledge of securitisation theory as propounded by Waever, Buzan and Wilde (known popularly as societal security theorists) in 1998, and as contained in Nwosu, Ukwunna, Ebekozie and Ukwunna (2019), insecurity can rightly be characterised as an existential threat, especially to basic education in Anambra State, requiring immediate solution or else the consequences will be a colossal loss of time in keeping pace with fast-growing trends in contemporary times in the area of teaching and learning.There is no gain-saying the fact that insecurity has significantly impacted basic education growth and development in Anambra State.
A study carried out in 2023 Eziora O.P.; on Effects of security challenges in Anambra State on educational development of public junior secondary school students in Oyi Local Government Area of Anambra State came out with very disheartening findings which include that:
- Security challenges affect educational development and academic performance of secondary school students, who are ordinarily more attentive in class when they feel secured.
- Security challenges in Anambra affect the output and overall productivity of teachers who, even if reluctantly, absent themselves from work.
- The Monday "sit-at-home" phenomenon drastically reduces the days of schooling, making it quite difficult to finish termly schemes of work.

It is not surprising, therefore, that, as Ojukwu and Nwanna (2015) averred, unsecured school environments affect not only the teachers but also the learners psychologically and academically, as lateness to school and a certain level of emotional instability will be the prevailing atmosphere. Thus, insecurity is a very strong variable negatively impacting basic education in Anambra State.

Besides cultism, kidnapping, and abduction, which are common forms of insecurity threatening the education business across Nigeria, the activities of criminals designated variously as unknown gunmen, members of Eastern Security Network (ESN), Ebube Agu, and others, including the Fulani cattle rearers or herdsmen operating in Anambra State, constitute unique security challenges to the flourishing of basic education in the state.

Williams (2000), quoted in Obiechina, Abraham and Nwogu (2018), rightly observed that one major link between education and security is that the impact of the new security threats to education are exposed and tackled through education itself. There is no doubt that insecurity in an environment brings a lot of negative vibes which run counter to the well-functioning of the school system. Thus, no meaningful teaching-learning process can flourish in an atmosphere of insecurity as witnessed in Anambra State in recent years (cf. Ughamadu and Onuselogu, 2015). It is our hope, all the same, that the higher education system in Nigeria, where security studies is done as a course should be able to substantiate this claim of 'service link' between education itself and the impact of the new security threats to education. And this can most suitably be done by experts in security studies evaluating the extent to which basic education has been hampered in Anambra State. Among the areas these experts may like to look into as per effects of insecurity on basic education in the State are:
- Shortage of teachers, whereby educators feel very reluctant to accept posting to areas prone to insecurity. They are more likely to abandon the teching profession than risk their lives.
- Limited access to education for those at the basic education age in the state is another issue. This is more disturbing in some local government areas where insecurity is on high level.
- Academic performance of pupils and students at the basic education level in the state should also be studied. The reason is that insecurity creates an unstable and stressful learning environment that is antithetical to academic excellence.
- Finally, there is need to consider the rate of decline in enrollment into basic education in the State. Parents are becoming increasingly reluctant to enroll their children (and wards), more especially the girls in schools

due to fear of insecurity. Again this is more prevalent in the areas of the State where insecurity is more common.

Any measures taken so far?
Besides the truth as stated in the cause of this study that solution to the new security threats to education should be provided by education itself, what we can describe as 'extrinsic' or 'extraneous' solutions are also available. And Anambra State Government is not resting on its oars regarding security threat to the flourishing of basic education in the State.

There have been concerted efforts at addressing the phenomenon of insecurity in general in Anambra State, and as it affects basic education in particular. The efforts target improving security to ensure a conducive environment for education in the state. Basic education has received a fair share in this regard. Besides the contributions of the previous administration in the area of security, there are fresh measures put in place by the current government. Where the former established Operation Nkpochapu to combat crime, the latter has come up with Operation Udo Ga-Achi. These are forms of community policing which go a long way to improve security in the state.
There is in place also a joint task force comprising the army, the police, state security services and even local community vigilante outfits as a collaborative effort to beef up security in Anambra, thereby ensuring a secure environment for teachers, pupils and students to freely engage in the teaching-learning business. Installation of CCTV cameras at strategic locations, provision of mobile surveillance vans are measures taken to enhance security in the state.

To remedy the harms already done to basic education in the state, government has taken strategic steps. As it concerns shortage of teachers owing to voluntary disengagement from teaching for reasons of insecurity, some 8,115 teachers were recruited between 2022 and 2024. In the area of poor enrollment and/or dropping out of school due to fear of insecurity in the state, governments free education policy (though criticized for being partial or parochial) has increased public school enrollment by about 45% between 2022 and 2025. There is no doubt, therefore, that the appropriate authorities and stake holders in the education industry are on their toes to rescue basic education from total collapse in Anambra State.

Critical Evaluation/Conclusion
The process connected with mitigating any kind of threat to man and his values and valuables is ascribed the name 'security'. The absence of such is a situation of insecurity. The traditional school of thought admits that safety from danger and absence of infiltration of criminal characters or dangerous elements into a society from outside its borders mean that such a society is secure. This realist paradigm has its primary referent as the state, not necessarily the citizens (Abolurin, 2010). For Nwolise (2017), this understanding of security is 'underdeveloped' and therefore requires rehabilitation.

The non-traditional school of thought, on the other hand, propounds a wider and indeed deeper understanding of security, arguing that issues of environmental, political, economic and purely social disorder are apt to endanger the lives and property of members of a society. Such situations, the school insists, should be of greater security concern than acts of external invasion and infiltration (Afolabi, 2015). It is the emphatic conclusion of the school that security should be essentially oriented towards human emancipation. The prevailing idea and action in any well-meaning society concerning security should therefore be geared towards an atmosphere that allows members thereof to freely access all their needs, education inclusive, without constraints.

Security should thus be understood fundamentally as the basic-level situation for a successful struggle for survival (Ocheche, 2019). Akintunde and Musa (2016) were right, therefore, when they explained security as a basic human need which contributes to effective learning. From all we adduced above, it is clear that the concept of security is not merely physical. It rather incorporates the idea of environmental factors which instill peace of mind in members of a society, enabling them to function optimally (Nwosu, Ukwunna, Ebokaiwe and Ukwunna, 2019). And whatever is contrary to all we have said so far as the meaning of security means insecurity: "the state of being open to danger, or threat, lack of protection" (cf: Oxford Languages, google.com).

This paper diagnoses that the security situation in Anambra State falls short of the quality of atmosphere necessary for basic education to flourish. Anambra State won nine major national awards at the 2025 President's Teachers' and School Excellence Awards ceremony. Indeed Woliwo Primary School II, Onitsha bagged the Overall Best School in the Whole of Nigeria. The State government also approved N6.154 billion counterpart funding for Universal Basic Education (UBE) projects for the 2022-2024 period. This action unlocked the 12.308 billion available for the education industry from Universal Basic Education Commission (cf: thecable.ng; von.gov.ng;

vanguardngr.com). Whether the fund has been accessed we don't have information about. If accessed, has it been disbursed and spent on basic education is another question.

From all indications, however, the glorious chapters of basic education in the state tend to emanate from the urban and semi-urban schools. These centres could be regarded as 'secure', from many considerations: Conventional security operatives are on hand to address any breaches this direction. Teachers generally shelve their fears of insecurity and attend to their duties. Most parents and guardians do the same and send, or release their children and wards to school. These situations are unfortunately different in our rural areas. And in these hinterlands exist a high number of our basic education schools, including the migrant schools. Happenings in these insecurity-prone areas pull down any successes we may pride ourselves on in the area of basic education. In the home, ones backyard, ones kitchen and conveniences/rest rooms define the quality of hygiene of the entire household. The schools in our rural areas constitute the most important defining variables in establishing the successes and failures of the basic education programme in Anambra State. And a stitch in time saves nine!

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