

EFFECT OF THE FULANI HERDSMEN CRISES ON SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA: THE PERSPECTIVE OF DECLINING SCHOOL ENROLMENT IN OMALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examines the effect of the Fulani herdsmen crises on school enrolment in schools in Omala Local Government Nigeria. The paper discusses the concept of school enrolment and general factors that affect school enrolment. The paper also describes Omala local government area before the crises, took a look at the concept of Fulani herdsmen, the Fulani herdsmen in Omala Local Government Nigeria, Fulani herdsmen crises in Omala Local Government Nigeria and the effect on the people of Omala Local Government and school enrolment in particular to include: decrease in enrolment, absenteeism, poor turnout of teachers to schools during and after the crises and set back to the educational advancement of the area. The paper suggested ways of boosting school enrolment which include: restoring peace in the area, provision of security, reconstruction of school building destroyed during the carnage and empowering the people of the area for productivity.

Keywords: Fulani Herdsmen crises, School Enrolment, Nigeria, Education Management

INTRODUCTION

Education is crucial to the development of individual and the nation. Its continuous growth and quality improvement depend on a number of factors; some of these factors are provision of infrastructures, quality of teachers, payment of teachers' salary on time, provision and constant revision of the curriculum and provision of adequate funds for infrastructures Ogbonnaya (2013). The factors mentioned above are paramount and can bring the desired growth where they are pursued and provided. On the other hand, where there is any inhibition and they are not pursued, it stifles growth and slows down the education process. Apart from the factors mentioned above, there are some other factors that could stifle the process of growth in the education industry, these factors are incidental factors identified by the researchers. Incidental factors in the context of this work include natural disaster, insurgencies, and crises from the Fulani herdsmen. When there is natural disaster in an area, it affect enrolment because many people will run from their place of abode to a safer place, when there is insurgencies for instance, Boko Haram in Nigeria or the Fulani Herdsmen crises, many people will fled the area for safety, this affect the population of the area generally, school enrolment and the quality of educational improvement.

There has been public outcry and expression of worry over the declining school enrolment in Nigeria and Omala local government in particular. This inturn affect educational quality improvement in the area and Nigeria. School enrolment has been an area of discourse neglected by researchers, but which has now become a force to be reckoned with as far as growth in the education sector is concerned. In most rural area across the country, for over two decade, there has been a steady decline in school enrolment (Obi, 2001). This decline in school enrolment is further worsened by some of the incidental factors mentioned above. In Omala local government, Nigeria, for over three years now, the researcher observed that there has been a steady decline in school enrolment as a result of crises between the Fulani cattle herdsmen and the indigene of Omala local government area, some of the major towns and commercial cities in the local government area were attacked and people fled for their life. This crisis has affected school enrolment, the quality of teaching and educational quality improvement advocated for all in this millennium. The Federal government of Nigeria and authorities of Omala Local Government have made attempt to ensure that peace returned to the Local Government area and that the internally displaced person return from camp to their homes, but this seems not to have yielded meaningful results as most people are yet to return. This in turn affects the population of the area and school enrolment. The need for normalcy in Omala local government Nigeria for improved school enrolment necessitates this study.

Concept of School Enrolment

School enrolment refers to the number of pupils/students that a school registered over a period of time (Obi, 2001). The author further state that enrolment determine the viability of a school, where the school enrolment is growing, there is hope of continuity, on the other hand, where there is steady decrease in enrolment, the school may fold up with time. In Nigeria, primary and secondary schools enrolment are categorized into male and female. In a school that is purely male school only boys are enrolled, while in the school that is purely female, only female pupils//students are enrolled. According to Oguche (2011) school enrolment can be positive or negative. It is positive when the enrolment is increasing, while it is negative, when it is decreasing. Positive school enrolment is desirable by all stakeholders in the education industry as this will guarantee continuity and bring about the attainment of stated educational objectives.

Many schools and colleges set enrolment goals overtime to ensure growth in enrolment and continuity in the school system. These goals can be attained through a combination of academic programmes, institutional academic plan, aggressive marketing of academic programmes, student services and institutional strategic plans. Many factors affect school enrolment, these factors are discussed below.

Factors that affect School Enrolment

Government Policy: The government of a particular state or nation may decide to introduce free education as part of her obligation to the people, this bring about increase in enrolment, while introduction of school fees and other levies bring about decrease in enrolment. In Nigeria, the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 (FGN,NPE 2004) by president Olusegun Obasanjo the then Military Head of States of the Federal republic of Nigeria has led to increased school enrolment in primary and secondary schools. This is because parents that cannot afford to pay school fees had opportunity to send their children to school. On the other hand when school fees was introduced in primary and secondary schools in some states in Nigeria, enrolment decreased, this is because most parents cannot afford to pay the fees for their children, because of poverty.

In addition, performance of students in external examinations can either increase or decrease school enrolment. Akagwu (2012) note that when students perform well in a particular school in external examinations like West African Examinations Council (WAEC),National Examination Council (NECO) and National Board for Technical Education (NABTEB),students will run to such school to register for external examination, this will boost the enrolment of that school. The reverse is the case where students don't perform well in external examinations, such school will be deserted by students. In Nigeria, emphasis is on paper qualification,

candidate prefer schools were they will pass their external examinations no matter the cost. However, teachers, principals and proprietors of schools should beware of their school being labeled as miracle centre.

Parent/Guardian Transfer: Parent especially the working class can be transferred from one workstation to another. This affects enrolment of that school (Oguche & Rabah, 2001). When a child is leaving in favour of a particular school, enrolment of the school the child is going will increase, while the enrolment of the school he is leaving will decrease.

Managerial Ability: Managerial ability of school administrator brings about increase or decrease in school enrolment (Ochai, 2010). The ability of a school administrator to put together the available human and material resources in a school give room to efficiency increased enrolment. Proper management of human and material resources brings about discipline and academic excellence. This attracts parent and guardian to send their children to such school. On the other hand, where the leadership is not efficient, there will be indiscipline, the result is decrease in enrolment.

Furthermore, village politics affect school enrolment. (Obi, 2001) people in the same neighborhood may decide to direct their children to attend a particular school, at the expense of other schools around, this can boost the enrolment of the school that was given priority. On the other hand, the school that was not favoured will have decreased enrolment. Village politics abound all over in Nigeria due to communal clashes and land dispute as a result of the land tenure system that characterized communities in Nigeria. This has constantly affected school enrolment.

Apart from the above points, Old Boys Associations (OBA) have strong influence on school enrolment (Ogbonnaya, 2013). People that finished from a particular school can encourage their children, friends and relation to attend the school they finished from. This is bound to increase the enrolment of that school. On the other hand, where the activities of old boys are not pronounced, there will be increase in enrolment.

In addition rural urban migration has effect on school enrolment (Akpa, 2003). The more people migrate to urban area, all things being equal, the more the school enrolment. On the other hand, the place where people migrate from will have reduced enrolment. In Nigeria, migration is high due to Boko Haram insurgencies in North Eastern Nigeria, flooding in parts of the country and activities of the Fulani Herdsmen.etc. These factors affect school enrolment from time to time.

Birth rate has a very strong influence on school enrolment. (Akpa, 2003) note that birth rate is the number of birth per thousand of the total population. He state that the higher the birth rate, the higher the enrolment, the lower the birth rate, the lower the enrolment, this is because

surviving children must be enrolled in schools. In Nigeria, birth rate has increased over the years because of the practice of polygamy, improved medical facility and personal hygiene. This has positive effect on school enrolment.

Finally, infant mortality can have a very serious influence on school enrolment. Infant mortality is the rate at which children die; the higher the infant mortality, the lower the enrolment, the lower the infant mortality, the higher the enrolment. In Nigeria, infant mortality has reduced because of the introduction of immunization, availability and access to medical facility and reduction in superstitious believe. Children that are alive will have right to education. This has led to increased enrolment.

In addition to the general factors that affect school enrolment mentioned above, the researcher observed that for over three years now in Omala Local Government Nigeria, the Fulani herdsmen's crises has caused a very serious decline in school enrolment, leading to poor quality educational improvement and retardation in growth and educational advancement. This factor is the focus of this study.

Omala Local Government, Nigeria

Omala Local Government Area Nigeria is one of the Local Government Areas out of the 23 Local Government Areas in Kogi state and out of the 774 Local Government Areas in Nigeria. The local government area was created in 1991 out of the then Ankpa Local Government Area, it is located in the eastern part of Kogi state Nigeria with head quarter in Abejukolo. The local government area is inhabited by the Igala speaking people of Kogi state and shares boundary with Idoma speaking people of Benue and Nasarawa state. According to a community leader in the area Ahmed Suleiman Umanu (2016) the major occupation of the people of the area is Agriculture. The people of the area took advantage of the vast land resources to grow crops like cassava, rice, maize and wheat at subsistence level while some took to fishing because of the availability of River Benue. The local government is also known for its commercial activities. The abundant natural resources like fertile land, rivers, forestry and solid mineral support commercial activities. The availability of these resources brought about influx of people into the local government area, majorly Bagana town and its environs to carry out commercial activities. According to a community leader in the area Joseph (2015), the United African Company (UAC) was a major exporter of agricultural cash crops like cotton, palm oil and palm kernel produced by farmers in the local government area, different ethnic group take advantage of the availability of the company to market their products, some of these traders eventually settled down in Bagana town to carry out their business activities. He further stated that the local government

area had been peaceful, despite the ethnic co-habitation until the outbreak of crises between Bagana people, and the Fulani cattle herdsman in 2014.

The Fulani Herdsmen

The Fulani herdsman were among the early settlers in the local government area who took advantage of the vast land to carry out their grazing activities. They are traditionally a nomadic, pastoralist, trading people herding cattle, goats and sheep across the vast hinterland of their domain, keeping somewhat separate from the local agricultural populations. According to (zetadboards) the origin of the Fulani people is deepened in mystery with widely divergent opinions. Many scholars believed that they are of the Judaco-Syrian origin. However, it is generally recognized that Fulani descended from nomads from both North Africa and sub Sahara Africa, then they spread in all countries in west Africa including Nigeria. In Nigeria, they are mostly found in the North Eastern part of the country, The Fulani began to enter the Hausa country in the 13th century and by the 15th century they were tending cattle, sheep, and goats in Borno as well. The Fulani came from the Senegal River valley, where their ancestors had developed a method of livestock management. Some Fulbe converted to Islam as early as the 11th century and settled among the Hausa, from whom they became racially indistinguishable. There they constituted devoutly religious, educated elite who made themselves indispensable to the Hausa kings as government advisers, Islamic judges, and teachers. Their sedentary life and the quest for grazing land might be responsible for their spread in almost all the states of Nigeria including Omala local government.

Fulani Herdsmen in Omala Local Government Area

The presence of the Fulani herdsman in Omala Local Government Area of Kogi state dates back to the era of colonial rule in Nigeria. A renowned educationist and a community leader in Omala Local Government Area, Joseph (2015) gave a comprehensive history of the Fulani herdsman presence in Omala Local Government Area thus 'the coming of the United Africa Company (UAC) as a trading unit on River Benue at Bagana in Omala local government area encouraged the influx of other ethnic nationalities into Bagana (The Hausa and Fulani inclusive) to take advantage of the trade especially in cash crop. To ease the communication problems arising from the multiplicity of tribal marketers and tax collection exercises, the district head of Ife then appointed a Hausaman to be a middleman between the white traders and the locals as the only language understood by the white traders and the their agents were English and Hausa. The Hausa brought in the Fulani's as their immediate neighbors. The Fulani came in

with their cattles as this was the means of their livelihood taking advantage of the vast land resources in the local government area'.

THE FULANI HERDSMEN CRISES IN OMALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT NIGERIA

A community leader in Omala local government Nigeria, a retired Army colonel, Baba (2015) gave a comprehensive account of the causes of Fulani herdsmen crises and Omala indigene. According to him, the Hausa and the Fulani were among the numerous ethnic groups that flux into Omala local government area, specifically Bagana town to carry out their trade and grazing activities, the Fulani grew in strength and became rooted in the local government area that they felt they don't owe any allegiance to the owners of the land. They owe allegiance only to the Sariki, their own paramount ruler in the area; they therefore arrogate power to themselves. This may be regarded as the remote causes of the crises.

Trouble sparked off when the Fulani herdsmen in search of grazing land destroyed people's crop on their farms, crops like cassava, maize, yams and groundnut. These crops were the means of sustenance of the indigene of the area. The indigene were not happy with this development, they retaliated by killing the herdsmen cattle in numbers. The herdsmen felt that their source of livelihood too is tampered with and unleashed mayhem on the indigene who was the original owner of the land. The crises that erupted in Bagana on the 22nd of April, 2015 later spread to other parts of the local government area. An eye witness Ahmed (2015) state that there was break down of law and order, as a result of the clashes which broke out at about 2:00pm on Afor market day, a popular market located in Bagana Omala local government area. In a twinkle of an eye, Bagana town and its environs went into disarray, there was mass killing, burning of houses, killing of cattles, displacement of people, business premises, closure of schools, burning of vehicles and other assets and outright looting and cheating.

A lot of damages were done to human lives. According to Ibrahim (2015) who witnessed the crises, people fled from their homes, economic activities came to a halt in the commercial city of Bagana. The crises later spread to other districts in the local government area like Ibado Akpacha Ola Edihi district and Bagaji Odo district. The latest crises was the killing of two soldier who were sent to the place on a peace mission by the Federal Government by Agatu militants, a popular militant group from the nearby Benue state, another state that witnessed major crises resulting from the Fulani herdsmen's attack. The killing which was said to be in error is part of the effect of Fulani crises in Omala local government area. On the whole it has been very difficult to report the number of losses in the carnage, the houses burnt down and the lives that were lost.

Implication of the Fulani Herdsmen Crises on School Enrolment

The crises have implications on the generality of the people and specifically on school enrolment which is the focus of this paper.

The table below shows the school enrolment analysis of Universal Basic Education (UBE) Bagana Omala Local Government Nigeria before and after the Fulani Herdsmen and Omala indigene crises.

Table 1: Enrolment Analysis of Students of UBE Bagana before the Crises (January –March, 2014)

S/NO	Class	No of Boys	No of Girls	Total	Remarks
1	Jss1a	20	25	45	
2	Jss1b	22	24	46	
3	Jss2a	21	20	41	
4	Jss2b	20	19	39	
5	Jss3	24	25	49	
Total		107	113	220	

Source: Omala Local Government Education Authority, (2016)

Table 1 shows the enrolment of students of UBE Bagana before the crises, from the table, the total number of student in this school from January to March 2014 are 220 students. This is made up of 107 boys and 113 girls.

Table 2: Enrolment of Students after the Crises (January- April, 2016)

S/NO	Class	No of Boys	No of Girls	Total	Remark
1	Jss1A	10	7	17	
2	Jss1b	12	11	23	
3	Jss2a	8	9	17	
4	Jss2b	15	10	25	
5	Jss3	10	12	22	
	Total	55	49	114	

Source: Omala Local Government Education Authority

Table two shows the enrolment of student in UBE Bagana after the crises. The table showed that there were 55 boys and 49 girls in UBE Bagana after the crises. It also showed a drastic reduction in enrolment from 220 students to 114 students after the crises. A total of 106 students left the school after the crises. This has implication on the future of the students, the educational development of the Local Government Area, Kogi state and the Nigeria in general.

Generally, the crisis has brought more hardship to pupils and students living with their parents in Bagana and the entire Local Government Area. The researcher's personal survey,

observations and interactions with some victims revealed that most people lost their economic trees, loved ones and some fled from the area. Educational activities came to a halt as school buildings were burnt down, while school enrolment decreased because of emigration. The survey equally revealed that teachers posted to the area also fled for their dear lives, while those who remained to offer skeletal services just to protect their job are cautious of these insurgents.

The carnage brought about increased school enrolment in some parts of the local government that are not affected by the crises. This has created management problems for teachers and head teachers in such area. The emotional and psychological problems created in the people as a result of the fear further lead to decreased enrolment. Most parents who have returned from the internally displaced people's camp preferred to stay at home with their children, than sending them back to school to continue their education. According to most parent interviewed by the researcher, they prefer to stay at home with their children because they don't know when next the Fulani are coming. This psychological problem further aggravated the enrolment situation in Omala Local government area.

On the whole school enrolment reduced by half when normalcy returned to the area because many people left the local government and even the state in search of peace and school for their children. Thus Omala local government which has a high school enrolment is nowhere to be found yet as far as school enrolment is concerned. However, with the return of peace to the area, it is hoped that school enrolment will increase as the internally displaced people are gradually returning back to their homes.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that no meaningful educational improvement can take place without school enrolment. What makes a school is the population of a school; enrolment can only grow where there is no crisis. Where there is a crisis school enrolment is bound to decrease like the situation witnessed in Omala Local government Nigeria.

Suggestions for Increased School Enrolment

In view of the fact that enrolment is important for schools and Colleges, it is very important for all stakeholders in Omala local government area to come together and ensure that normalcy return to Omala local government area and that school in the area resumed accordingly. The following suggestions may help in bringing about the desired peace and consequently increase in school enrolment.

The Federal government should make effort to provide grazing field for Fulani herdsmen across the country. The provision of grazing field will reduce sedentization by the Fulani herdsmen. When this happen, the herdsmen will not destroy other people's farmland and economic trees that may lead to conflict.

In addition, there is need to restore confidence in the people through the provision of adequate security for the people to help maintain peace in the area. The presence of security men will scare people who may wish to formant trouble in the area.

Furthermore, when peace is restored, the internally displaced people should return to their homes and start normal activity, including sending their children to school to continue their education. This will help to boost enrolment that has hither to disappear from schools as a result of the crises.

The Federal government of Nigeria, individual and Nongovernmental organizations should embark on reconstruction of buildings and other infrastructures destroyed in the carnage. This will encourage the people to send their children back to school.

Finally there is the need to empower the internally displaced persons through such means as asset ownership and access to credit facilities. Empowering, them will make them to be productive and create wealth through the multiplier effect. The gains from their businesses can be used to support their children in schools.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY

The following research shall be considered for further studies.

1. The contributions of the economy of Omala people to the development of Nigeria.
2. Ways of addressing the causes of Fulani and Omala indigene crises for sustainable development in Nigeria.
3. The building and reconstruction of the Omala crises infested area for sustainable development
4. Strategies for enhancing peace and good neighborliness among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

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