

STRATEGIES FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF FULANI CRISES INFESTED AREA IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF OMALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA-NIGERIA

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Abstract— This paper discusses the strategies for the Reconstruction of the Educational system of the Fulani Herdsmen infested Omala Local Government Area Kogi state Nigeria .The paper examines the concept of reconstruction, educational system, the Fulani, the Fulani Herdsmen and Omala Local Government. The paper also discusses the co-habitation of the Fulani and Omala indigenes, the Fulani/Omala indigene crises and the consequences of the crises to include: Loss of lives and property, looting, destruction of economic trees, destruction of school buildings, curriculum, teachers guide and syllabus, decrease in school enrolment as a result of emigration and outright closure of schools. A summary of the strategies for the reconstruction of the educational system in the area was suggested and this are: training and retraining of manpower, provision of curriculum, reinvigorating normadic schools, building of new classroom and administrative blocks and renovation of existing ones in these crises infested area.

Keywords— Strategy, Reconstruction, Educational System, Fulani Herdsmen, Omala Local Government, Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is an instrument for national reconstruction and development. The perceived function of education for a rapid growing society like Nigeria has placed enormous pressure on the Federal, States, local government and the private sector for its provision, policy formulation and programmes, organization and management and continuous growth and supervision. In the view of Ukeje (1976, Education is an instrument for national and social reconstruction that changes the society and changes the status of man/woman so that they can be good to themselves and the society at large. This definition implies that Education is the panacea for change, helps in the transmission of accumulated abilities, knowledge and attitudes from one generation to another. It is an integral part of human life, a basic condition for the development of a whole man/woman and a vital instrument for accelerating the well being and prosperity of man/woman and the nation.

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has witnessed series of innovations aimed at improving the provision practice, and management of education Alfa (2005). These innovations the author noted include excellent plan and annual budget for the education sector, introduction and funding of Universal Primary Education (U.P.E), introduction of Universal Basic Education (U.B.E), introduction of home grown programme for pupils in lower primary and deregulation of the sector to ensure private sector participation in the provision and management of education etc. These innovations and many others not mentioned in this write up are laudable and are meant to bring improvement into the education sector, however, despite the innovations, the provision of education in Nigeria and quality improvement continue to deteriorate. According to Achimugu (2000), the principal problem facing Nigeria education system is the inability of the various regimes to properly harness and administer resources meant for the education sector to implement faithfully these innovations. The researcher observed that all over the country, well prepared programmes, plan, policies for the incoming generation are thwarted by politicians and beaurecrat who are charged with the implementation of government policies at one level or the other. This has brought about underdevelopment in the education sector witnessed today in primary, secondary and tertiary schools across the country.

In addition to the above challenges, the researcher also observed that for over a decade, Nigeria, has witnessed another emerging and growing trends toward the propagation of religion doctrine by various religious sect, like Boko Haram Fulani, the Fulani Herdsmen insurgencies under the disguise of cattle rearing, Niger Delta avenger, Ogoniland crises and different types of communal clashes in various parts of Nigeria. These groups are threat to peace and educational development of Nigeria, states, local government and families who are the tripod of the educational system. The diverse and complex nature of these insurgents, their mode of operations, the targeting of schools in particular and the need to reconstruct the schools make the issue under discussion relevant.

Omala Local Government Area Kogi state Nigeria is one of the areas in the country that witnessed insecurity designed to instill terror on civilian, and the educational system. The fighting between the indigene, and the Fulani herdsmen, whom people described as the rival opposition group and the rampant lawlessness that characterized the carnage affect all national life including educational advancement of the area. The attack on schools in the area has greatly sabotaged government effort to improve education. What can the government, individual and the society do to reconstruct the educational system in this Fulani Herdsmen infested area? Providing answer to the above question necessitates the present study.

II. CONCEPT OF RECONSTRUCTION

Reconstruction has to do with the act of putting something in working order again. It involves forming again those things that existed before, but which were destroyed due to one reason or the other Fafunwa (1974). In the context of this study, reconstruction has to do with the complete rebuilding, renovation, recreation and re-establishment of educational activities in the Fulani herdsmen infested crises area. The reconstruction of educational activities in these areas will help to restore confidence in the minds of the people of the area, bring back the educational development of the area and promote teaching and learning. In the reconstruction of educational activities, every aspect of education is considered. These areas include school building, recruitment of staff, payment of salaries, school enrolment physical facilities, security and general administration.

III. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Educational activities include all activities carried out in or outside the school to promote teaching and learning Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN,1998). In the context of this study Educational activities include activities such as curriculum development, computerization of schools, capacity building for staff personnel, construction of school buildings, development of infrastructure and monitoring and evaluation etc. It can also be described as everything that goes into educating the masses at all levels. Educational activities are by nature extremely complex and multifaceted and the challenges entailed in reconstructing or improving them can be similarly complex and multifaceted. Reconstructing Educational Activities in Fulani Herdsmen infested area requires co-operative effort by all stakeholders in the education industry, the Federal government, state government, the local government, Private sector and individual.

IV. THE FULANI

The Fulani are among the widely spread culturally diverse peoples in Africa. Their origin is traced to the Senegambia Area. According to Reisman (1977), the Fulani population adopted the Islamic religion and initiated jihad in several parts of the world. Hopen (1958) categorizes Fulani into pastoral Fulani who move about with their cattle in search of grazing land and the settled Fulani who live permanently in villages

and cities. These Fulani dwell side by side with the original owners of the land and pay tax to the chief of the land at agreed rate.

V. The Fulani Herdsmen (Pastoral Fulani)

The Fulani herdsmen are known for their sedentary life. In the view of Paul (2015) their quest for grazing land for their cattle make sedentization a way of life. The researcher observed that they often live in small temporary camps built by them with bamboo leaves and grasses from the forest. This can be dismantled as they move in search of pasture and water for their herds. Their sedentary life might be responsible for the frequent clashes between them and the original owners of the land where they settled. This is because as they move from one place to another, their Herds will go into the field and eat the grain of local farmers. The Fulani herdsmen are brave and fearless, always ready for war. This is evidenced by the type of weapon they carry as they move from one place to another.

VI. THE FULANI HERDSMEN CRISES

There has been a dramatic escalation of the Fulani herdsmen crises over the years. The brutality and impunity with which the assailants operate without regard for law and sanctity has gone beyond reason, the tension and attack in recent time include kidnappings and killing by the Normads. Fulani herdsmen brutally kill natives of invaded farming communities including women and children. They are armed with sophisticated weapons and usually attack their target communities at a time they are most vulnerable such as midnight or on Sunday killing people and burning houses

VII. OMALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, NIGERIA

Omala Local Government Area Kogi state 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. It has a land area of 1,669 sq km and a population of 108, 402 people according to 2006 population census. 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.

VIII. 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 their agents were English and Hausa. The Hausa brought in the Fulani's as their immediate neighbors. The Fulani came in with their cattle as this was the means of their livelihood taking advantage of the vast land resources in the local government area'.

IX. 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 herdsman 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 herdsman 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 herdsman cattle in numbers. The herdsman felt that their source of livelihood too is tampered with and unleashed mayhem on the indigene who were 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 twinkling of an eye, Bagana town and its environs went into disarray, there was mass killing, burning of houses, killing of cattle, 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 soldiers 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 herdsman'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.

A. Consequences of the Fulani Herdsman/ Omala Indigene Crises on the Educational System of Omala Local Government Area, Nigeria.

Generally the crises has brought hardship to the of the area and educational activities in particular. The researcher observed that some people lost their lives, some lost their children, loved ones and economic trees, while some fled from their homes to take shelter in another place. As noted earlier in this work, one of the area targeted in the attacks by the Fulani insurgents is attack on schools. The physical attack on schools affected the educational growth of the area as some schools were closed down, some school building were destroyed, students and teacher ran away for fear of being abducted.

In addition, to the above, school enrolment reduced drastically when people eventually returned from Internally Displaced Person Camp (IDP Camp). The emotional and psychological problems the students were subjected made some to seek transfer from schools in areas attacked by the Fulani Herdsman. On the other hand, nearby towns and local government areas had their schools flooded with pupils and students from the Fulani infested area, this created management problems for principals and headmasters of schools in such area.

Furthermore, in some schools visited during the survey of schools destroyed in the area, textbooks, teaching aid, curriculum and other thing kept in the headmasters / principals office were destroyed by fire and some by termite. These books and curriculum were used as guide to teachers who must teach in the classroom. On the other hand, school time table and individual teacher time table were also destroyed. These records are also used as teacher's guide in his/her daily routine.

Another major effect of the crises is in the area of human resource development. During the crises, many teachers and able bodied youths fled their homes for safety, their sources of income was tampered with. Students from the environs in higher institutions of learning could not come home to collect their school fees, their parent who were the purported bread winner, whose purse they collect school fees from could no longer provide for them. Many of them dropped out of school. This has a serious socio-economic effect on human resources growth and development.

The attack equally affected the academic calendar of schools in the area. The first, second and third term observed in primary and secondary schools along with some other schools in the state is tampered with. The crises that started in the year 2014, lasted for some months, even after the crises has subsided, the fear of the unknown affected speedy settlement of the returnees and their children. This has implication for educational planner in the state and the area in particular.

B. Strategy for the Reconstruction of Educational System of the Fulani crises infested Omala Local Government Area.

The perceived role of education to National development in a fast growing country like Nigeria has placed enormous responsibility on government and stakeholder in the education industry to reconstruct the aspect of educational system that has been in disarray due to one reason or the other. The following strategies may help government and the people of Omala Local Government area for sustainable educational development of the area.

The Federal government in collaboration with Kogi state government and Omala local government area should embark on school reconstruction and re-furbishment of school building destroyed during the carnage. This will help to provide shelter for pupils, students and teachers

They should also provide curriculum, textbooks teachers guide to schools and colleges affected by the crises to ensure that schools in the area meet up with curriculum requirements for effective teaching and learning. Government as well as well meaning individual and philanthropist should help the affected schools by providing basic resources and learning media like boards, pen, exercise books and school uniforms to the affected schools and children. The Normadic education introduced by the Federal Ministry of Education for the Fulani Normads should be re-invigorated and properly funded to take care of the literacy of the Fulani Normads. The Federal government enjoying the co-operations of the indigene of a particular area can acquire land as grazing zone for the Fulani Herdsmen. This will reduce sedentization and the problems that characterize sedentization. The authority of Omala Local Government should ensure that there should be a database of the Fulani Herdsmen living in a particular area. This will reduce impersonation by non Fulani insurgent. The state ministry of education should ensure that schools and colleges should intensify the teaching of religious instruction in schools. The local community where the school is located should come together as vigilante group to defend themselves in the face of

any invasion. They should put schools and its facilities under surveillance from time to time. Proprietors of schools in the local government area should ensure that all schools are fenced and adequate physical security provided to prevent encroachment. Adequate financial resources in form of overhead cost be provided to school administrators in the area by the state government to enable them cope with emergencies.

X. CONCLUSION

Education is an instrument for national development, its continuous growth and quality improvement is desired by all and sundry. However, where there is a problem like the Fulani Herdsmen crisis and Omala indigene discussed above that brought about destruction of the educational system, it has to be reconstructed. Reconstruction could take the form of re-building block of classrooms, curriculum development, capacity building, expansion of Normadic education, monitoring and evaluation and teaching of religious studies in schools.

Suggestions for further Studies.

The following areas are suggested for further studies.

- (1) Alternative sources of financing education in the Fulani Herdsmen infected area. A study of Agatu local government area Benue State.
- (2) Towards restoring peace in the Fulani Herdsmen infected crisis area. A study of Omala local government area.
- (3) Strategies for the training and retraining of personnel for educational quality improvement in areas attacked by insurgents. A study of Omala local government area.

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