

The Effects of Incessant Closure of Schools on School Administration in Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The inconsistency nature of school calendar in Nigerian educational system is no longer news. It is a common occurrence that one higher institution, secondary school or primary school is closed down due to internal crisis or attacks from bandits. Authorities in North-West, Nigeria had shut down more over 4,000 public primary schools across the state, and over 4,000 public secondary schools were among the closed down schools. According to him, over 300, 000 to 400,000 thousand students and pupils are at home after the incidence of Chibok school students' kidnap without considering the effects on the internal administration of the school especially the learners (Tribune, 2021). This paper discusses the effects of closure of schools on school administration in Northern Nigeria. Materials for this article consisted of secondary data sourced from print media and online publications. Poor learning, poor quality of education, loss of interest in education and disruption of academic calendar and learning loss were identified as the effects of closure of schools on school administration in Northern Nigeria. To address these problems, the paper made some useful recommendation.

Keywords: Administration, Attack, Academic, Closure, Effects, Learning, School.

1. Introduction

The Nigerian educational institutions are under attacks especially in Northern Nigeria. The higher institutions, secondary schools and the primary schools have all experienced one attacks or the other across the country especially in Northern Nigeria. Phenson, Ojje , Esin & Atai, (2014) observed that security lapses and challenges certainly do manifest on a daily basis in schools in Nigeria. Such challenges ranges from “youth restiveness, terrorism and insurgent attacks, kidnappings and hostage-takings for monetary ransoms, political assassinations, arsons, murders, cult-related activities, mass protests and so forth”

The continuous attacks on educational institutions have led to closure of school by different state government. In August 9, 2021, the Kaduna State government announced an indefinite postponement of school resumption in the state earlier scheduled for August 9, 2021. Kaduna state is one of the states mostly affected by banditry. Hundreds of people including students have been kidnapped for ransom in the state in recent months as reported by Premium times on July 5, 2021. Ibrahim Woo, Kaduna (2021) corroborating the report of premium times, submitted that the Kaduna State Schools Quality Assurance Authority has ordered 13 schools in areas vulnerable to bandit's attacks to shut down immediately. This was contained in a letter to the proprietors of the affected schools from the authority, dated July 5, 2021 signed by its Director-General, Umma K. Ahmed “Sequel to the information reaching the Authority on the security threat at the Bethel Baptist High school, Damishi, a meeting with the National Association of proprietors of Private schools (NAPPS) and some key stakeholders was held on Monday 5th July 2021 with the resolution that the following schools should close with effect from Monday 5th July 2021,”

On the 20th of Jun, 2021, Alhaji Isah Arzika, State Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) reported that No fewer than seven schools in Kebbi State had been shut down indefinitely in the aftermath of the attack on Federal Government College (FGC), Birnin Yauri, by suspected bandits.

On the 28th of April, 2021 The *Kano* state government announced the closure of Bagauda Technical College with immediate effect for fear of possible security breach.

Niger State Governor Sani Bello ordered the immediate closure of all boarding schools in four local council areas in the state after students and teachers were kidnapped from Government Science College (GSC) in Kagara. This was disclosed in a statement issued by the state Public Enlightenment Unit on social media on Thursday. The caption stated “Please be informed that the Niger State Government has directed that all public Secondary schools in the state be closed from March 12th to 26th, 2021. “This is to enable security agencies to conduct a comprehensive risk assessment of all public Secondary schools in the state.

On Friday 26th Feb, 2021, the Governor of Zamfara State, Bello Matawalle,, ordered the immediate closure of all boarding secondary schools in the state following the abduction of 317 female students in Talata Mafara Local Government Area. The governor gave the directive in a special state broadcast on the abduction of the students at Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe, saying it is a trying moment for the state.

February 26, 2021, Nasir Ibrahim (2021) reported that the Kano State Government has closed 10 boarding schools following the incessant abduction of students from boarding schools in Northern States. The announcement was made several hours after the abduction of 317 students of Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe, Zamfara State, in the early hours of Friday.

In, December 12, 2020, Bashir Bello observed that, Governor Aminu Bello Masari of Katsina State ordered the closure of all boarding schools till further notice following Friday night attack by gunmen on Government Science secondary school, Kankara local government area of the state

Abubakar Ahmadu Maishanu (2020) reported that in Zamfara, the government announced the closure of 10 schools in Council Areas sharing borders with Katsina and Kaduna amidst insecurity in the North-West region. The state's commissioner for education, Ibrahim Gusau, said the closure was to forestall any breakdown of law and order.

On, 15th of Dec 2020, Abubakar Ahmadu Maishanu stated that, following the abduction of 333 students at Government Science Secondary School, Kankara in Katsina, neighbouring states, Jigawa and Zamfara, have closed their schools. The continuous closure of schools because of the attacks on educational institutions by the government is now the problem facing education in Nigeria especially in the Northern Nigeria. This paper intends to discuss the effects of closure of schools on school administration in Northern Nigeria.

1. Concept of School Closure
2. School Administration
3. Effects of school closure on the school administration in Northern Nigeria

2. Concept of School Closure

School Closure is an action or a decision to close school to prevent further attacks by bandits and insurgency. School closure due to insecurity is a strategy to stop further attacks on educational institutions. School closure due to insecurity is an educational strategy to safeguard the students and teachers from possible attacks by the bandits.

School closure strategy is one of the strategies the Nigerian government at all levels have adopted to prevent further attacks on educational institutions. whenever an educational institution is experiencing attacks, other educational institutions close by are shut down immediately to prevent further attacks of other institutions in the state. The implementation of this strategy in the Northern Nigeria by the various state government have led to continuous closure of school in the region because, educational institutions had always been attacked by the bandits, Boko Haram and other terrorists in the region.

2.1 School Administration

School administration is the internal administration of the school that deals with day-to-day planning, organizing and coordination of the school activities with the aim of achieving its objectives. School administration is the indoor operation of the activities and programme of the school for the purpose of realizing its objectives. Abdulrahman (2018) opined that, school administration is associated with the day to day running of schools having appointed officers. According Learn.org (2018), school administration is overseeing the daily operations of Schools, Colleges, Universities, Day Care Centres and Preschools. Johnson (2012) explains that school administration is the school's main governing body, and it plays a major part in making decisions related to students, faculty and the school's overall status. There are several types of school administration, depending on the school's nature. Abdulrahman (2018) observed that these administrations oversee the school's development as well as the welfare of its students and faculty. More often, they are also the only entity that bridges the relationship between the school and the community.

School administration deals with school programme planning, fund allocation for programme implementation, instructional supervision, staff administration, students' administration, plant administration, teaching and learning administration, human resources administration and facilities maintenance.

3. Effects of School Closure

The effects of continuous closure of school as a result of school attacks in Northern Nigeria include; poor learning, poor quality of education, loss of interest in education and disruption of academic calendar and learning loss.

3.1 Poor Learning

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The negative effect of the continuous closure of school by the states government in Northern Nigeria as a strategy to prevent further attacks on other educational institutions whenever schools comes under attack by Bandits or insurgents will obviously result to poor learning of students in the various schools affected. Learning is a process and a system that is planned from one stage to another, whenever a school is closed down as a result of external or internal crisis, this affects the learners and teachers because, teaching and learning will not take place and the students are mostly affected because they are always at the receiving side. Musa (2020) and Abdul (2020) agrees that the actions of the Northern States government in closing down educational institutions whenever there is an attacks in any educational institutions within a state is dangerous to educational development. While Aliyu (2021) submitted that school closure in the Northern Nigeria is affecting students' academic performance. He further stated that, the region that is backward in terms of education before now, is further subjected to deeper backwardness. Emmanuel (2018) and Olowoselu, Bello & Onuselogu, (2014) observed that the inaccessibility of schools as a result of the inherent dangers therefore remains a serious challenge to the knowledge givers, the learners and also other critical stakeholders. In most schools attacked, the traumatic experience alone cannot easily be erased as such, experience instills fear on the teachers and the students alike and make it very difficult for them to return back to school. More so, the "planning , organizing, coordinating, financing and evaluating of all educational activities on students, teachers and school heads" in the schools attacked are often jeopardized while teaching and learning processes are hindered because the school environments are unsafe and learning can't be properly conducted and coordinated in an unsafe school environment.

3.2 Poor Quality of Education

Poor quality of education is another effect of the continuous closure of school in Northern Nigeria. Quality of education is achieved when all the educational resource are used effectively and effectively including school time and covering of the expected scheme of work. The continuous closure of school in Northern Nigeria as a result of attacks by Banditry and insurgence is not allowing students and teachers to cover the designed scheme of work, and when this happens, it will definitely result to poor quality education because the students have not learnt what they supposed to learn in school due to unstable educational system caused by insurgents. Musa (2020) acknowledged that when students do not learn what they supposed to learn in the various educational institutions as a result of closure of school caused by banditry and insurgence, the effect will turn out to be poor quality education.

3.3 Loss of Interest in Education

Many parents and guardians in Northern Nigeria have lost interest in sending their children to schools due to incessant attacks by the bandits and kidnapping of school children for ransom. Many teachers, students have been kidnapped in Zamfara, Niger State and Kaduna state within a month. Musa (2020), Abu, (2021) and Gambo (2021) submitted that the continuous attacks on educational institutions in the North by Bandits and Boko Haram is discouraging parents to send their children to school because, they are afraid of attacks. Amnesty International's Seun Bakare says attacks and school closures signal severe threats to education in Nigeria. The recent wave of kidnapping continues to worsen the education crisis in Nigeria's North, a region known for low levels of literacy and enrollment, and accounting for more than 70 percent of Nigeria's school dropouts. The U.N. children's agency, UNICEF, says 2.8 million children in the north-East need education emergency support due to violence in the region. Unless this situation is urgently addressed, experts say many more children will be risking a bleak future. Muhammed (2021)

3.4 Disruption of Academic Calendar

Continuous closure of schools by the state government in the Northern Nigeria whenever there is any attack on educational institutions within or close to the state is also responsible for unstable academic calendar of various educational institutions in the states especially, the secondary schools which are the most affected in the region. Educational institutions operates on planned academic calendar which specifies the academic session, terms and weeks that school will open for teaching and learning. Scheme of work and syllables are there to be covered within the school calendar. Theses academic calendar and programmes of educational institutions are poorly implemented due to closure of school which is unhealthy for the development of education because, teaching and learning and other academic activities are intermittently disrupted.

3.5 Learning Loss

Learning loss is the loss of academic skills and knowledge as a result of closure of schools that have lengthy breaks in the school calendar due to attacks from terrorists and bandits. Studies have shown that when learners are out of school for too long, it results into intellectual retardation and depreciation. Many students in Northern Nigeria are faced with this situation for which the state government consider as strategy for safety and security of the pupils and students. Musa (2020) and Abubakar (2021) submitted that closure of schools in Northern Nigeria have resulted to learning loss for many students who are been forced to stay back at home due the the continuous school closure as a result of attacks on public education institutions.

4. Way Forward

The federal and states government should look for lasting solution to insecurity in the country especially, Northern Nigeria. Educational institutions ought to be protected from attacks. This paper hereby recommends the following:

- 1) Government at all levels should be more proactive in dealing with security situation in the country to ensure that incessant closure of schools leading to disruption of academic calendar is controlled.
- 2) School premises and their surroundings should be secured adequately in order to guaranty the safety and security of lives and properties.
- 3) Government should do the needful to restore public confidence that educational institutions are not open access to kidnapping and hostage taking as perceived by many.
- 4) Restoration of interests in education amongst our pupils and students in the regions worst hit by banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, hostage taking is paramount.
- 5) Possible strategies can be devised on how to make pupils and students learning loss be recalled and be made permanent irrespective of the duration of loss.

Conclusion

Whenever an educational institution is experiencing attacks, other educational institutions close by are shut down immediately to prevent further attacks of other institutions in the state. The implementation of this strategy especially in Northern Nigeria by the various state government have led to continuous closure of schools in the region because, educational institutions had always been a target for attacks by the bandits, Boko Haram and other terrorists in the region. It could be admitted that someone has to be alive to be educated, however, in as much as it is an emergency measure to protect lives and properties, it should also be noted that the decision has its own attendance effects on school administration in its entirety. A more proactive measure can be introduced to check the over-bearing impacts of insecurity in Nigeria.

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