

ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF NOMADIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: PROSPECTS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

Education plays an invaluable role in human affairs since it serves as a medium through which man becomes adequately informed about the norms, values and beliefs of his immediate environment and the general society. Hence, nomadic education, as an appendage of formal education was established in Nigeria in order to rejuvenate the nomadic Fulani so they become accustom with the diverse socio-cultural norms and values inherent in the heterogeneous society of Nigeria which they are equally a part. The paper thus sought to examine the daunting challenges confronting the nomadic education programme and equally enumerate some proffering solutions that will reform the programme for better. Through this, the paper discovered some of the factors militating against the qualitative delivery of nomadic education in Nigeria to include shortage of funds, lack of accurate data bank, unsuitable curriculum, and constant migration of the targeted beneficiaries and erection of immobile class rooms, among others. Consequently, it was suggested that for premium nomadic education to to be recorded in Nigeria, effective curriculum must be developed, the nomadic teacher must be trained and retrained, enough funds must be allocated into the programme and properly utilized with provision of adequate infrastructure and instructional materials among others.

Keywords: Enhancement, Quality, Nomadic Education, Prospects, Challenges, Solutions, Nigeria.

Introduction

Education plays important role in the development of every nation. It is the bedrock of societal development; hence every society strives to invest huge resources in education in order to enhance social-political, economic and technological advancement that will be put it on a pedestal to compete favourably in the global environment (Elujekwute, 2019). The quality of education of a country is crucial to its development and facilitates social economic empowerment of the citizenry. In realization of the fact that education is a veritable tool for achieving the objectives as a nation, the Federal Republic of Nigeria stipulated in her National Policy on Education (2014) that education is to bring about the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.

It is in this realization that the government introduces the nomadic education programme in order to remove the chronic illiteracy among the mobile population of Nigeria. The programme has three broad goals; to raise the living standard of the rural community; to harness the potential of the Fulani and to bridge the literacy gap between the Fulani and the rest of the society (Adazie, 2010). Education is rightly recognized as an instrument per excellence, for affecting national development. For education to contribute effectively to the development of any nation, the citizen must have access to quality education. Quality in the sense of preparing the recipients for technical and vocational competence that will make the individual child to be self reliant. According to Ajah and Nnamchi (2021) the quality of output of education of a nation depends on the quality of teachers/instructors, facilities/ equipment, quality books, computers/ICT, resources centers and funds. In achieving the right to education for all is one of the biggest challenges of our times. Educating Nigeria's nomadic population through distance learning can be received as a positive step towards effective and efficient implementation of the provision of Nigeria's National Policy on Education (NPE, 20214) on equal access and brighter opportunities for all its citizens regardless of where they live.

Some state governments in the Northern Nigeria recognizes the unique problems of the nomadic people and such as desires to encourage their integration with other Nigerians through education. This recognition arises from the involvement with cattle, especially, the children and the fact that cattle is a very important aspect of our economy and their accessibility of formal education since they have to remain in remote areas for grazing purpose. According to Lar (1989) the hardship encountered as a result of their isolation from the rest of the Nigerian community led to the establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education. Nomadic education in Nigeria draws its strength from section 10 sub-section 94 (ii) of the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014), this section states that the children of nomadic pastorals, migrant fishers folks, migrant farmers and hunters among others, who due to their life styles and means of livelihood, are unable to have access to the conventional educational provision and therefore require special education to cater for their particular or peculiar needs and circumstances. However, there are good signs that pastoralists are gradually embracing education and unproving their literacy, many pastoralists today, are interested in formal education. In view of the above, these efforts of bringing education to the door steps of every Nigerian, especially the nomadic have met with a mountain of challenges which this study intends to examine.

Brief Historical Background of Nomadism

The human race is by nature full of adventure. Nomadism is a common characteristic of human being. As one looks around the world history, one is bound to find that movement must have taken place in the life of all nations of the world. Lar (1989) states that the Fulani Nomads originated from Senegal Basin and there are the product of inter-marriage between the Negro stock and Berbers. Toruegs and Moors of North- Africa some of the Fulani people themselves say that they originated from Arab speaking Greek or Roman from Egypt. However, the authenticity of these versions, it still a controversial issues but the popular view is that the Fulani are descendants of the Arabs, whose nucleus could be traced to Senegal. The Fulani stand a striking contrast to their West African neighbours. Their narrow nose, thin lips, bronze skin, Navy hair and tall stature make them distance from other ethnic groups in West Africa. Ezeomah (1983) describes the Fulani as having straight hair, straight nose, thin lips and lightly built body both male and female are noted for their beauty. Nomadism is practised in many parts of the world for various reasons ranging from freedom seeking, economy to cattle rearing. Nomadism in Nigeria is mainly dictated by cattle rearing activities which can be categorized into two. These are the short and long term movements. The long term transhumance orbit is that movement which is intra-local government area or inter-state. In-state and beyond national boundaries is the long term movement. Ezeomah further maintains that short and long term movement consists of both small and large group. There are times that situations may warrant that the aged be settled while the younger ones move with cattle and occasionally come back to them to acquaint them with progress or check on their well being. The marriage among the nomads could be contracted by payment of a bride price, which is usually paid in the form of Kolants and cattle. Akinpelu (1993) discloses that consent of the parents of the bride and the groom is important. The marriage contract is normally made between the two parents who are considered to be more matured and reliable. They are expected to protect the couple and guide them from internal problems. Divorce is regarded as a disgrace and is therefore, rare. The family courts or the state courts deal with divorce cases where the bride price is returned to the husband's parents.

Concept of Nomadic Education in Nigeria

The equal and equitable education opportunities are essential as an answer to socio-economic and political marginalization of different social groups in developing economies, otherwise, the domination and suppression of the less privileged will continue unabated. Okonkwo and Ibrahim (2014) defines Nomadic as any type of existence characterized by the absence of a fixed domicile. Akinpelu further identifies three categories of nomadic groups as hunters, food gatherers, itinerant fishermen and pastoralists (herdsmen). In realization of the importance of education as an indispensable weapon for human and national development, the government in order to bring education to the door steps of nomads in Nigeria established the National Commission for Nomadic Education that employed various approaches such as on site schools, the shift system schools. With alternative intakes and Ishamiyaya (Islamic) schools to provide literacy education to the nomads and as the result, the Nigeria government set up different agencies to implement education for nomads. These agencies include the Federal Ministry of Education, School Management Board and Agency for Mass Literacy and the Scholarship Board. All these agencies offer mobile school system, wherein the schools and the teachers move with the Fulani children.

Prospects of Nomadic Education in Nigeria

Many pastoralists today are interested in formal education; there is public outcry by the Nigerians newspapers reporting a growing interest in schools among the Fulani as indicated by an increase in the demand for such schools. In some communities, the Fulani have even built their own schools through community effort and have asked the government to send teachers and instructional materials for effective and efficient teaching and learning for their children (Osokoya, Atinmo and Sarumi, 2010). Considering the black future of nomadic pastoralism, many Fulani are looking for an alternative to herding and school seems a good option, having realized that the herding sector cannot absorb all the children and that not every child who would like to stay in herding will have the chance to do so. The Fulani parents have also realized that sending their children to school is the key to active participation in governance and the best way to fight for the rights denied them for so long. According to Maduewesi (2015) absence of these men and women in governance and policy making has put the Fulani at the mercy of their more educated counterparts in the society. Some Fulani feared of losing their cultural heritage as expressed of them and accepted that the school idea was for their good as gradually their desire moved towards acquiring this education. Nomadic people's interest in education has been successfully stimulated towards formal education. The needs, aspirations, movement trends, demography and socio-economic factors of the nomads must be taken into consideration in planning and implementing an educational programme for nomads Fulani in Nigeria.

In doing this, the culture of the Nomads has to be taken into serious consideration, since it is through their culture that they can relate themselves to technology, economy, politics and other spheres of human and national endeavours. It is also from their culture that national values can be inculcated. Japan is said to have developed very fast because all their development plans were and are still based on their culture.

Challenges of Nomads Education in Nigeria

The importance of education provision cannot be overemphasized and is integral to the overall achievement of the millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and marginalized group who are currently unable to access education is also part of nomadic communities is one of the most challenging and urgent issues currently facing education policy makers practitioners among other actors within the field of education. These challenges are briefly examined below;

Lack of Funds: The shortage of funds limits government to provide funds to educational sectors including nomadic education in Nigeria. Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) remarks that the Nigeria government over the years has not meeting the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendation of 26% of the total budget allocation for the education sector. Saadu and Aminu (2020) posit that government priority to education is still very low. This perhaps explains the underfunding of nomadic education in Nigeria. The inaccurate demographic data, lack of reliable statistics on the nomadic leads to planning based on guessing. The lack of fund also limited the activities of the schools. For example, inadequate infrastructures made it impossible for good classrooms to be provided as well as other facilities such as instructional materials and walls for children's display among others.

Lack of Accurate Data: Data was hurriedly conducted as result the research was not an in-depth one that could give the implementation, the confidence to plan according to its results.

There is a need to conduct a more in-depth research that will produce more authentic demographic figures and other information for the planners for effective implementation of the programme.

Unsuitable Curriculum: The nomadic education curriculum is unsuitable for learning rather hindrance to learning. For instance, the use of English language as means of instructional delivery at the elementary school level is an inappropriate method. Learning in the English language is difficult for the Fulani children who are yet to master their own language (Fulfulde).

Constant Migration: Their constant migration/movement in search of water and pasture for their livestock in the case of the pastoralists, and for fish and other aquatic animals in the case of the migrate fishing groups makes it difficult for effective and efficient teaching and learning to take place.

Mismanagement of Funds: Some of the officials of National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) and ministries of education are said to be mismanaging funds through the purchases, contracts awards and payment of teachers has hindered the development and progress of the nomadic education in Nigeria.

Land tenure System: A land tenure system that makes it difficult for the nomads to acquire land and have permanent settlements is a challenge to nomadic educational programme.

Culture: The predominantly Muslim Fulani refused to accept the nomadic schools due to sectarian and cultural reasons, such that their children will become Christianized. Fafunwa (1980) agrees with the Fulani and states that since the missionary schools were established primarily to convert children and young adults to the Christian faith, the Muslims in the north and south saw this as a definite threat to their own faith.

The Role of Fulani Children: The critical role of children in their production of animals which makes parents and guardians reluctant to release them to participate in formal education is an impediment to nomadic education programme.

Inadequate Planning: Nomadic educational planners fail to take account of the governments' inability to provide specialized services for example just to impress the general public, the government rushed into policy pronouncement for mobile school system without considering the difficulties in getting teachers and supervisors for the programme

Permanent and Movable Structure: The use of permanent and immovable structures for conventional classroom and schools are unsuitable for the nomads. The nomads groups are continually on the move, migrating from one settlement to another in response to seasonal and occupational demands. These constant migrations disrupt their children schooling. They do not stay long enough in a settlement for learners to complete academic session or school year. Therefore, to ensure regular and interrupted schooling of children of the nomads the school must move along with them.

Communal Crises: Communal crises in Nigeria as a one other problems that severally affects nomadic education programmes. The rearing of Fulani cattle in most cases result to destruction of farms produce. This leads to conflicts between the nomads and their host communities which in turn affects nomadic supervisors' wiliness to get to schools in such terrain for supervision. This trend also affects teachers in such areas as such most of the nomadic education centers are unsupervised for long periods of time.

Enhancing the Quality of Nomadic Education in Nigeria

Curriculum Development: The opinion of nomadic women and men should be sought since it is of great significance in developing a curriculum for both sexes of the community. Traders should also be involved in this. The trial copy of the curriculum ought to be examined by different bodies like the universities or other educational institutions as well as educationists in the Ministry of Educations.

Quality Teachers: The importance of the quality of teachers in qualitative education is well documented in research, Ezeomah (2013) notes that in teacher's quality and students achievement, it was found that teachers characteristics such as certification and degree in the field to be taught are very significant, therefore more teachers should be trained and re-trained for the purpose of utilizing the shift system effectively. They should be provided with more incentives and adequate arrangement should be made for their welfare packages. Elujekwute (2019) states that the issue of salaries goes beyond the institutional development as it affects the families of the staff (teacher) and his social status since salaries delayed is salary denied. Many teachers are always reluctant to work on an empty stomach and more especially when they cannot meet their social obligations to their families, relatives and their exigencies of life. The teachers need some form of mobility to enable them to move without tears and from their working places. More efforts should be made in the search for Fulani student teachers so they can instruct the children in their language for the first threes years of primary school, as stipulated by the policy on education.

Provision of Adequate Infrastructure: There is no infrastructure in some of these schools, learning takes place under trees, for example in Barakes Ladi according to Lar (1989) uses mud rectangular houses with zinc roofing. They use tents to serve as toilet or first aid room. There should be standard nomadic classroom building designed by experts who will take cognizance of the children comfort during the different seasons. The classrooms should be spacious to allow for the display of children's work and should also provide room for various instructional materials and good storage facilities in place. The security of children and all school property should be guaranteed. The school environment should have enough space for games and should be beautified with trees and flowers.

Mobile Schools: The idea of having school centers along the nomads' movement routes is a good one and will meet the needs of nomads. Mobile schools are still the best for nomads. According to Lassa (2003) the problem is that of identifying the actual nomads end not cattle rearers. The nomads amongst them must be identified so that they can benefit from the teaching and learning activities. Alternatively for the groups that move without teachers, there is need for some kind of continuity in their studies for example, each child should be issued with an identity card, which he can be show at their next station and they should be allowed to join regular schools or nomadic schools.

Instructional Materials: Instructional materials are very important to learning in schools, according to Elujekwute (2019) the effective management of schools is known first and foremost through effective instructional activities organized by school administrators. Babaola (2010) adds that as ingredient is to soup, so also resources materials to curriculum implementation. Experience has revealed that adequate supply of books were made to nomadic education for subjects like English and Mathematics while other subjects lacked textbooks and instructional materials. Lar (1989) records that these inadequacies were partly responsible for the pupils low performance in health science and social studies among others. Textbooks and other instructional materials should be made available in the entire subject in the nomadic education programmes. Schools should stick to one selected series of textbooks and only use the others to supplement what is missing for additional practice. The ministry of education should inaugurate a language committee consisting of educationist who studied languages and those who know the Fulani language to work towards the provision of instructional materials in Fulfulde.

Radio Programmes: A radio programme was designed for nomadic education. It is regrettable that the programmes were not well publicized for a good number of nomadic communities in the states to benefit from it, so the adult education programmes were not well implemented. However, the radio programme were well designed, the programme itself was not used for the maximum benefit of nomadic listeners. There was good intention but not full monitored for effective end efficient results to be achieved. The re-structuring of the topics so that they are presented systematically is very important. Wright (2015) suggests that nomadic education should be well publicized so that maximum benefit is derived from it. This can be done through nomadic people's meetings with veterinary officers or recorded tapes taken round and played to their hearings in their home environments

Solutions to the Challenges of Nomadic Education in Nigeria

The following solutions and strategies as a way out of the predicament of nomadic education are briefly examined below

Establishment of Mobile Schools: Convenient schools should be established at their movement routes. It appears that nomads have a movement pattern and if this is carefully studied, strategize areas will be determined for the establishment of such schools. Teachers would be assigned to some identified large groups to teach them as they move along. Distant learning through the use of radio and cassette recorders, this because many nomads listen to the radio during herding, therefore they can be encouraged to listen to radio classes. Lessons or instructions could be recorded on cassettes in Fulfulde and sold to the nomads. Jingles and enlightenment programmes could also be relayed through the radio for nomadic listeners. Mobile schools are still the best for nomads. The problem is that of identifying the actual nomads and not cattle rearers. The nomads amongst them must be identified so that they can benefit from the project.

Public Enlightenment: The numerous criticisms of the nomadic education at the initial stage can partly be attributed to inadequate publicity for the project before it took off. Adequate enlightenment programme should be intensified; this should be done so as to allay the fear of the nomads that they children will be converted to Christianity. It is regrettable that the programmes were not well publicized for good number of nomadic communities in the states

to benefit from it. Therefore, the re-structuring of the topic so that they are presented systematically is necessary. It should be well publicized so that maximum benefit is derived from it.

Provision of Instructional Materials: Teaching materials like textbooks should be made available in all the subjects. Schools should stick to one selected series of textbooks and only use the others to supplement what is missing for additional practice. The educational administrators should form a language committee consisting of educationist who studied languages, and those who know the Fulani language to work towards the provision of instructional materials in Fulfulde.

Involvement of Non-Governmental Organization: The non-government and community based organization should be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the nomadic educational programmes. The Inspectorate unit should ensure that the learners and instructors are doing the right thing all the time.

Provision of Infrastructural Facilities: Government should ensure that adequate infrastructural facilities are provided as well as improved conditions of existing nomadic schools. There are no infrastructure in some of areas, and learning takes place under the trees, mud rectangular houses with zinc roofing. The use of tents to serve as toilet or first aid room and some schools uses rectangular zinc shelter and zanz matting for toilets. Therefore, there should be a standard nomadic classroom building, designed by experts who will take cognizance of the children's comfort during the different seasons. The classrooms should be spacious to allow for the display of children's work, and should also provide room for various teaching aids and storage facilities.

Provision of Appropriate Curriculum: The use of inappropriate and sometimes irrelevant school curriculum teaching methods and materials should be discouraged by the educational administrators and educational supervisors. The strategies adopted in planning the curriculum are satisfactory. The incorporation of research and seminar reports during the write-up of the curriculum is commendable. However, the curriculum should not be rushed. The curriculum needs plenty of time to involve as many people as possible. The result of the first seminar should have been reconsidered by another seminar Likewise; the workshop ought to have a second one for the purpose of reviewing the first work. The opinion of nomadic women should have been sought since it is of great significant in developing a curriculum for both sexes of the nomadic community. Also, traders should be involved in this project. The trial copy of the curriculum ought to be examined by different bodies such as Universities or other educational organizations as well as educationalists in the Ministry of Education, for further comments before its implementation but this was not done

Training of Teachers: The teacher training objectives were to help the teachers through training to face their job with confidence. Therefore, more teachers' should be trained for the purpose of utilizing the shift system effectively. More effort should be made in the search for Fulani student's teachers, so they can instruct the children in their language for the first three years of primary school, as stipulated by the policy on education.

Conclusion

The paper has underscored the fact that education plays a pivotal role in the formation and reformation of man in consonance with the norms, values and beliefs of their constituent environment. Hence, the paper apprised the establishment of nomadic education, an appendage of formal education, in Nigeria; a programme that was borne out of the daring attempt to rehabilitate the misinformed nomadic Fulani by inculcating the right norms and societal values in them through the classroom teaching and learning. The programme, however, plausible suffers some setbacks which range from mismanagement and shortage of funds, building of immobile structures, inadequate teachers, shortage of instructional materials and ineffective curriculum among others. Thus, in order to reposition the programme, both the government and well-meaning organizations should inject more money into the scheme, employ qualitative teaching personal, erect movable structures that can easily be migrated with by the nomadic Fulani and above all. Develop an all-encompassing curriculum that will meet the yearning and expectations of the programme.

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