

EDUCATION FOR ALL IN NIGERIA: REACHING OUT TO THE NOMADIC POPULATION

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Abstract

This paper discusses the general characteristics of the nomads in the world over and the necessity of extending education to them. The paper has been generally discussed under the following sub-headings: Nomads, their characteristics, location, and treatment in the society; the need for the education of the nomads; barriers/constraints to the education of the Nigerian Nomads; the Nomadic Education Programme (NEP) in Nigeria; the role of the National Commission on Nomadic Education (NCNE); current approaches to Nomadic Education in Nigeria; problems of Nomadic education in Nigeria. The paper concludes by discussing the need for the Nigerian Government to still intensify its efforts in extending formal education to the Nomadic population if Education for All is to be truly for all in the country.

BACKGROUND TO THE HISTORY OF NOMADS

Nomads, their characteristics, locations, and treatment in the Society

Nomads are an ethnographic group who wander from place to place with no fixed home. Their movement is necessitated by their economic activities, be they cattle rearing, fishing, hunting or craftworks. Nomadism is as old as humanity and it is a common characteristic of human reaction to hostile or unfavorable conditions on their livelihood. Tahir (2003) opined that all over the world, the phenomenon of Nomadism is generally recognized because nomadic groups constitute a sizeable portion of the world's population. Nomadism is influenced by a number of factors and these factors are dependent upon the nomadic group in focus. For instance, pastoral nomads are compelled to move largely in search of pasture and water for their cattle. Owing to their nomadic nature, they do not erect permanent structures.

Tahir (1997) did a broad categorization of the nomads into three groups namely:

- i. The pastoralists: this group of nomads include the Fulbe in West Africa, the Shuwa Arabs in Nigeria and Cameroon, the Massai, the Turkana and the Rendelie in Kenya, the Karamonjon in Uganda, the Somalia nomads in Somalia, the Tuaregs in Libya, Niger and Chad.

- ii. The migrant fishermen, who are predominantly found along the riverine areas, lakeshores and the coasts of Atlantic and Indian oceans in Africa; and
- iii. The hunters/food gatherers who are predominantly found in Rift valley around Lake Nyasa in the northern part of Tanzania, Namibia and the rainforest areas of Central Africa.

Nigeria is richly endowed with various nomadic populations that are pastoralists and fishermen. According to the report of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (2003), the Nigeria nomadic pastoralists are made up of the Fulani (5.3m), Shuwa Arabs (1.01m): Koyan (32,000), Badawi (20,000), Dark Buzzu (15,000) and the Buduma (10,000).

The Fulani are found in 31 out of 36 states of Nigeria while the others are mainly found in Borno plains and shores of Lake Chad. The Migrant fishermen have a population of about 2.8 million. This group of nomads is found in the riverine areas of the country. Aminu (1991) described the life of pastoral nomads, thus:

He bears the brunt of natural disasters. With more- than Spartan endurance, he defies the scorching of the heart of the sun, the chilly and dry winds of the rainy and harmattan seasons. He is exposed to the bites of insects and snakes which often times causes ill-health and dearth. He has little recreation because he is constantly on the move in pursuance of his primary interests, the welfare of his livestock (p.5).

Thus, nomads all over the world are largely treated as second- class citizens who must conform to the norms of larger society for them to be recognized and accorded the rights and privileges of a citizen.

The need for the Education of the Nomads

Education is the source of upward mobility, especially in developing countries and a principal instrument in fostering democracy, equality and justice. Therefore, equal and equitable educational 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. Recognition the importance of education as an indispensable weapon for human and national development, it has declared as a human right.

The importance of education provision to nomadic communities is integral to the overall achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and marginalized groups 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 and other actors within the field of education.

It has been observed that among those not enrolled in schools are the school age children of nomads and of these very few girls are participating in schooling. National statistics of various countries according to UNESCO (2005) confirm that nomads are among the largest groups absent from the educational system. Greater commitment to the universalisation of access to basic education heightened interest of the Nigerian Government in the provision of quality education to nomadic and other disadvantaged groups. Kwara SUBEB is taking the Bull by the horn in this direction. Many individuals in the society hardly understand the need for educating the nomads. For example, there was an outcry even from many academic circles against the national nomadic education programme at the initial stages, starting from 1986 (Tahir, in FRN,2003). Some people saw it as waste of time, human and material resources. Many others advocated for its stoppage until the nomads are settled. This prejudice against this category of people is doing a lot of harm to their being educated.

Education of nomads is a necessity. Like any other groups, they are entitled to basic education in a way that conforms to their way of life and that addresses their needs and interests.

Barriers/Constraints on the Education of the Nomads

Some of the problems of providing education for the nomads in Nigeria was that the government was not fully aware of the problems of the nomads. Schools provided were regular and the curriculum was for secondary peoples. Parents from nomadic communities subsequently withdrew their children from school. Another problem was that nomadic parents were dependent on their school age children for herding animals and for undertaking other house tasks that were important for the survival of a fragile community hence, the nomadic children cannot afford to spend the time needed by the schools which are outside their homes. So, in Nigeria, the constraints of the nomads to participate in existing basic education programmes were as follows:

1. They are always on the move. The pastoralists move from place to place in search of water and pasture for their livestock while the fishermen wander for fish and any other aquatic animals, so, the use of permanent and immovable structures for classrooms and the conventional approach are unsuitable for the nomads.
2. Their children play crucial role in their economic life and this makes parents to be reluctant to release them for schooling.
3. The formal school curriculum and time schedules of the school are not suitable and do not meet the special needs of the nomads.
4. The government law of land tenure system that makes it difficult for the nomads to acquire land and have permanent settlements.

The need to improve access to basic education to the nomadic groups in Nigeria was felt and this informed the introduction of the Nomadic Education

Programme (NEP) and the establishment of the National Commissions for Nomadic Education (NCNE) by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The Nomadic Education Programme (NPE) and the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE)

In order to improve access of the nomads to quality basic education, and to boost literacy which will equip them with skills and competencies to enhance their well-being, the nomadic Education Programme was developed by the Federal Government of Nigeria. This is in a bid to attain the goals of EFA. This programme had put in place, the following:

1. Development and use of relevant curriculum, teaching methods, materials and infrastructure appropriate to the needs and peculiar circumstances of the nomads;
2. Flexible and responsive school calendar and time scheduling to suit the nomadic learners;
3. Intensive community sensitization and empowerment to stimulate and sustain programme support; and
4. Robust collaboration and partnerships with relevant governments, institutions and organizations in programme development, implementation and evaluation

To implement the Nomadic Education Programme, the federal government also established the national commission for Nomadic education in 1989. This commission was saddled with the responsibility of carrying out functions, some of which are:

- a) Formulating policies and issuing guidelines in all matters relating to nomadic education in Nigeria;
- b) Providing funds for the development of personnel, programmes, and for carrying out researches for the improvement of nomadic education;
- c) Providing equipment and instructional materials and construction of classrooms and any other facilities relating to nomadic education.
- d) Determining standards of skills to be attained in nomadic education;
- e) Monitoring all agencies connected with nomadic education
- f) Establishing, managing and maintaining primary schools in the nomadic settlement;

In order to effectively discharge its responsibilities, the NCNE operates using four departments, six zonal offices and four university-based Nomadic Education Centres (NEC). The University of Jos is used for research and evaluation for nomadic education. The University of Maiduguri is used for teacher training and outreach programmes for nomadic education, the Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto is used for the development of curriculum and instructional materials, while the University of Port Harcourt is use for curriculum and instructional materials, teacher

training programmes, research and evaluation for the education of the migrant fishing group.

Approaches to Nomadic Education

To improve and actualized the literacy rate of Nigeria's nomads, the National Commission for Nomadic Education employed various approaches such as on site schools, the " shift system", schools with alternative intake, Islamiyya (Islamic) to provide literacy education to Nomads.

Mobile Schools

Mobile schools use collapsible classrooms that can be assembled or disassembled within 30 minutes and carried conveniently by pack animals. (Aderinoye, Ojokheta, & Olojede; 2007). While a whole classroom and its furniture can be hauled by only four pack animals, Motor caravans are replacing pack animals in moving the classrooms. A typical mobile unit consists of three classrooms, each with spaces for fifteen to twenty children. At N40, 000, a mobile unit is cheaper than a regular classroom. Some of the classrooms are equipped with audio-visual teaching aids

Radio and television education

A pastoral Fulani is a captive audience for radio and television programs. Most Fulani have radios which they carry along during herding. The literate world can, thus , reach Fulani without disrupting their herding. To improve literacy especially in the rural areas, the government introduces radio and television education programmes. The government supplies the hardware such as radio, television, and electric generator. It also builds viewing rooms for public use

Although the government has spent millions of naira in nomadic education programme, the measure of education attainment among the Fulani remains low. The quality of education among them is mediocre at best. The nomadic education is, therefore, yet to lift the literacy and standard of living of the Fulani. Many Fulani are taking advantage of the education facilities provided by the government. However, the children of the farmers constitute up to eighty percent of the students in nomadic schools.

New Learning Technology

The use of UCT's can produce a reasonable learning environment for both formal and informal adult and youth education. The countries such as Cuba, China, Mexico, and Nigeria through practical experience has shown that the combination of ICT and distance education can achieve tremendously. This is implied that similar combination can achieve greatly in nomadic education. Mobile phone is one of the ICTs components.

The Use of Mobile Phone

Mobile learning can be describe as the process through which wireless device is use for learning on the motion. It is a means through which learner learns electronic device and receive educational content that will assist in acquisition of skills irrespective of place or period of time(Lehner & Nosekabel, 2002), in another vein, learning could be mobile in three ways such as space, different locations, and time (Kinshuck, 2003) meaning that mobile learning programmes should be able to provide the desire knowledge to learners irrespective of the location or period and space.

The efforts to actually achieve success for the nomads' education in Nigeria can make use of cell phones. It has been established that mobile phone can be a better alternative if government is willing to achieve success in nomads' education. A research was conducted in south Africa where a lecturer observed that some students don't participate in the class discussions, and questions for political reasons, he developed a system that will enable the students to use their cell phones to text the course instructors, web sites and students groups, with this innovation the students participation has improved which create mobile learning environment (Ng'ambi,2009). Similarly companies such as Harvard business school are providing adult education through the use of mobile phone, this can be effective for people in remote areas (Learning resources).

The nomadic culture can easily fit in the mobile nature of the schools which make it possible dismantling and quick movement, this will fit adequately for nomads' lifestyles. The National Commission for nomadic education can reach and agreement with communication companies to make it affordable and accessible.

Various centre can be established at different centre which will be in line with the nomads route so as to facilitate learning process, the centre will be a placw where the nomad can reach to obtain necessary materials for learning. It will serve as coordinating centre as well.

The facilitators also can use their mobile phones to put the learners on track, ditto for the learners can use the mobile phone to seek clarification, or ask question or decide to meet at the centre.

Challenges

Usage

Researches have shown that having access to technology is different from making use of it (Hayes,2003). The people in charge of this programe can contact the mobile company to develop a programe or system that will facilitate the use of mobile. The charges will be taking care of because it will involve many people and period of discussing will be taken into consideration.

Technical Know How

Another major problem of using mobile phone is technical know how, it may develop fault. The organizer should have a depot where the nomads may be able to have free access and interact both practical and technical know how.

Finance

The financial implication must be considered, it will involve huge amounts of moneys and the government can be of help. It is not something an individual can embark upon. The cost of mobile phones, the recharge cards, other accessories that will facilitate its use.

Willingness

The nomads may be reluctant in receiving this new innovation because of their orientation coupled with their culture. The government can mount a campaign for it and sensitize them.

Inspectorate unit

There should be a unit meant for inspection to be able to ensure that people are doing the right thing, I mean the learners and instructors.

Conclusion

The fact that the use of mobile phone for education of nomads has its own disadvantages, yet the advantages are more than disadvantages. The government should be willing to invest in the programme, by making every necessary material ready both human resources and capital resources should be handy.

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