
Regenerating Nomadic Education for Poverty Eradication, Self Reliance and National Development

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Abstract

Poverty eradication, self reliance and national development are important aspects of a people's life that depends entirely on the right type and quality of education accessible to all. It is unarguably true that, no nation can rise above the quality of her education. To facilitate rapid and effective poverty eradication, self reliance and national development, everyone must have unrestricted access to a viable education. The regeneration of nomadic education in Nigeria and elsewhere is regarded as a versatile tool in accomplishing national developmental goals and policies. This approach is perceived as a viable strategy in placing the nomads on the right track towards producing functional and participatory members of the Nigerian society. This paper examines the progress made so far in providing education for the nomads, the present state of the art and how it can be regenerated for poverty eradication, self reliance and national development.

The Nomads for a long time have contributed immensely to the social, economic and political development of Nigeria. They are the suppliers of quality beef that floats the meat market in the country. The diary products obtained from their cattle are used both in home and international trade and for the manufacture of many foods items of high dietary value. The hide obtained from their cattle constitute major raw material in the leather industry. Unfortunately, it was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that

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little efforts were been made to inculcate into them the necessary skills, values and attitudes that will facilitate their survival as participatory and contributory citizens.

They have not being integrated into national life. They are often regarded by many Nigerians as a migrant population that cannot be settled to benefit from formal education. The population of the nomads comprises the pastoralists, fisherman and workers. According to Tahir in Isyaku, Akale, Maiyanga and Oloku, (1998), the pastoralist consist of the Fulbe or Fulani (5.3 million), the Shuwa (1.01 million), the Koyan (32,000), the Badawi (20,000) and the Buzzu (15,000). The migrant fishermen are mostly concentrated at the reverine and river basins areas with an estimated population of 2.8 million.

Again, Ogu (2008) noted that, out of the estimated 9.4 million nomadic peoples in Nigeria, over 3 million are children of school-going age. The literacy rate among the nomads is estimated at 0.02% (Gadima, 2006). Their major constraint to formal and non-formal education is a function of their constant motion in pursuance of the relevant aspects of their occupation—the pastoralists being pasture and water while the migrant fishermen being fish. Owing to the dismal fact that little efforts had been made to integrate the nomads into national life.

According to Daagu (2011), some attempts made by certain northern state governments of Borno, Bauchi, Adamawa, Kano and Plateau to educate the nomads achieved very limited success. Albeit those other factors as physical barriers, employment of child labour, land tenure system and inappropriate curriculum constituted additional constraints to the success of modern education among the nomads. The untold part of the episode is that, as this portion of the population is alienated from accessing quality and functional education, their potentials for poverty eradication, self reliance and national development have been grossly trampled upon.

This paper examined the development of Nomadic Education in Nigeria vis-à-vis its historical development, the progress so far made, the constraints and the way forward for regenerating for effective poverty eradication, self reliance and national development.

Historical Development of Nomadic Education in Nigeria

Although nomadic education has been in existence since the colonial era, it never received the deserved attention until the late 1970s. It is on record that mobile schools for nomadic children were established in the old Borno Province as far back as 1920s. In 1976, the governments of North East, North West, Kano, Benue-Plateau and North Central states initiated some few pilot schools for the nomadic population.

The Federal Government launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme which included the nomadic education. Awareness was created among the

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nomadic populace on the importance of education. They were also encouraged to use regular schools established. Initially, Ezeoma (1995) noted that, some nomadic parents were enthusiastic in enrolling their children. As a result, enrolment at the onset of the programme was high but both enrolment and attendance became irregular and eventually declined. Reasons for this decline in enrollment and attendance were advanced by Oguche (2005) to include:

1. The established schools were organized and structured along the dictates of formal school system which to an extent were at variance with the nomadic people's lifestyle.
2. The teachers trained and recruited for the nomadic schools did not fully comprehend the cultural differences and or diversity of the nomads so as to adapt their pedagogical strategies along the cultural needs and complexities of the nomads.
3. Parents felt that a longer time than necessary was spent in school in terms of daily attendance and hours stayed in school.
4. The nomadic education experiments were not supported by or based on a critical and comprehensive research base on the lifestyle of the nomad. Summarily, the nomads felt that the content and time of delivery of the curriculum was either irrelevant or unsuitable for their needs and lifestyle.

The implications of the regular school system initiated for the nomads were that, the initiative emphasized acquisition of reading and writing skills to enable the children of the nomads enroll into regular schools. This generated widespread resistance among the nomads because the regular schools did not reflect their cultural background. Consequently, the children had difficulty transferring what was learnt at school to solving their problems at home. To salvage this essential form of education from demise, the Federal Government came into the scene and acted in this direction.

Federal Government's Intervention in Nomadic Education.

Nomadic Education caught the attention of the Federal Government which was displayed in the National Policy on Education (1981 & 2004 editions). This was aimed at giving the nomads a fair sheer of the deal in their efforts in the development the nation. Consequently, Decree 41 of 12th December, 1989 established the National Commission for Nomadic Education with the following objectives:

1. To eradicate illiteracy (among the nomads) through the ability to read and write;
2. To expose the nomadic child to the elementary form of modern education;
3. To help the child to adapt to any school and physical environment;
4. To help the child accept his social environment and accommodate other people;

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5. To develop the child's ability to manipulate innovations within the nomadic setting;
6. To develop the child's initiative and scientific thinking and promote technological awareness among the nomadic children in the use of modern methods of livestock keeping;
7. To inculcate in him the spirit of humanity through education.

According to Taiwo (2009), the nomadic education programme started in November 1986 after the Gongola Conference on Nomadic Education which was to champion to cause of nomadic education in the country. The conference among other things resolved that 'the nomads needed a fair deal through the provision of education and other social amenities to reciprocate their contribution to nation building'. This gave birth to the inauguration of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE). The commission became fully operational in January 1988 with 206 schools, 1,500 students and 499 teachers. 97 of those schools had permanent buildings while the rest operated in temporal stations; some had furniture while others used mats (Adamu, 2007). The curriculum was a modified curriculum in English, Arithmetic, Social Studies, and Primary Science. Unfortunately, only few schools in Plateau, Kaduna, Kwara, Niger, Sokoto, FCT Abuja, Jigawa, Taraba, Ogun, Katsina, Osun, Ondo, Oyo and Benue States are currently viable. The NCNE has not evolved a fully functional national strategy for the education of the migrant fishermen's children in the country as most of the schools meant for this category have become conventional school.

Achievements of NCNE

The commission has made the following achievements in the provision of nomadic education in Nigeria:

1. the development and adaptation of curricula materials in eight primary school subjects;
2. the provision of financial grants to states for building classrooms, purchase of furniture, and payment of teachers' salaries;
3. the provision of mobile collapsible classroom structures(which can be assembled and disassembled in 30 minutes and carried conveniently by pack bulls) to states and local governments and construction of permanent 3-classroom blocks in 21 states of the federation;
4. the development and provision of instructional materials and the equipment to states and local government schools;
5. the provision of financial assistance to boost community efforts;
6. the production and distribution of instructional materials;
7. the training of various categories of teachers and supervisor for the nomadic schools;

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8. the provision of bursaries and scholarships to children of nomads in tertiary institutions in Nigeria;
9. survey of nomads in southern states of the country;
10. national monitoring of nomadic education;
11. production and utilization of monitoring and evaluation instruments and guides, and mapping and survey instruments; and
12. Radio programmes for mobilization and public enlightenment of the nomads:

The nomadic Fulfulde are a captive audience for radio programme. Most of them have radios which they carry along and listen to programmes during herding.

Apart from the afore-mentioned achievements of the commission, nomadic education in Nigeria has succeeded in establishing an administrative structure with appropriate departments and units to perform its functions and achieve target objectives. The commission also established a working link with the Ardo'en and the other community leaders which facilitated community participation in nomadic education.

Similarly, Adamu (2007) noted that, nomadic education has sponsored young men to acquire university education. Currently, the following are products of university education who are nomads: Mr. Ardo Aliyu Alhaji (Education Admin/Community Development), Dr. Usman Ardo (Vet.), Dr. Bature Abdulahi (Medicine), Mr. Isa Bawa (Architecture), and Dr. Sadiq Damina (Vet.) among others who are still undergoing undergraduate programmes. From this summary, it is evident that, nomadic education has not been adequately placed to facilitate poverty eradication, self reliance and national development as can be seen in the ever increasing number of nomadic cattle herders in Nigeria.

Obstacles of Nomadic Education in Nigeria

The placement of nomadic education in Nigeria to actively facilitate poverty eradication, self reliance and national development has been affected by the following obstacles:

1. Nomadic education curriculum is unsuitable if not an impediment to learning. For example, the use of English Language for instruction at the elementary level is grossly inappropriate.
2. The government has not developed the Fulfulde language to replace English as a medium of instruction.

3. The Miyetti-Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) complained that the teaching of subjects like cockroach breeding, how to play basket ball and climb mountains was irrelevant and at best derogatory to the Fulani race and downplayed their life styles.
4. Conventional education for the nomads ignores the desirability of apprenticeship model of learning thereby closing a vital channel of skill transfer.
5. The conventional school system provides the literacy needed in modern times but its content is too foreign to the pastoralist since pastoral procedure is not incorporated into it.
6. Frequent adjustment of pedagogical approaches: Owing to the incontrovertible change in students' composition, the teachers are forced to frequently adjust their teaching methods to suit the new comer(s). This is not an easy task.
7. Nomadic education has not categorically catered for the children of the nomadic fishermen, hunters and farmers who should constitute 80% of the students in nomadic education.
8. Lack of adequate and sustained government's influence: The delivery of nomadic education programmes is characterized by defective policies, improper school placement and incessant migration of the students. Means of mobility for supervisors are generally lacking in most states. Consequently, the tempo with which the programme has been characterized at the initial stages of its take-off has diminished drastically.
9. The problem of land tenure system and religious taboos: In many parts of the country, there is a dangerous rivalry over the use of land. This has generated tensions between land owners and the pastoralists. When there is this increased intensity in violence and irrational behaviour, the educational sector is the casualty. Schools are destroyed and closed down for months and both the teachers and/ or students are traumatized or killed. Recent cases of Tiv-Fulani riots in the Middle Belt readily come to mind. Again, the predominant Muslim Fulani regards nomadic education as an avenue of Christianizing their children. This is something they try to resist.
10. Lack of sustained interest and large-scale corruption: Initially, the initiators of the nomadic education and the parents were aiming at immediate gains by economy. As a result, interest was high in mobilizing of material resources and interest for this form of education. As time went on with the discovery that, short term

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benefits were not forthcoming, the parents tactically withdrew their children and support along with the enthusiasm. Again, the managers of the programme saw an avenue of rapidly enriching themselves from the funds allocated to nomadic education. This has negatively affected to success of the programme.

11. Financial constraints: Inadequate funding of nomadic education has being a debilitating factor for the smooth operation of the programme. This has drastically reduced the efficacy of the whole programme towards poverty eradication, self reliance and national development.
12. Falsification of and obsolete data: Unfortunately, there is no accurate data on the operations of nomadic education programmes and projects. Most states and stakeholders falsify data in order to obtain grants from the federal government. This does not form a sound background for the production of viable policies and programmes to boost the operations to nomadic education. At the moment, even the Ministry of Education will find it hard nut to crack to present decisive and accurate data on nomadic education in Nigeria
13. Harsh conditions of service: According to Daagu (2011), nomadic education is a hazardous venture. Teachers (most of whom are married) move along with the nomads to facilitate programme continuity. Initially, the teachers in these schools were paid hazard allowances. Even with this, the salaries were meager and not consistent. At the moment, the hazard allowance has been withdrawn and there is no upward review of the salary structure. Consequent upon this, many teachers in nomadic schools have resigned their appointments. This has further exacerbated the problem of shortage of personnel in nomadic education.
14. Recurrent conflict between NCNE and MACBAN: MACBAN and NCNE have being at logger heads on issues of staff recruitment, favouritism and contracting jobs. This negatively affects the smooth operation of nomadic education in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The Federal Government established nomadic education with the intention of equalizing educational, economic and developmental opportunities for all Nigerians. This would have contributed effectively towards poverty eradication, self reliance and national development. Unfortunately, certain events and obstacles militated against the attainment of the lofty aims of nomadic education programme. This has coerced and relegated this important form of education to the background. At the moment, nomadic education is precisely mentioned in debates, conferences, seminars and journalistic articles. Its operation is in dilemma. This calls for an urgent need to regenerate nomadic

education so as to facilitate poverty eradication, self reliance and national development in Nigeria. It is the responsibility of every responsible Nigerian government, individuals, community-based bodies and even the international community to see to it that nomadic education receives the attention it deserves.

Recommendations

The author submit the following recommendations as pertinent for effective implementation of nomadic education in Nigeria and the accomplishment of the national goals as stipulated in the National Policy on Education.

1. Mass mobilization and awareness campaigns should be mounted to inform the nomads of the need to improve their standard of living through education;
2. The public should offer suggestions for effective implementation of the programmes of nomadic education;
3. The government at all levels should make adequate budgetary provisions of incentives to motivate teachers in nomadic education;
4. The government should show more determination and commitment to the programme by providing infrastructures, rouses, personnel and other necessary materials for a smooth operation of the programme.
5. The nomads who have passed out of the primary or elementary level of education should be identified and encouraged or assisted to further their educational careers;
6. Mobile teachers and schools should be used for mobile families depending on their number within a cluster; adult education programmes should be implemented for nomadic parents; on-site schools should be established for the sedentary nomads with a shifting system of class attendance employed to suit their herding activities; and radio/distance education programme should be infused into the nomadic education programme for effectiveness and success.
7. Training and recruiting nomadic education teachers so that they will continue with the education of the nomads.
8. Development and production of various texts on nomadic education to enable effective teaching and learning in nomadic schools.
9. Frequent review of the nomadic education curriculum to encompass modern and model innovations in science and technology.
10. Procurement and disbursement of needed instructional materials in nomadic schools to facilitate effective teaching and learning.
11. Teachers in nomadic schools should be adequately motivated through various forms of monetary and non-monetary incentives to discourage the exodus of teachers from nomadic schools.

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