

NOMADIC EDUCATION AND SELF RELIANCE IN NIGERIA

Dr Tabotndip, J. E

Abstract

The nomadic groups in Nigeria are largely an illiterate and backward people. Attempts to alleviate their conditions dates back to 1953 when the Colonial Government made frantic incursions into this area in order to provide the nomads with the necessary skills and knowledge to improve their lot. Since then, subsequent governments have ventured to no avail to have an encompassing educational programme that could be helpful to this sect, until the Decree No. 41 of 1988 was promulgated. This decree established a peculiar Nomadic Education Programme that has provision to meet the needs of all the nomadic groups in the country. It specified a number of objectives, a scope that if properly implemented will diversify the nomads, make them self reliant, accommodative and more productive for themselves and their nation.

Introduction

The nomadic people constitute a bulk of illiterates and backward people of Nigeria. Yet they contribute tremendously to the Nigerian economy in terms of agricultural productivity, payment of taxes and making franchise decision of the governance in the country.

The Nigerian Government has been worried about the illiteracy position and backwardness of these people. Attempts to correct these conditions could traced back to the Colonial Government in 1953 when a primary school was established in Karhaku in Daura, now Daura Local Government Area in Katsina State. Since then many other educational programmes have been mounted in Nigeria such as the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) and the National Mass Literacy and Non Formal Education Commission (NMEC) but none of these has fully accommodated the nomads. This forced back the Federal Government of Nigeria to the drawing table which gave birth to Decree No. 41 of 1988 that established a National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE). This commission is charged with the responsibilities of ensuring that the doctrine and the provision of access of basic education 'For All¹' was conveyed to the nomadic people of Nigeria (FGN, 1998).

This nomadic educational programme is very necessary because the nomads have a mode of existence and a pattern of living that must be properly harnessed towards helping them participate massively in formal education. More to that the nomads constitute a substantial proportion of the Nigerian population and reserve the right lo education for all if Nigeria must fight its illiteracy problems. Ezeoma (1987), Aminu (1991) and Opara (2002) put the number of the (Fulbes) Fulanis to about 4 million and above. This number is minus the other nomadic groups whose actual population is unknown.

Nomadic education is not only timely but also very necessary in order to equip the nomads with useful skills for diversification in their profession and contribute to the development of the nation as a whole. It will help them get integrated and harmonize with other Nigerians towards the advancement of the country. Formal education will create awareness in the nomads and help them realize that the treasures of the land for their cattle are being drastically reduced to a certain degree hence unemployment may hit them.

The fishermen and women would realize that at certain ages in their lives they may not be strong enough to go for fishing expeditions as they have done in the past. They would also realize that it is necessary to diversify in life especially when oil spillage is destroying aquatic life else they run the risk of unemployment in the nearest future. Abonyi (2002) agreed with this when he pointed out that there was a rapid reduction of available pastures for cattle due to increase in land use by sedentary tribes. He also warned against the ravages of unemployment that may befall the nomads. This implied that changes in the land use system would create unemployment for the nomads in the later future and the only way out would be the application of skills acquired through formal education for survival.

By establishing an educational commission of this nature, Nigeria has joined other nations of the world like Somalia, Kenya, Uganda and Britain who have for years floated such schemes towards eradicating illiteracy among their nomadic groups.

The Nomadic People of Nigeria

The nomadic people in Nigeria comprise the cattle Fulanis of the Northern Region of Nigeria. This group moves along with their cattle from one place to another in search of grazing pastures. During the two seasons (rainy and dry seasons) that vary in Nigeria, the cattle nomads practice transhumance i.e. North and South wards movement in search of grazing pastures.

Another nomadic group are the farmers who migrate to the farm states during the farming season and only return to their homes over the weekends or after the fanning period is over. Those groups are scattered over the country but are commonly found in the West, extreme East and the Middle Belt of Nigeria.

The other groups of nomads are the fishermen of the coastal and the riverine areas of Nigeria. Finally, another group to be considered are the apprentices who skipped education because of having to undertake trading expedition under different masters. This group is highly concentrated in the South Eastern States of Nigeria.

In order to properly accommodate the nomads in the formal education programme, the National Commission for Nomadic Education spelt out an encompassing scope guided by a number of objectives.

The Nomadic Education programme in Nigeria covers the provision of basic and functional literacy skills to children of migrant sets; training of the trainers; provision of curricula!" guides for State Co-ordinators and supervisors.

The objectives of the Nomadic Education Programme could be summarized as follows:

- > To integrate the nomads into national life.
- > To provide the nomads with relevant and functional basic education.
- ^ To provide the nomads with requisite knowledge.
- > To provide the nomads with skills so as to enable them improve upon their pre-occupation (FGN, 1987).

For the purposes of effectiveness and efficiency, the Nomadic Education Commission established four centres at some strategic locations in some chosen Nigerian Universities e.g. University of Jos, Maiduguri, Sokoto and Port Harcourt respectively. The University of Jos, Maiduguri and Sokoto all located in Northern Nigeria are responsible for the development of a curriculum for the pastoral nomads while University of Port Harcourt is charged with the responsibility of developing a curriculum for the migrant fishermen and farmers. These centres have been responsible to conduct researches on migrant groups, undertake curriculum development and instructional materials as well as organize in-service training for teacher training programmes.

Education and Self Reliance

Formal education in all its intent could be regarded as capacity building in its recipients leading to improved levels of performances in all the beneficiaries. It is believed to develop confidence, sound judgment and personal philosophies for self-actualization in the recipients. The knowledge and skills attained at school will help the individual build his life to such an extent that he/she can afford. Uzochukwu (2002) confirmed this saying that the process of education ultimately leads to the phase of self-education, which occurs when the individual after attaining and appropriate level of psycho-physical maturity begins to educate himself or herself on his own.

The structures being developed in the human organism by education from self-actualization to self-reliance are the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. These three edifices when properly erected in man could stabilize him to the extent of developing confident, wisdom and being able to contribute to the self, welfare of others and the nation.

Mind Liberation

Education liberates the human minds and sets it on a wider horizon of appreciating the world's experiences. It pulls man from the doldrums of ignorance. It is for this reason and others that UNESCO emphasized education 'for all' for the entire nations of the world.

The pastoral nomads in Nigeria are unshakably committed to their Islamic Religion capped by Islamic Education while the fishermen and the farmers are irrevocably committed to their ancestral and orthodox religion sects that may never liberate their minds as much as formal education.

Exposition of the nomads to formal education will help them develop personal philosophies that make for self-actualization and self-reliance. It will provide the ingredient for sound reasoning in the recipients leading to good judgment, accurate decision making strategies and choices of courses

of action towards coping with the recent world trends. Russel (1981) contended that the human mind evolves continuously as it encounters new experiences in life. This attainment will reduce inter-tribal conflicts common among the nomads and create a parley for peace process towards growth and advancement of the nation.

Diversification

The recent world [rend demands diversification in every facet of the economic life of-man. The idea of diversification is highly subsumed under knowledge and wisdom which only education can offer. Diversification of professions and industries means diversification of the humans in their various professions either by equipping or re-equipping them with new knowledge and skills through education and training.

The nomads in Nigeria are monoculture! in their professions. The cattle rearers depend solely on the pastoral lands, which are diminishing rapidly to population explosion, and varied land use system in the country. Various constructional activities have silted some shallow water courses making them remain more dry valley even in the rainy season. Oil spillage is destroying fast the aquatic life in the bigger bodies of water, all these to the detriment of the fishermen.

Formal education is the only alternative that may help the nomads to diversify them in their profession towards self-reliance. It may be an option to enable them withstand the ravages of-unemployment that awaits them in the nearest future. Tabotndip (2002) suggested that formal education was the only alternative to solve the employment problems that may soon ravage the nomads. Abonyi (2002) advised that the rapid reduction in the available pasture for cattle due to sedentary tribe's expansion and the ravages of employment that may befall the nomads due to changes in the land use system will be highly controlled by the acquisitions of skills through schooling.

Politics

Education will provide the logistics to mobilize the nomads towards greater participation in personal and national development. It will help them appreciate all about politics and politicking among the people of Nigeria and elsewhere. It will create awareness on when, how and where to exercise their civic rights as national in their country. It will urge them to know and care for the daily (rend of events in Nigeria and appreciate national ideologies, policies and programmes of the government, and other tribes. Gidado (2000) concluded this saying that at worst, nomadic education was necessary to mobilize the nomads to greater participation in their own development "Don Makiyaya A Ruga". The idea of using the nomads as a bee-hive-workers by some charlalant politicians and dropping almost immediately will be a thing to remember only as history.

Agriculture

The migrant groups are a formidable front in the agricultural industry. They produce for both the local and international markets. Daneji and Ardo (1991) and Aminu (1991) confirmed that the nomads are a backbone to the Nigerian economy as it concerns agricultural production in the country. Aminu (1991) discovered that the Fulani nomads in Nigeria are prominent in agricultural production and they own well over twelve million heads of cattle in the country.

The output of these migrants will be improved upon by providing this sect with skills and knowledge attained from the forma! education. Such knowledge will make them expand their industries from mere extractive industries to manufacturing industries for higher profits, which are today being carted away by the middlemen to the detriment of the nomads. The conservative methods and approaches practiced by these sects which arc obscure to industrialization in Nigeria and technological break-through will be changed to the modern ones. Ezeoma (1978) in his study discovered that not even one respondent out of the one hundred and ninety four (194) pastoral nomads agreed that modern scientific knowledge was advantageous in the management of animals. This

ideology can be very unproductive in the phase of revitalizing agriculture to its enviable position in Nigeria for the purpose of growth and development.

Civic Responsibility

Education brings about a positive change in man. Nwagwu (1989) said that education has been identified, as an instrument of change, be it in political, social, cultural or economic spheres. Its attainment will make the nomads appreciate their rights as citizens and exercise such rights for individual and national benefits. Such positive reactions from among the nationals of a country and

not only the nomads alone will bring about national cohesion and development

Value System

The migrants would change their value system of being highly mobile to settling in areas of their interest. The idea of settling in a place could help them integrate, interrelate or inter-marry with other tribes in the country. This change could create harmony and foster national growth and development. Tabotndip (2002) said that respect for human value is a step towards human perfection.

Nationalism

Nationalism could be regarded as a conscious call to the citizens of a nation. Though inspirational, it could be polarized by some bates made available at certain strategic locations to attract the citizenry such education, health, public utilities etc. Loyalty to the nation is a function of having to conscript the people's conscience with goodness.

For the Federal Government of Nigeria to have considered the migrants for such an encompassing educational programme, it is a stepping stone towards getting the sect to love, obey and defend their nations anywhere, any time. Education will provide them with a sense of belonging, skills, knowledge and wisdom necessary to contribute to national development. Dare and Ogewole (2002) posited that the Government maintains the law while the preservation of good life depends on all citizens contributing to each other and the government.

The greasy pole of education will reduce in the migrants, the idea of isolationism, conservatism, fanaticism and erase illiteracy which have been highly detrimental to other citizens and the nation as a whole. Mallum (1983), Aminu (1991) noted that migrant people of Nigeria were largely illiterates and most educational backward people of Nigeria with varied problems. Stenning (1959) and Abonyi (2002) also pointed out that of all the migrant groups, the nomadic Fulanis are most educationally disadvantaged because of their devotion to Islam and Islamic Education and highly resistant to Western education.

Conclusion

It has not been easy to mount an educational programme that could fully encompass the migrant groups in Nigeria because of their mode of existence and pattern of living.

The Nomadic Education Programme is a peculiar educational programme packaged to provide the needs of the migrants in Nigeria for self-actualization towards self-reliance. This should be effectively implemented to provide those needs that will make for self-actualization and self-reliance both for the nomads themselves and Nigeria as nation.

Recommendations

The Federal Government of Nigeria should carefully implement the Nomadic Education Programme by harnessing all the necessary equipment and personnel so as to achieve its objectives.

Nomadic education should be properly managed and funded by the using a commission that will see to daily activity towards its full realization.

» The NCNE should engaged the services of experts at all levels of its operation.

Nomadic schools should located where they would be useful to the nomads.

The programme should be depoliticised.

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