

INTEGRATING NOMADIC CHILDREN INTO THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY THROUGH NOMADIC EDUCATION: SOME BASIC REALITIES

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Abstract

This paper discusses the role of education in the socio-economic and political integration of Fulbe nomads. It affirms the social and local support to nomadic education programme and sees it as a vehicle for peaceful redress from social deprivation and injustice. The paper however, reveals some basic bottlenecks to the realization of the programme's integrative role: Inadequacy of the school, poor facilities, inadequacy of teachers and the negative attitude of the general public toward the recipients (the nomads). As a way out of the present situation, the paper advocates for improved funding, establishment of more schools, serious intervention by non-governmental organizations, and the channelling of "jangali" (cattle tax) towards educating the Fulbe nomads among other things.

Introduction

Nigeria, like many countries in the world, has a considerable number of nomads that are pastoralists and fishermen. It is estimated that the population of this group is 9.3million (Tahir, 1996). The same source reveals that among this pastoral nomads, the Fulbe constitute 5.3million, Shuwa 1.1 million, Koyam 32,000, Badawi 20.000 and Dark Buzzu 15,000, while the migrant fishermen are about 2.8million.

The nomadic Fulbe are found in 25 States of the Federation, while the other pastoralists are principally located in Borno State. By their occupational demands, the migrant fishermen are situated along Atlantic coastline, the riverine and river basin areas. The Fulbe nomads otherwise called the Mbororo, therefore, formed the largest portion of the unsettled group. They are professionally known to be cattle rearers who, as at 1991, owned about 95% of the 12million heads of cattle in the country (Aminu, 1991).

These show that the Mbororo contribute the largest quantity of beef, milk, mutton, and hides and skin. More so, they shoulder a "heavy burden of tax in the form of 'jangali' (Aminu, 1991). In spite of these however, they suffer corruption, harassment and humiliation by some local authorities. Apart from the social deprivation, the Mbororo are also exposed to natural disasters such as the hamattan, hash sun, dry winds and the exposure to dangerous insects, animals and reptiles which at times lead to ill-health and death (Aminu, 1991).

Despite the enumerated contribution of the nomads to the economy and good health, their standard and way of living are extremely pathetic. Only 0.02% of this group is literate as at 1996 (Tahir, 1996). They are isolated from all sorts of social amenities. This indicates that (he economic power they possess and take care of, mainly benefit others who are opportune to settle down and have considerable government attention. The Fulbe nomads are simply described as "socially deprived, denied and disadvantaged," (Aminu, 1991).

Consequent upon these, and as a way of showing legitimate concern for this apparent social injustice that has long been institutionalized against them (despite constitutional protection), the Federal Government realized the need to bring formal education for the nomadic child. This decision is owing to the realization of education as the most powerful for peaceful liberation of the deprived.

This paper is therefore, an attempt to identify the basic realities that should be tackled as a condition for complete integration of the Fulbe children, despite educational provision. It will also attempt to provide some suggestions that could help in brightening the prospects of the programme. Meanwhile, it is deemed important to define the concept of integration for better understanding of our focus.

The Concept of Integration

Integration is perceived as an action or process of making up of a whole by combining

separate parts or elements which together constitute a unity. It also means the coordination of personality and environment; the organization of psychological reactions, perceptions, etc, into a balanced whole, the unification of educational system previously segregated by some social factors: and the giving of full civil or membership rights to those deprived of them on certain social ground (Onions, 1974, Yinger, 1982, Webster's Dictionary of English, 1991).

Within the context of this paper however, integration is conceived as a process whereby the Fulbe nomadic children fully enjoy their constitutional rights as citizens of Nigeria, participate fully in the discharge of their obligations to their country, and effectively contribute their quota to the socio-economic and political development of the nation to the best of their physical and psychological-abilities without any hindrance.

The need for integration in Nigerian society cannot be overemphasized. It helps inter-alia, to bring about cooperation and better understanding among the component groups for the progress and survival of the groups and the nation at large. It is a necessary ingredient for social adjustment and tolerance which gives a room for collective responsibility and encourages communal efforts that serve as a vehicle for national development.

Nature and Objective of Nomadic Education

The National Nomadic Education Programme was launched in 1986 by the Federal Government and further re-enforced it with the establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) by the promulgation of Decree 41 of 1989. The goals of the programme are:

- 1) Integrating the nomads into the national life by providing them with relevant and functional basic education; and
- 2) Improving the survival skills of the nomads through improved method of animal husbandry (Tahir, 1996).

A careful analysis of these goals reveal that the major target of the programme is to enhance socio-cultural transformation of the nomad so that he/she will be able to adjust to the wider social structure, and to enhance his/her professional skills in animal husbandry, as well as prepare him/her for other vocation/occupation.

The programme therefore, can be viewed as an attempt at making practicable, the nation's education philosophy which "is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the' nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels..." (Ogundimu, 1985). These are closely tied with the national goals of Nigeria's educational system; these are:

- a) inculcating national consciousness and national unity
- b) Inculcating the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- c) The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and

- d) The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his/her society (National Policy on Education, 2004).

Making special educational provision for the nomads would therefore, ensure that effort has been made to reach out to some of the component groups in the society. Although nomadic education programme is erroneously conceived as a deliberate plan to provide educational opportunities to Fulbe Mbororo alone, the National Council on Education recommendation and ministerial directive incorporated artsinal fishermen into the programme. Consequently, special schools were also established for the migrant fishermen children, and that these schools enjoy financial assistance and instructional materials from the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) through their respective States and Local Governments (Tahir, 1996).

The programme, according to the executive Secretary of NCNE, is essentially a Primary and Non-formal Education Programme that is designed to wipe out illiteracy, improve the productive

capacities of the youth and adults, promote social justice and equity, and sensitize the nomads on their basic human and constitutional rights as bona-fide Nigerians and members of the human family (Farouk, 1996).

Hence, nomadic education is being run by the Federal Government in conjunction with the States and Local Governments and the affected communities. While the Federal Government shoulders the responsibility of advocacy ; provision of "matching grants" to participating States, Local Governments and Communities for classroom construction, provision of furniture and instructional materials, curriculum development and material production, teacher training, monitoring and research, the States Local Governments and communities, on the other hand, are left with the actual delivery of the programme (Farouk, 1996).

Justification for Nomadic Education Programme

Many people see nomadic education as not only a waste of time, human and material resources, but also baseless- a programme designed to fail. As such, some suggestions were made which include the stoppage of the initiative till all the nomads are settled. This was one of the suggestions made by some vocally "settled" citizenry against a programme whose beneficiaries are "the abandoned class of people" (Alkali, 1991) and objects of oppression.

These criticisms contradict logic and the various legal and policy provisions. The Mbororo, apart from being a major contributor to the socio-cultural heritage and economic development of the country, it should also be realized that education is a universally declared human right. In addition, education can enhance the quality and quantity of the food product the Mbororo sell to the "settlers" such as milk and butter. The cattle, goats and sheep the Mbororo rear are also likely be better taken care of through the appreciation and application of modern techniques of animal husbandry, including medication for improved productivity. Hence, apart from the self-development which the Mbororo gain, the society at large derives a lot of advantages from the programme. Here, the programme would help in the accumulation of human and material capital through resource development and effectively invest them for the development of the nation's economy.

It is not out of context that Fafunwa (1980) earlier enumerated the need for primary education to all children, thus:

- 1) Socially a true democracy is promoted if all children irrespective of their geographical location, the economic limitations, the social status, or religious beliefs of their parents, have an opportunity to have at least an elementary education. This education will, if adequately planned, help arrest superstition, ignorance and disease.
- 2) Politically, (he) education will help develop intelligent citizens.
- 3) Economically, education will help produce... a new source of manpower, an intelligent working class, literate consumers and producers of goods.
- 4) Culturally, it is through universal system of education...that the culture of the people can be adequately transmitted and the new challenges that characterize the twentieth century can be satisfactorily met.

Fafunwa insisted on educating all irrespective of their geographic, economic and socio-cultural circumstances. He also saw it, a necessary criterion if enumerated benefits are to be achieved. It can therefore, be viewed within this thinking that a universal education is a panacea to social, economic and political disintegration of ant society given the appropriate position. By this submission, the Mbororo child should as well be ultimately educated for the realization of the desired social order.

Indeed, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted child's entitlement to basic education, which shall be free and compulsory, at least at the primary level (UN, 1971). The type should be that which will promote culture and enable him on the basis of equal opportunity, develop his abilities, individual judgment and sense of moral and social responsibility which ultimately make him a useful member of the society.

The convention was ratified by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) chapter when/it states that "every child (male or female) is entitled to receiving compulsory basic education depending on individual ability) (Okobi, 1995). As a member of both the UNO and OAU, and as a

signatory to the convention and charter, Nigeria has a duty of ensuring that the educational right of the child including that of the Mbororo child is not within this context, violated, and indeed, enhanced. The Government and people of Nigeria further made a provision in the 1989 constitution for every child to be educated.

Even the NPE (2004), sees education not only as an investment which promised Government's complete intervention and participation, but also affirms it as a fundamental right of every citizen. In this direction, the identification of nomads as one of the educationally disadvantaged groups, who need special but urgent attention in the provision of educational facilities (Aminu, 1991), is an attempt to actualize the relevant laws and policies. In fact, the programme is not only a necessary Government obligation that be religiously pursued, its initiation as national programme should have come earlier.

Integrating the Mbororo (Fulbe) Children through Nomadic Education: Basic Realities

There is no denying the fact that education transmits the culture of society, provide for innovation, helps in political enlightenment and development, aids social selection and ensures economic empowerment.

School as an educational institution is therefore, saddled with those responsibilities. It is meant to be an effective tool for national integration. This can be achieved if the school is made to be a reflection of the wider society, and a model of the envisioned society. For school to be a true reflection of the Nigerian society however, factors such as adequacy and quality of schools, instructional materials, teachers and the attitude of the general public among others, should be considered.

In contrast, the nomadic schools lack these facilities. As at 1995/96 session, there were only 890 schools for pastoral nomads with the enrolment of only 88,871. These schools are conclusively inadequate to cater for the estimated 3.1 million school-age nomads. Even the existing schools, drawing conclusion from Tahir (1996), are below standard as up to 45.2 percent of them had conducted lessons under tree sheds, and only 21.8 percent of the schools had permanent structures, and another 13.4 percent with mobile collapsible structures. In addition, the 1995/96 national monitoring report reveals that the programme was grossly uncoordinated, infrastructural facilities are grossly inadequate, teachers' salaries are hardly paid, and in some cases not paid for a long period, some States transfer teachers without replacements, and the large proliferation of teacher-aids who were unqualified and ungraded (Tahir, 1996),

This situation is not only discouraging but can hardly allow the schools to achieve the goals for which they are established. Various studies (Sesay, 1987; Urwick and Bature, 1993, Banu, 1994) support this position when they found a strong correlation between physical facilities, infrastructure, materials and the learning process. This indicates that however excellent the nomadic education programme may be, the absence of these necessary facilities and infrastructure will almost certainly, cripple the realization of the programme's objectives. The acute shortage of teachers both in qualitative and quantitative terms is another area of concern. This affirmation by NPE (2004) that "no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers" is enough to predict whether the programme can achieve its integrative role or not.

From these realities, it can be conceptualized that the programme is seriously under-funded at all levels of operation. Indeed, Tahir (1996) admitted that monetary assistance from the Federal Government was no longer forth-coming even with the resuscitation of the National Education Commission (NPEC), a parastatal that allocates some funds to NCNE. With this development, it is only logical to expect the programme to suffer implementation problems. Based on the above, the

NCNE (Farouk, 1996) revealed that only few of the schools can be "truly regarded as viable." Consequent upon these problems, attendance has seriously declined and many instructors have deserted their classes.

Furthermore, the attitude of the settled citizenry towards the Fulbe nomads is a serious threat. Apart from turning the Mbororo the object of exploitation and social deprivation (Aminu, 1991), they also see him as an inferior being and therefore, is subjected to ridicule and cheat. She/he is generally seen as dull ad an unwise stranger in

town. Hence, the relationship is mostly that of exploitation. In market places, prices of goods are often escalated when it is the Mbororo who buys. Authorities such as tax collectors, the police and even some judges find means of exploiting them in various forms. In short, the Mbororo lacks social acceptability from majority of the general public.

The foregoing circumstance can hardly be permissive of complete integration of the Mbororo child. This is because, the school being a temporary environment to the child, his level of integration would ultimately depend on the way the society behaves towards him. The short and long term effect of this behaviour is the possibility of creating an image in the mind of the Mbororo that the wider society is a separate entity from his environment. Even if educated, there is the tendency that the nomadic child, upon realization of the social deprivation and domination instituted against him by the settled citizenry, will establish enmity between himself and the populace. Under this circumstance, integration would be quite difficult. It is therefore, necessary that the negative social interaction be checked.

Prospects of Integrating the Fulbe Nomads: Suggestions

Having highlighted some of problems that can stall nomadic school from discharging its major duty: integration of the nomads into the wider social structure, particularly the Fulbe children, attention is now focused on suggesting possible options that could help arrest the situation, and hence the realization of the slated goals.

First and foremost, the general public, as a pre-requisite for social integration, has to regard the Fulbe nomads both in thought and action as their brother's keeper. They should appreciate the fact that inferiority or superiority is but a mere perception and social attachment which could be changed. The nomad needs social acceptability for him to conform with the wider social structure. The settled citizenry should bear in mind that ethnocentricism abounds in every culture. As such just as the other component groups see the nomads as possessing a second class culture, so they (the nomads) may also see the other groups. Hence, we should learn to accept them as colleagues with whom we are independent.

As already x-rayed, the schools that are shouldered with the integration function are on-ly grossly inadequate, but are also pathetic. This paper suggests that more schools be built, and each should be a model of an ideal Nigerian society. This is for the school to effectively transform the nomads into the general way of life of the society. The schools are not necessarily to be tagged "nomadic school". They can be simply called primary schools located in a particular area. This is because the word "nomadic" within the Nigerian context, appears to have negative connotations which further justify unnecessary social stratification.

The provision of functional and adequate learning materials needs to be stressed at this juncture. Although the country claims financial constraints, notwithstanding this, spending for the long socially deprived in this era is a necessity when viewed within the legal and moral lenses. More so, educating this group in itself is an asset which the nation awaits to reap its fruits.

Closely linked to the above is the need to train teachers for the programme. Since it is no longer debatable that the quality of teachers to a large extent determines the level of output, it is suggested that the curriculum of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) programme be redesigned in a way that its graduates can be effectively fit in teaching the nomads.

The aforementioned suggestions are considerably dependent upon sufficiency of funds. Hence, the success of the programme lies in the availability of sufficient funds, In order to ensure its adequate funding; there is the express need for government at various levels to make considerable financial increment to the programme. More so, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Islamic Education Trust (IET) and Human Rights Oriented Organization, should partake in financing the programme. Endowment Appeal Fund can also be launched and maintained. It is here necessary to acknowledge the contribution of international organizations such as the Department of for International Development (DFID) and UNICEF to the programme, as reported by Farouk (1996). Also, the "jangali" (cattle tax) that is being collected from the Fulbe should be re-channelled towards educating their children. This is in recognition of the fact tax is mainly meant for the provision of social amenities to the populace. SINCE THE Fulbe nomads 'had been paying the "jangali" even before the nation attained independence, without any reasonable social benefit, it is high time that the tax is concentrated on their children.

These suggestions, it is hoped, will help brighten the future of nomadic education programme through helping it survive the odds and realize integrative role in the society.

Conclusion

There exist in Nigeria about 5.3million Fulbe nomads who have long been denied their constitutional rights to education among other things. Realizing the long institutionalized injustice and its attendant effects, the country came up with education programme to cater for the educational needs of the Fulbe nomads (along with other hither-to abandoned nomads).

This paper therefore, appreciates the bold initiatives and argues that more needs to be done if the education is to translate itself into a meaningful avenue for complete integration of the Fulbe nomads into the mainstream of the nation's socio-economic and political feature. These include the provision of more schools and better facilities, as well as helping the nomads to acquire favourable attitude towards education through the settled citizenry accepting them as part of the main board in thought and practice.

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