

THE TEACHER FACTOR AS A CHALLENGE TO THE SUCCESS OF NOMADIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

By

R. M. ABOHO

*Department of Educational Foundation and General Studies,
University of Agriculture,
Makurdi.*

I.W. YAKUBU

*Department of Curriculum and Teaching,
Benue State University,
Makurdi.*

and

L. I. EL-YAKUBU

*Department of Curriculum Studies,
Taraba State University,
Jalingo.*

Abstract

Nomads are groups of people whose contribution to economic development cannot be over emphasized. Though nomads contribute financially to national economy, they lack formal education that can enhance their skills and yield maximum output. This paper has attempted a review of nomads, their level of education and the Nomadic Education Programme. The paper also delved into the objectives of the Nomadic Education Programme, its curricular contents and implications. Further attempt was made to explore the role of teachers

Pristine: ISSN: 2250 – 9593

as the implementer of the curriculum and how they have fared. Research reveals that teacher quality in nomadic education is poor due to such reasons as poor welfare, poor condition of service, lack of continuous training, indiscriminate transfer of teacher to mention a few. To this ends recommendations were made, which includes improved welfare and working conditions, replacement of transferred teachers, and effective training programmes. On this ground, the paper was concluded.

Man's quest for survival especially in unstable economic waters has constantly left man searching for more and even searching for the proverbial greener pastures. With this in view, man is constantly searching for better opportunities for economic and social enhancement. To this end, it is no longer news to see man move from one place to another in search of bigger and better opportunities mainly for financial enhancement and empowerment. This movement from one location to another is what mainly characterises a group of people focused in a sector of agricultural activities- "the nomads".

History even records that the advent of agricultural activities and practices started with the early man's activities, which mainly involved his moving from one location to another gathering fruits and other agricultural produces which he met along his way. The early man also planted the seeds of these fruits thus giving rise to even bigger agricultural activities. He was also preoccupied with hunting activities. He hunted and kept animals he found within his vicinity and subsequently moved with them to other locations, since he hardly had a permanent place of abode. This brings to the fore front, the crust of this paper.

Who are the nomads?

People who do not have a particular residential place, who move from one place to another in search of greener pastures for their cattle and other animals are often referred to as nomads. Gbamanja (2000), describes nomads as people of a particular community, who in search of better livelihood usually move from one place to another. This implies that in the bid to improve on their livelihood, they may choose to move to locations they perceive to be better than where they currently reside. Aboho and Maduwesi, (2006:78) refer to nomads as "ethnic or socio professional groups who travel and migrate in large or small clans in search of means of livelihood". This further suggest that those who are usually characterised as nomads are often associated with a particular occupation or ethnic group. For example the Fulani ethnic group in Northern Nigeria, Masai in Kenya, the Moors and Bedouins and Tuaregs in North Africa. These ethnic groups are mainly known for the kind of economic or commercial activities they

R. M. Aboho; I.W. Yakubu and L. I. El-Yakubu

are involved in which is cattle rearing. This occupation is one that is involved with the raising and caring for animals especially cattle, to the point where they are given out for commercial purposes. In essence cattle rearing among the nomads is mainly for commercial purpose.

Okonkwo and Ibrahim (2014), further describe nomads as people who wander from place to place for pastures for their animals. These also includes migrant fisher folks. Shutz (2003), also describes nomads as people with the adaptive characteristics of a chameleon, which is able to change its colour to adapt to any environment in which it finds itself. This adaptive nature is such a necessity because until they are able to adjust their lifestyle to their host community at every point in time, their survival as well as that of their cattle will always be compromised.

Education for the nomads

The role of effective and qualitative education in nation building cannot be over emphasized. Education equips individuals with knowledge and skills to act and make responsible decisions for the betterment of self and nation. Federal Government of Nigeria (2004: 111), identifies education in Nigeria as “an instrument par excellence for affecting national development”. If a country aims to improve on its economic development, through improved standard of living of its citizens, it ought to give serious attention to the development of the education sector.

In educating citizens, it is a common error to assume that education means teaching in the four walls of a classroom and turning out large numbers of professionals in various fields. For example, when people talk about the educated, they most likely will be referring to engineers, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, teachers, nurses etc. Consequently, most people within the sectors of non-professional careers are often rarely referred to as uneducated. This is an error that needs to be corrected, because education goes beyond what happens within the four walls of school classrooms. Education also goes beyond teaching people how to read and write. Osokoya (2011:2) expatiates on the meaning of education, as he posits that it is “a continuous process which the society establishes to assist its members to understand the heritage of the past and to participate fully and productively in the future”. This further suggests that individuals in the society are led through education to discover their inborn potentials, acquire skills, aptitude and competencies necessary for self-realization and for coping with life’s challenges. Thus, education should be seen as a process that transcends schooling, because an individual may be educated without going through the formal school system. This holds a lot for the education of the nomads in our society.

Having established the fact that nomadic activities contribute a lot to economic development of the nation, it will not be out of place to say that nomads need to acquire skills to boost the gains from their profession. It is an established truth that majority of nomads are without formal education (Okonkwo and Ibrahim, 2014). This is so because they are constantly on the move and have no permanent place of residence. Their

children especially sons also soon become acquainted with this occupation, thus these children are often seen moving along with adults in search of pastures for their cattle. Furthermore, due to their constant mobility, it is always a challenge for them to get enrolled in the formal school setting. This goes on in circles from adults to younger children and leaves nomads without any form of formal education.

However, owing to their financial contribution to national growth and development, which includes the commercial production and provision of cattle products like beef, dairy, leather, hides and skin there is need for constant skills and knowledge enhancement. For example as they constantly migrate, what measures can be taken to protect their cattle in the event of disease outbreak? Difference in climatic condition across the country may make it difficult to become conversant with various diseases that are imminent in different communities other than their own. The knowledge of the treatment of a particular disease in one location may not be applicable in another location. This is detrimental to the lives of cattle and can lead to low output. Apart from protecting the cattle from disease outbreak, nomads must have enough knowledge on how to care for themselves in different locations at every point in time.

Furthermore, with the advancement of technology, there have emerged better and easier ways to raise animals, process and preserve their produce. Instead of manually milking a cow for dairy products, nomads can be educated on how to apply modern technology in a more simplified way to milk, store and process these products. It can even save time and increase output within a shorter period of time. Another aspect or area of nomadic activities that requires effective education is religious and social relations within their host communities at every point in time. While the religious education is not a means to change their religious beliefs to that of the host communities, it is rather to educate them on the religious beliefs of other communities especially if such beliefs are different from theirs and how to live and relate with others to avoid conflict, which has characterized the activities of nomads in recent times in Nigeria. All these will be discussed in perspective when the curriculum for nomadic education is discussed.

Objectives of the programme

In furtherance of the Federal government's pursuit for the provision of quality education for all its citizens irrespective of ethnic, cultural and religious affiliation, Federal Government of Nigeria (2004), emphasizes provision of functional education to all Nigerians. It is in this respect that in 1987, the government established Nomadic Education Programme. This programme is to cater for the peculiar education needs of nomads, while taking their cultural and professional lifestyle into consideration. The following objectives thus underpin the establishment of the Nomadic Education Programme:

1. To expose the nomadic child to elementary forms of modern education

R. M. Aboho; I.W. Yakubu and L. I. El-Yakubu

2. To inculcate in him the spirit of humanity and make the nomadic child realize himself as a member of the Nigerian society.
3. To enable the nomadic child take part in the development of his immediate environment and the country in general.
4. To make the nomadic child able to improve his living conditions, thus eliminating the hardship and constraints in his life. To help him modernise his techniques of herdmanship or animal management.
5. To help the nomadic child appreciate moral and religious practices.
6. To assist the nomadic child develop himself rapidly and fully both physically and intellectually to cope with the demands of the contemporary world.
7. To develop the initiative of the nomadic child and stimulate in him scientific and analytical modes of thinking

A cursory look at the objectives of the programme suggests that without changing the lifestyle of the nomads to unknown ways of doing things, it is geared towards making them better informed, better equipped and more competent as they make progress in their occupation.

The Curriculum

Curriculum means all the activities that students are involved in, both academic and non-academic for their duration in school. Oludipe (2011), defines curriculum as the totality of the syllabuses of activities carried out under the aegis of a school, in response to societal demands, while Utulu, (2002) opines that curriculum is a programme of instruction and activities supervised by the school. Maduwesi, Aboho and Okwuedei (2010:2), also assert that “the sum total of what the students learn at school and what the teachers do in order to make the students learn, from the day the students are admitted to when they leave school may rightly come under the word curriculum”. To further actualise the objectives of the Nomadic Education Programme, a curriculum was formulated. The subjects in the curriculum reflected areas where basic skills and knowledge for their survival as appropriate to their lifestyle are met.

The subjects in the Nomadic Education Programme include: Language art, Mathematics/Arithmetic, Social Studies, Religious and Moral instruction, Elementary Science, Creative Art, Home Economics, Health Education and Hygiene, Basic Principles in Marketing and Management plus any other relevant and required school subjects.

A cursory look at the subjects in the curriculum suggest that the aim is to ensure maximum productivity while nomadic activities are being carried out. For example the study of language art ensures that nomads are able to effectively communicate with community dwellers, for as long as they keep moving. Effective communication reduces friction and clashes between nomads and community dwellers. Nomads must also be able to count the number of cattle they have and also transact business correctly, hence

the inclusion of mathematics/ arithmetic for everyday counting. Social studies and religious/ moral instruction in the curriculum is geared towards peaceful social relations between the constantly travelling nomads and the communities in which they find themselves at any point in time. A good knowledge of the social environment together with ideal religious and moral instruction can help reduce the incessant clashes between nomads.

Furthermore, the inclusion of home economics and health education is aimed at equipping nomads with relevant knowledge to be able to maintain proper hygiene for themselves, family members and their cattle. Should the health of nomads fail for lack of proper care and hygiene, this will affect their labour. Should cattle health and hygiene be compromised, it could lead to their death, hence low productivity and decrease in income. Similarly, knowledge of home economics and other relevant subjects aims to provide various ways on how to process by products of cattle as well as storage and preservation to avoid wastage. The reason that nomads are involved in this occupation is to engage in commercial activities with their cattle. Marketing and management principles is a core subject to enhance their knowledge in financial accountability when cattle and other by products are sold.

As fantastic and promising as the curriculum for Nomadic Education Programme may be, it will not yield positive results if the curriculum contents are not effectively implemented. Since curriculum planners do not implement the contents of the curriculum, attention is turned to the primary implementers of the curriculum. These are the classroom teachers.

The teacher factor

Teachers are those who bear the responsibility of implementing the contents of the curriculum. In other words their primary role is to ensure that they employ suitable methods and techniques to ensure that learners learn. Akindutire and Ekundayo (2012) assert that a teacher is a professional who imparts knowledge to stimulate, guide, direct and facilitate learning. Wallace (2009) opine that a teacher is one with pedagogical skills to train, tutor and instruct and that to become a teacher, lengthy period of training is required. This stresses the need for quality training to be given to teachers which impact will eventually be felt in their service delivery. Akpa (2011:308), opines that “no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Furthermore, Jenefar and Begum (2011) upholds the fact that educational systems cannot record high level of success if they lack quality teachers. It is thus pertinent to attempt a review of who a quality teacher is.

A quality teacher is one who has been properly trained and can put his acquired knowledge to work, while making use of existing structures and materials within a school system to make learners learn. According to Manickam and Begum (2011) and Nagavalli (2011), some characteristics of a quality teacher include: quest for excellence, action-oriented, innovation for change, competency building, understanding concepts

R. M. Aboho; I.W. Yakubu and L. I. El-Yakubu

and learner-centric approach. To achieve all these in teachers and ensure quality, teacher education must be treated with uttermost importance. Oluchukwu (2000) asserts that the production of qualitative teachers in Nigerian education sector is unsatisfactory, while Tahir (2000), opines that undoubtedly, nomads are among the educationally disadvantaged in the country. Several reasons are given for this trend. These include poor teacher training programme, poor pedagogical skills, lack of infrastructure and funds, mobile lifestyle, the use of children in their workforce which makes it difficult for them to be enrolled in schools, poor working conditions of nomadic teachers which make them abandon their duty posts, very poor and unattractive incentives for teachers, indiscriminate transfer of teachers (Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2012; Okeke-Oti and Adaka, 2012 and Yusuf, Afolabi and Oyetato 2014). With such conditions, it is obvious that the quality of nomadic teachers will be compromised.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted a review of nomads and nomadic education in Nigeria. Attempt was made to define who nomads are, their role in the growth of the economy and how this role can be improved upon. The paper also established the fact that nomads in Nigeria are without formal education and stressed the importance of functional formal education to meet their peculiar occupation and lifestyle needs. Also the objectives of the Nomadic Education programme and its curriculum was delved into, while the importance of the teacher factor was further stressed. The paper established that the teacher is instrumental to the successful implementation of the programme, but decried the quality of teachers in the programme. The challenges of qualitative teachers was visited, after which recommendations were made to tackle these challenges.

Recommendations

The poor condition in which nomadic teachers have to work, coupled with poor incentives, and poor infrastructure leaves much to be desired in the role of teachers towards quality service delivery to nomads. More need to be done to ensure that the Nomadic Education Programme does not fail in its objectives. To ensure this, the following recommendations are made.

Government should revisit the programme to ascertain the relevance of its objectives and put measures in place to ensure that the objectives are achieved. Furthermore, in the training of teachers, more should be done to ensure that these would-be teachers receives the quality of training and pedagogical skills needed to give back to the system and continuous professional development should be upheld. Welfare packages should be improved upon to motivate teachers. Furthermore, the working conditions of teachers should be improved upon and should a teacher be transferred, replacement should be made immediately. More should be done to sensitize nomads such that even if they move, they will be willing to enrol their children in the next settlement.

References

- Akindutire, I. O. &Ekundayo, H. T. (2012). Teacher education in a Democratic Nigeria; challenges and the way forward. *Educational Research*. 3(5):429- 435.
- Akpa, O. G. (2000). The Teacher factor as a challenge to the success of UBE in Nigeria. In Akinmade, C. T. O., Oyetunde, T. O., Akpa, O. G., Enoh, O. & Ezenwafor-Ozaji, E. D. (Eds). *Improving Teacher Education in the 21st century Nigeria: challenges and strategies*. (308-312). Jos: University of Jos.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2004). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC.
- Gbamanja, S. P. T. &Aboho, D. A. (2006). *Emerging Issues in Education of the Special Target Group*. Kano: West and Solomon Publishing Coy. Limited.
- Jenefar, F. & Begum, A. J. (2011). *Teacher education: Quality Indicators*. New Delhi: APH Publishing Company.
- Maduwesi, B.U., Aboho, D.A. &Okwuedei, C.A. (2010). *A Practical Guide to Curriculum Development. Third Edition*. Onitsha: West and Solomon Publishing Company.
- Manickam, K. & Begum, J. A. (2011). Quality Assurance in Teacher Education. In Jenefar, F. & Begum, J. A. (Eds.). *Teacher Education: Quality Indicators*. (9-16).
- Nagavalli, T. (2011). Quality Indicators in Teacher Education program. In Jenefar, F. & Begum, J. A. (Eds.). *Teacher Education: Quality Indicators*. (22-32).New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation.
- Okeke- Oti, B. A. &Adaka, T. A. (2012). Teachers quality for the effectiveness of children's primary school Education. *Global Voice of Educators*. 1(1): 1-7.
- Okonkwo, H. I. & Ibrahim, M. A. (2014). Contemporary Issues in Nomadic, Minority and Almajiri Education; problems and prospects. *Journal of Education and Practice*. 5(24): 19-27.
- Oluchukwu, E. E. (2000). The challenges of Teacher Production and Utilization in Nigeria in the 21st century. In Akinmade, C. T. O., Oyetunde, T. O., Akpa, O. G., Enoh, O. A. &Ezenwafor-Ozaji, E. D. (Eds). *Improving Teacher Education in the 21st century Nigeria: challenges and strategies*. (339-347). Jos: University of Jos.

R. M. Aboho; I.W. Yakubu and L. I. El-Yakubu

- Oludipe, D.I. (2011). Developing Nigerian Integrated Science Curriculum. *Journal of Soil Science and Environment Management*, 2 (8):134-145.
- Shultz, W. (2003). Global and domestic nomads or 3rd culture kids. Who are they and what the universities need to know. *Journal of Student Affairs*. 12:6-11.
- Tahir, G. (2000). Teacher demand and supply for Nomadic Education: a challenge to Teacher Education Institution for the 21st century. In Akinmade, C. T. O., Oyetunde, T. O., Akpa, O. G., Enoh, O. A. & Ezenwafor-Ozaji, E. D. (Eds). *Improving Teacher Education in the 21st century Nigeria: challenges and strategies*. (30-37). Jos: University of Jos
- Utulu, R.E. (2002). *The Curriculum and the Teacher: theory and practice*. Makurdi:Selfers Publishers.
- Wallace, S. (2009). *Oxford Dictionary of Education*. Oxford: University Press.
- Yusuf, M. A., Afolabi, F. O. & Oyetayo, M. O. (2014). Professionalization of teaching through functional teacher Education in Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*. 10(4); 107-118.