

THE NECESSITY FOR NOMADIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The migrant groups in Nigeria constitute a substantial proportion of the Nigerian population. They are a formidable front in the agricultural industry in the country. They produce for both the local and the international markets. But it is unfortunate that these sects have remained largely very backward educationally. Many of the educational programmes mounted in the country have not properly accommodated the migrants. It was basically on this that the Federal Government went on to establish the peculiar Nomadic Education Programme by the Decree No. 41 of 1988 to cater for the interest of this sect. This paper reviewed the various migrant groups in Nigeria, the objectives and scope of Nomadic Education in Nigeria. It also examined some factors that make the programme not only necessary but imperative if Nigeria must grow and advance as expected.

Introduction

The migrant groups in Nigeria are numerous and they include the nomads who are the pastoral cattle rearers of the Middle Belt and the Northern Region of Nigeria, the Fishermen of the coastal riverine areas, the residence of the river basins and some farmers who migrate to their farmstat from planting until harvesting periods are over.

These migrant groups constitute a substantial proportion of the Nigerian population. It is necessary to note that the Fulbes generally referred as the Nomadic Fulani alone control the largest single migrant group among others in the country. (Ezeoma, 1987; Aminu, 1991; and Opara, 2002) pin-pointed that the Nomadic Fulanis or the Fulbes number over four million in Nigeria. Tabotndip (2002) concluded that this number together with other migrant groups is too high for Nigeria to dispense with in course of eradicating illiteracy and providing opportunities for skill acquisition to all citizens for the purpose of advancement. In other words, the much desired growth and development being sought for by the Federal Republic of Nigeria through eradicating illiteracy and providing functional education in Nigeria could be impeded if these numbers are not properly harnessed and treated to the package of educational for all'.

This sect of the Nigerian's population has severally been omitted in many government policies and programmes especially in the area of education. The omission has been due to the mode of existence and the pattern of living of these migrant groups. It has been very difficult to harness this sect to participate massively in the formal education programmes of the nation. It is basically for thin reason that the Federal Government of Nigeria went on to promulgate Decree No. 41 of 1989 on December establishing at National Council for Nomadic Education in order to make basic education accessible to all the nomadic groups in Nigeria.

The National Council for Nomadic Education is exceptional because it gave credence to the (nomads) migrants who have been omitted in other educational programmes like the National Primary Education Programme managed by the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) and the Mass Literacy and the Non-Formal Educational Programmes organized under the National Commission for Mass Literacy and the Non-Formal Schemes (NMEC).

For the purposes of effectiveness and efficiency the Nomadic Education Commission established four centers in the Universities of Jos, Maiduguri, Sokoto and Port Harcourt respectively. While the first three Universities located in the Northern Region of the country charged with the responsibility of developing a curriculum for pastoral nomads, that of Port Harcourt in the South is responsible for the Migrant Fishermen and Farmers. These centres are to conduct researches on the migrant groups, undertake curriculum development and instructional materials as well as organize in-service teacher training programmes.

By this move Nigeria has joined other nations like Somali, Kenya, Uganda, Britain, etc. that have been in the race of having to eradicate illiteracy among the nomads and other migrant groups before now. However, Nigeria has never been in slumber as it concerns the education of the nomads because the Colonial Government of Nigeria in 1953 made incursions into this area by establishing a primary school at Karharku in Duara now in Duara Local Government Area in Katsina State.

Scope

Nomadic Education in Nigeria is designed to provide basic and functional literacy skills to the children of the migrant sets in the Nigerian society. It also includes such aspects as training the trainer programme as well as providing curriculum guides for State Co-Ordinators and Supervisors of the Nomadic Education Programme.

Objectives

The objectives of the Nomadic Education Programme could be summarized thus:

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

Reasons for Nomadic Education *Nationalism*

The migrant groups are bonafied Nigerians in every ramification like all other Nigerian citizens. Consequently, they have every right to all the dividends of the Federal, State and Local Governments. Unfortunately for them, they have not been properly accommodated in the policies and programmes of the nation. Yet, they constitute such a substantial proportion of the population that needs to be attended to immediately of illiteracy must be eradicated in Nigeria. Any further deprivation of this largely non-literate people will be a set back in the nation's educational plans towards national growth and development.

^f The implications for not having been harnessed into the on-going educational programmes are numerous but the most glaring among them are conservatism, fanaticism and isolationism which are highly detrimental not only to the other citizens but the nation as a whole. Mallum (1983), Aminu (1991) concluded that the various migrant groups in Nigeria are largely illiterates and of course the most educationally disadvantaged people in Nigeria. In their own contribution, Stenning (1959) and Abonyi (2002) noted that of all the migrant groups, the Nomadic Fulanis are the most educationally disadvantaged because of their devotion to Islam and Islamic Education and they are highly resistant to the Western Education.

In the absence of western education, the migrants especially the Fulani nomads may forever remain in isolation of other communities despite the necessity to interact with these communities for posterity.

Agricultural Contributions

The migrant in Nigeria are a backbone in the agricultural productivity. The pastoral cattle rearers contribute largely to the supply of all the animal products while the Fishermen supply quotoms of catches to the markets and the farmers produce all the food items needed to sustain the population. In a study 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. 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.

In the phase of revitalizing agriculture to its enviable position, a formidable front of this nature in the agricultural industry is supposed to be upgraded with basic education and functional skills. Such skills should be those necessary to diversify these people in the agricultural sector of the country for greater productivity.

The conservative methods and approaches being practised by these viable migrant groups are of very low technology and obscures industrialization for Nigeria which has all the desire towards technological break-through. Ezeoma (1978), in his study discovered that not even one respondent *out* of the one hundred and ninety-four (194) agreed that modern scientific knowledge was advantageous in the management of their animals. This ideology can be very unproductive to the world of the ***The Necessity for Nomadic Education in Nigeria***

pastoralists in this scientific age leading to a decline in their contribution to the nation's Gross Domestic Product and the National Income respectively.

Contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

The products of these migrant groups are consumed both locally and externally thereby contributing substantially to the Gross Domestic Product of the nation. In addition to this, they pay huge

taxes to the government coffers meant for all kinds of development in the nation. Austine (1989) noted that taxpayers are legitimate nationals to exercise civic responsibilities of their nation according to interest.

The author may be suggesting that all taxpayers including the migrant groups have the legal right to enjoy the assets of the nation. It is not also far fetched that huge sums of money for taxes may be evaded by many adults among these groups because there may be no machinery to control tax collection.

From the above, Nomadic Education is an educational package by the government for these largely illiterate people that is very necessary to help them become more productive and contribute even more to the nation.

Contributions to Politics

Formal education will provide skills and knowledge to mobilize the nomads towards greater participation in their own development and that of the nation in general. With the basics of education, the migrants will appreciate all about politics and politicking among the people of Nigeria and elsewhere. It will also enable them know when and how to exercise their civic rights as nationals in the country they all belong to. Their vision of Nigeria will expand hence they will begin to appreciate national ideologies and those of other tribes. Gidado (2000) posited that at worst, nomadic education was necessary to mobilize the nomads to greater participation in their own development - "Don Makiyaya A Ruga".

Changes in Land Use Pattern

Nomadic Education in Nigeria is very necessary to equip the nomads with useful skills to diversify them in their profession. This is necessary because population explosion and varied land use systems are rapidly diminishing the pastoral land of the nomads. Various constructional activities have silted some shallow water courses which remain mere dry valley even in the rainy season.

Indeed, formal education is the only alternative that may solve employment that may soon ravage the nomads. It will also go a long way to reduce inter-tribal conflicts between them and create parley for peace processes towards growth and advancement. Abonyi (2002) advised that the rapid reduction in the available pasture for cattle due to sedentary tribes 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 acquisition of skills through schooling.

Mind Liberation

The pastoral cattle rearers are unshakably committed to their Islamic religious practices capped by Islamic Education. While the Farmers and Fishermen are committed to ancestral and orthodox religious sect that may not liberate the mind as much as education. It is therefore necessary to provide basic skills and other knowledge that will make for self-actualization, self reliance and personal philosophies in life to aid the migrants cope with the recent world trends. Russel (1981) contended that the mind evolves continuously as it encounters new experiences in life.

Government Involvement

It is historic for Nigeria to plan massively only to fail in the course of implementation. Yet, the planning strategies have been so encompassing and excellent to change the future of Nigeria. Evidence are abound in the Universal Primary Education Scheme and the 6-3-3-4 system of education up to an including the Universal Basic Education that is on a sick bed.

Because of the importance of Nomadic Education Programme to Nigeria and the extent to which the government has committed itself to it, it is imperative to see its end for posterity.

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The efforts of the government are traceable to its ability to involve Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) both national and international like the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF); National Veterinary Research Institute (NVRI); Federal School of Pest Control Services (FSPCS); Association for Promotion of Livestock Production for Sahel and Savannah (APESS), etc. to participate in one way or the other to support and boost this programme to a success in Nigeria.

In addition to this, huge amounts of money have been spent in radios, television advertisement and community development in many places. For example, up N1.5m has been spent in 1999 to assist 22 communities in providing deep cement walls, donations of building materials and renovation of damaged school building in Kaduna, Kwara, Plateau, Borno, Taraba, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Adamawa, Gombe, Bauchi, Ogun, Edo, Bayelsa, Ekiti, Osun and Ondo States (Gidado, 2000). The efforts are yielding dividends in the nomadic school enrolments as the enrolment of 157837 in 1998 increased to 163361 in 2000 (Gidado, 2000).

Recommendations

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should properly fund and manage well the funds meant for the Nomadic Education Programme to its full realization.
2. The NCNE should engage the services of experts at all levels of its operation.
3. Nomadic Schools should be located where they are necessary and useful.
4. This Educational Programme should be highly de-politicized to avoid failure like in the preceding programmes.

Conclusion

The Nomadic Education Programme in Nigeria is a peculiar educational programme packaged to cater for the lot of the migrants in Nigeria.

It has not been easy to design a befitting educational programme for the nomads whose mode of existence and pattern of living is quite different from the rest of the citizenry. Having ventured that far it is very necessary to sustain the programme towards achieving its objectives for the purpose of national growth and advancement.

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