

CRITICAL CONSTRAINTS TO THE EDUCATION OF NOMADS IN NIGERIA

Uneze, Chijioke U.

Abstract .

This paper on the critical constraints to the education of nomads in Nigeria looked at the general state of the structure of implementing program of educating nomads. Further, the constraining variables bedeviling the effectiveness were hinged on cultural factors, resource constraints and educational policy flaws. In line with this constraints identified remediative strategies including developing appropriate curricula, research on nomadic educational needs, infrastructure development, stakeholder consensus building and institutional capacity of implemented.

Introduction

Livestock production is a main subsector of Agriculture and contributes meaningfully to its overall growth. Yet in Nigeria this vital subsector is dominated by the Fulani's - a nomadic people. Ismail (1999) had noted that more than 80 percent of Nigerians depend on the Fulani. They keep bulk of the Nigerian herd, providing meat, milk, ghee, cheese, hair, honey, butter, manure, hides and skin etc. Moreover, millions also earn their living by marketing these products even as governments earn revenue from cattle merchandise. Besides, this people who are determined to contribute meaningfully to our GDP are often linked with mobility as their system of production. Although, they essentially move in search of pasture, water and markets for their livestock. The strategy of migration put them far away from basic social services such as Education and health. Even the stocks that move with them are also exposed to environmental stresses like their stockowners. An arrangement of this scenario makes it difficult to harness the full potential of such peoples as citizens of this country.

It is in realization of the strength of this problem that successive governments at the Federal Level had made various interventions at improving the live of nomads. This thesis intends therefore to look at present educational policy targeted at the Fulani peoples of Nigeria, and then purpose meliorative strategies that may be followed to achieve desired policy successes.

Present Structure of Nomadic Education in Nigeria

In conformity with providing equal access to educational opportunities to all Nigerians as envisaged and enshrined in the constitution, the Federal Government realized that unless a special intervention is made at educating the nomads, the realization of this dream would be elusive. Hence the Federal Government established the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) by Decree No. 41 of December, 1989. Accordingly, the broad goals were:

- a. to provide the nomads with relevant and functional education.
- b. to improve the survival skills of nomads by providing them with knowledge and skills that will enable them raise their productivity.
- .c. also participate effectively in nation's socio-economic and political affairs.

Essentially, in meeting the basic educational needs of migrant communities on-site Primary schools, the shift-system, schools with alternative intake, Islanraiyya schools and to a limited extent mobile schools were established by governments (NCNE, 2003).

NCNE (2003) reports further that the commission in its responsibility of primary education to pastoral nomads as at March, 2001 had 1,574 nomadic schools located in all (36) states. The total people enrollment in these schools being 203,844 made up of 118,905 males and 84, 939 females. The total numbers of teachers still at the same period was 4907. Also in the same period about 15,833 pupils successfully graduated from the nomadic school system.

Further observation from the commission reveals that 3.1 million children of nomadic peoples are of school age. Hence, the performance in terms of enrollment was abysmally low.

Major Constraints to the Education of Nomads

The critical constraints bedeviling the educational progress of the nomads in Nigeria for convenience would be treaded into 3 groups- cultural based factors, Resource constraints and Education policy factors.

i. Cultural Factors

The nomads of nature are migratory and require movements to achieve the objectives - their cattle's welfare and that of their families. They move essentially in search of water and pasture. Any attempt to resettle and encourage sedentarization of nomads is often visited with failures. Meaningful education would hardly progress under migration. Awogbade (1980) for instance, argued that a sedentary lifestyle is traumatic for pastoralists and costly and burdensome on government. And more importantly reducing the quality of life of nomadic people. It has often been argued that sedentarization breeches the traditional social relations thereby depriving the pastoralists of their main line of defence. This way development in any educational programme in Nigeria can hardly survive if nomads are involuntarily settled at camps, spots or wherever in order for them to acquire education. Many governments are caught unprepared by the challenge of demand on social services among settled people (Awogbade, 1982).

Also, the centrality of child labour in their production system makes it extremely difficult to allow their children participate in formal schooling. The physical isolation and inaccessibility of the environments is also challenging as to developing a progressive educational programme.

ii. Resource Constraints

Teachers, instructional materials/infrastructure, supervision/inspection of schools are inadequate because the overall levels of finding for financing school-based activities are limited. For instance the NCNE reported that the levels of enrolment in nomadic schools is relatively low- a mere 203, 844 pupils out of a school age population which had been estimated at 3 million children. Also, 4907 teachers for 1574 schools, giving a ratio of about 3 teachers per school. This number is grossly inadequate if any realistic achievement are to be recorded of the universal basic Education programme of the Federal Government. There is an inadequate supply of instructional material such as textbooks, writing materials etc. Inaccessibility of schools most often may hamper the supervision of schools. Probably the roads are not motorable and also the inadequacy of means of transportation. All giving a heavy blow to effective inspection.

iii. Educational Policy

This problem of educational policy affecting nomads manifest in multi facets. The problem fall within 3 broad areas: the goals, curriculum, and the effects of formal education in Africa (Aleyidieno, 1985, Awogbade, 1980).

Educators blame the content of European-style literacy for lack of interest in education among the nomads. Scholars attribute the widespread failure of education in Africa to Pedagogy, which is especially unsuitable to the needs and circumstances of the nomadic people. Here instead of teaching pastoral procedures formal schools spend too much time on teaching history and culture of societies the nomads least know or want to know about. This conventional liberal education ignores the apprenticeship model thereby closing up a vital channel of skill transfer (Bincan, 1992; Alayidieno, 1985). The products of the system shy away from rural life and instead go to the cities and join the pool'of the unemployed city dwellers who are looking for salaried job.

The children of the nomads would then prefer to be unemployed as city dwellers after graduation than return to livestock herding in the bush. This trend if not checked and managed is capable of eroding livestock productivity in Nigeria.

Ismail (1999) for example reported that the curricula of nomadic education make it difficult for students to re-enter the pastoral life after graduation. Further, the first seven recipients of nomadic education in Nigeria have studied Medicine, Accounting, and Pharmacy or education. None of the students has returned to nomadic pastoralism.

Accepted as a force in changing values, western education, nomads say adulterates the traditional values. Older nomads worry that education will breed a generation susceptible to the

Critical Constraints to the EDucartion of Nomads in Nigeria

thoughts of sedentarization. They allege that education softens the youngsters, especially girls, and weakens their commitment to traditional values (Aleyidieno, 1985; Awogbade, 1980).

Remediative Strategies

Given the myriads of problems of nomadic education, this thesis proposes the following as factors urgent for remediative actions.

- a. The development of appropriate curricular guide that makes it easy for students to re-enter pastoral life after graduation is imperative. The teachings in nomadic education curriculum must center on pastoral procedures, emphasizing work skills and herd technologies. The present curricular in eight subjects viz: English, Mathematics, Primary science, Social studies, fulfilled, Islamic Religious Knowledge, Health education and Handcraft for nomadic pastoralist primary schools is deficient.
- b. An urgent research at understanding the lifestyle and education needs of the nomads is needful. The result might put to rest the debate on sedentarization of nomadic pastoralists that has long attracted the interest of economist, geographers, demographers, and anthropologist more than any other issue in pastoral nomadism. Also, how migratory life of nomads can be integrated to school attendance without disruptive activities would better be appreciated by a research finding.
- c. Infrastructure development along the grazing routes of nomads is necessary in improving their well being. Dams, water-points and salt licks are infrastructural facilities government at all levels should seriously think of providing for the nomads. At least to get the mind of these nomads, since this facility touches directly on their livelihood.
- d. Consensus building mechanism is very essential in capacity building for the nomads. Community leaders and educational administrators must develop, a platform that strengthens the understanding of policies, making it easier for them to buy and own such. This way stakeholder shows greater enthusiasm for established programs. Consequently, nomads may even build, fund and manage their own schools in order to engender sustainability of the programme even when government withdraws.
- e. Strengthening institutional capacity of the implementers of the programme through employment, training and retraining, workshops, supervision and inspection etc are necessities for better delivery of the programme.

Conclusion

This paper has made a pierce through the present structure of implementing education for the nomads after defining the necessity for their education. More compelling were the economic justification and social obligation on the part of government. The problems or rather critical constraints of the programme in its present state were cleverly discussed, with clear consideration for substantive issues. In line with settling the problems compelling remediative strategies were identified.

It is the believe of the writer that a modest contribution at solving the ever problems of nomadic education in Nigeria has been exposed in the paper.

References

- Aleyidieno, S. (1982). *Education and Occupational Diversification among Young Learners. The Problem of Harmonizing Tradition Practices with the Lessons of our Colonial Heritage*. Processing of a Seminar held in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
- Awogbade, M. (1980). *Livestock Development and Range use in Nigeria*. Proceeding of a Conference held in Nairobi by Institute of Development Studies.
- Awogbade, M;(1982). Prospects to settlement of the Pastoral Fulani. The case Study of Rumakukar-Jangari. *C.S.E.R. Research Report (9)*.

Unt'ze, Clijioko U.

Bincan, N. (1992). *Government Role in Livestock Research in Nigeria*. Paper presented at the International Workshop on Research and Development of Goat Production Systems in Humid Tropics Held at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife.

Ismail, I. (1999). From Normalism to Sedentarism, An Analysis of Development Constraints and •Public Policy Issues in the Socio-economic Transformation of the Pastoral Fulani of *Nigeria Published in Zumuta Association U.S.A. Inc.*

National Commission for Nomadic Education (2003). *Bulletin Prepared by the Department of Programme Development and Extension*. Kaduna: NCNE.