Abstract

Nomadic education is a programme designed for the children of nomads. The aim of the programme apart from equipping the children with the skills with which to take part in the development of their immediate environment and the country in general, include, making the child able to improve his living conditions, eliminating the hardships and constraints in his life; to help him modernize his techniques of herdmanship and animal management. In order to realize these goals, the National Commission for Nomadic Education was established in 1989 and charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the children of nomads gain access to free and compulsory qualitative education. In consonance with the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), there is need to appraise the extent of the implementation of nomadic education programme. This paper, therefore, addresses the extent of the implementation of the programme. It examines the government’s efforts towards the realization of the programme objectives and implementation strategies. Recommendations were also made on how to enhance the realization of the goals of nomadic education programme.

Introduction

Who are the Nomads?

Nomadic populations in Nigeria are scattered in many states of the federation. The populations are made up of mainly pastoralists, migrant fishermen and farmers. The pastoralists are predominantly the Fulbe (Fulani), Shuwa, Koyam, Badawi, dark Buzu and Badawi who are found mainly in Bornn and Yobe States (Ogunsola 1998). According to Ogunsoia, by 1986, their literacy rate stood at 0.02 percent. The other pastoralists are found in the Lake Chad basin area of Nigeria. The migrant fishermen are densely concentrated on the Atlantic Coastline, the riverine and the river basin areas of the country. The literacy level of this group is 2.0 percent by 1986. The migrant crop farmers can be found in Benue, Kogi, Edo, Ebonyi and Cross River States. Nomadic communities are itinerant groups whose pattern of activity is dictated by the needs imposed on them by the requirements of the animals or the crops they tend. Awogbade (1991), opined that nomadism or wandering pastoralism is the mode of existence of human communities totally or partially dependent on the husbandry of one or more species of domesticated animals. These categories of people are educationally disadvantaged in the acquisition of the formal education and getting social and welfare facilities as a result of their constant migration and dispersion.

The migrant fishermen, for instance are found in a particular geographical terrain under very difficult aquamarine ecological environment which more often than not present intimidating obstacles to the education of children in these areas. Awogbade, further noted that in most of the riverine areas, it is difficult to initiate long term educational development because some of the human settlements are scattered and sometimes transient in nature. The true situation of their lives is that a good number of primary school age children are locked in some of the creeks with little or no opportunity to receive primary education. The nature of their job oblige them to move from one fishing and/or selling location to another, with their children who are either too tender to be left behind to attend distant schools or are used to help their parents to whom fishing has become a source of livelihood. For these nomads to participate actively in the affairs of the nation and contribute positively to the development of the country there is need for a kind of affirmative action on the part of the government.

Government Policy on Nomadic Education

The desire on the part of the government to provide equal educational opportunities to all school age children in Nigeria led to the formulation of nomadic education policy. Nomadic education is defined as the informal education provided by the nomadic peoples within their cultural contexts as well as the formal and non-formal education provided by the nomads, national governments and international agencies with the aim of promoting the culture of the nomadic peoples and equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills so as to empower them to develop themselves and their communities (Ezeomah n.d). Such skills will also enable them to contribute meaningfully to the development of the
nation. It is against this background that the Federal Government in 1989 promulgated Decree 41 of 1989 which established National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE). This decree became operational from January 1990, while the Commission with its board was inaugurated in June 5, 1991 (NCNE 1999). The establishment of National Commission for Nomadic Education is in response to the provision of the 1999 constitution which stated that government .shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.

According to the Decree, the Nomadic Education Commission, in addition to other functions have the following major objectives.

1. To formulate policy and issue guidelines in all matters relating to nomadic education in Nigeria.
2. To provide funds for:
   (a) the research and personnel development for the improvement of nomadic education in Nigeria.
   (b) the development of programmes on nomadic education:
   (c) equipment, other instruction materials (including teaching aids and amenities), construction of classrooms and other facilities relating to nomadic education.
3. To arrange effective monitoring and evaluation of the activities of agencies concerned with nomadic education.
4. To establish, manage and maintain primary schools for nomadic children. (Decree 41, 1989).

The Objectives of Nomadic Education

According to the 1995/96 Nomadic Education Report, the objectives of Nomadic Education include attitudinal changes, acquisition of functional literacy and numeracy and skills relevant to the life-styles and occupational roles of the nomads. These objectives are to be achieved through:

(a) exposing the nomadic child to formal education;
(b) inculcating the spirit of humanity and make the nomadic child realize himself as a member of the Nigerian society;
(c) enabling the nomadic child take part in the development of his immediate environment and the country in general;
(d) making the nomadic child able to improve his living conditions; eliminating the hardships and constraints in his life. To help him modernize his techniques of herdmanship and animal management;
(e) helping the nomadic child to appreciate moral and religious practices;
(f) assisting the nomadic child to develop himself rapidly and fully, both physically and intellectually to cope with the demands of the contemporary world;
(g) developing the initiative of the nomadic child and stimulate in him scientific and analytical modes of thinking (NCNE, 1996).

The policy on nomadic education is in consonance with the national educational goals as contained in the National Policy on Education (NPE) which states inter alia ... The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of menial, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society (NPE 2004:8). The policy is also in conformity with the provisions in the Implementation Guidelines for the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme (2000) which stated that the broad aim of the programme is to lay the foundation for life-long learning through the inculcation of appropriate learning-to-learn, self awareness, citizenship and life skills.

Implementation of Nomadic Education Policy in Nigeria

Since the establishment of the Nomadic Education Commission in 1989. the Commission has concentrated its activities on the 6.5 million nomadic pastoralists and 2.8 million migrant fishermen. Out of the 9.3 million nomads in Nigeria. 3.1 millions are children of school age (NCNE 1999). A review of the activities of the commission in 1989 shows that as at 1998. there were 1,321 nomadic schools, out of which 1,022 were for nomadic pastoralists, while 299 were for migrant fishermen in 35 states of the federation. The total pupil enrolment in these schools was 157.837, out of which 92.290 were boys while 65.547 were girls. There were 4,926 classes and 4208 teaches and 347 supervisors (NCNE 1998).

There has been a steady progress in the implementation of nomadic education policy in Nigeria. This progress cuts across pupil enrolment, teacher population and establishment of more
schools. The Commission’s monitoring reports showed that in 2006, the overall enrolment in the 2,094 nomadic schools was 355,909 pupils. A breakdown of the figure shows that 264,079 pupils were in 1,670 pastoralist schools while 88,288 pupils were in 451 migrant fishermen’s schools. These schools have a total number of 7,169 teachers with a ratio 1:49 pupils. The qualification of these teachers, according to the report range from NCE, Teacher’s Grade Two to Teachers’ Grade Two referred. The report stated that those who are yet to attain the national minimum qualification of NCE shall be encouraged to improve on their knowledge and certificates to guarantee the quality of learning in the nomadic schools.

Out of 355,909 pupils in nomadic schools nationwide, 206,225 representing 58 percent were male while 149,684 representing 42 percent were female showing a 16 percent imbalance in the schools. The report also noted that a remarkable increase in the number of graduating students has been recorded. In 2004/2005 academic session, a total number of 24,437 graduands were recorded out of which 14,362 transited to various schools. This is against the initial record of 1,462 pioneer graduands in 1996/97 academic session out of which only 580 graduands went for secondary education (Muhammad 2007).

From the foregoing one can infer that the implementation of nomadic education policy in Nigeria recorded a measurable degree of success. This success is due to a number of factors. First, the government has shown a lot of financial commitment to the programme. Under the 2006 capital Appropriation Act, for instance, the Commission secured a forty million Naira (N40m) project approval. After the debt cancellation by Paris Club, the Commission got additional allocation of five hundred million Naira (N500,000,000.00) from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) office in the presidency (Muhammad 2007). This financial commitment on the part of the government enabled the commission to establish more schools, train more teachers and extension agents, procurement of educational facilities including collapsible classroom structures, creating awareness/sensitizing the nomads on the importance of education. Second, the commitment of the commission and field workers helped tremendously in the successful implementation of the policy. Third, the nomads have been sensitized on the value of education. Consequently, they have come to embrace education realizing that it is a veritable tool for development and survival in a competitive technological world. Fourth, there is a manifestation of judicious utilization of fund by the Commission. This success notwithstanding, there are some constraints in the implementation of nomadic education.

**Constraints to the Implementation of Nomadic Education Programme in Nigeria**

Although available data above show that there has been a steady increase in the enrolment of nomadic children but when viewed against the estimated 3.1 million school age children of nomadic population, the figure is certainly low. It becomes more worrisome when one considers the lower level of participation of the nomadic girls when compared to that of the boys. This is however a global phenomenon because girl’s education lags generally behind boys in most developing countries. UNICEF, in Obiesie (200-7), noted that 80 million girls aged 6-11 years compared to 54 million boys do not go to primary school. In the same vein, in Nigeria amongst the sedentary population, available data on pupils enrolment in primary education show that by 2002, out of a total enrolment of 19,342,650 pupils, 8,569,745 were girls which is about 11 percent in favour of the males (FME in Obiesie, 2007). From the data on pupils enrolment earlier cited, girls do not appear to participate much in primary education.

The Commission noted that the major constraints to the participation of nomadic children in education include:

1. their constant migrations/movements in search of water and pasture in the case of pastoralists and fish in the case of the migrant fishermen;
2. the centrality of child labour in their production system, thus making it extremely difficult to allow their children to participate in formal schooling;
3. incessant clashes between the nomads and the sedentary population and between different fishing ports. This has led to the depopulation of many children's schools:
4. the irrelevance of the school curriculum which is tailored to meeting the needs of sedentary groups and thus ignores the educational needs of nomadic peoples;
5. the environmental degradation of the Niger Delta area which effects adversely the Migrant fishermen children's schools;
6. their physical isolation, since they operate in largely inaccessible physical environments;
7. the activities of oil companies in the Niger Delta area which affect the environment, coupled with utter neglect of the development of the school by both states and Local Government Area;
8. a land tenure system that makes it difficult for the nomads to acquire land and settle in one place;
9. the domestication of the Universal Basic Education Law at the states which affects effective implementation of nomadic education programme. The expectation is that all the components of basic education - conventional primary school, nomadic education, adult literacy and junior secondary be carried along at the state level. This has not been the case as most of the states only recognize the conventional primary and junior education (NCNE 1999, Muhammad, 2007).

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to enhance the efficacy of the implementation of nomadic education programme.
1. Only qualified teachers should be recruited to teach in nomadic schools. In other words, those who do not possess the minimum teaching qualification of NCE should not be recruited.
2. Aggressive campaign should be mounted and directed against nomadic population on the need for education. Parents should be persuaded to allow their children to go to school. Implementation of the penalty for those who refuse to send their children to school as contained in the UBE ACT should be enforced with vigour.
3. State governments should be persuaded to show equal interest in nomadic education as they do in conventional primary and junior education.
4. There is need for frequent meetings and discussions between the nomads and the sedentary population. This is to avoid frequent clashes.

Conclusion

In spite of the above constraints, the policy on nomadic education has recorded reasonable achievements. One important and current issue in education is Education for ALL (EFA). One of the goals of EFA is expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. The children of nomads are certainly vulnerable and disadvantaged. It is expected that by 2015, all children, especially girls and those in difficult circumstances and those of ethnic minority origin have gained access to free and compulsory qualitative education. Judging from the enrolment data, teacher population and the number of nomadic schools cited earlier, the realization of EFA goals by 2015 will be a mirage. That teachers with Teachers' Grade Two certificates as well as those referred in Teachers' Grade Two are still found in the classroom does not guarantee qualitative education for nomadic children. There is, therefore, the need to evaluate the nomadic education programme with a view to enhance: the quality of the teaching staff, the enrolment figure, number of nomadic schools etc.

References


