THE STATE OF NOMADIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: NEED TO REPACKAGE THE SYSTEM

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Abstract
The nomads have contributed positively to the economy of Nigeria yet, they have suffered social and educational deprivation and neglect in many respects. Nomadic education is therefore an effective approach to enhance emancipation from illiteracy and to make nomads develop themselves. Nomadic education is a special educational package designed for the children of nomads in Nigeria to enable them take advantage of Western education without obstructing their nomadic life. The paper discussed the nomadic education in Nigeria, spelling out the aims and objectives, some of the problems of the programme and how the nomadic education programme can be repackaged in order to attain the objectives of the National Policy on Education. Some ways of repackaging the nomadic education programme were suggested, among which are; that the government should provide pasture land for the cattle to reduce the movement of the nomads as well as give special salary packages to the staff.

Introduction
The government was worried that a segment of the country's population was living without the rudiments of literacy and numeracy in the western sense. In an effort to educationally carry along these people, the government realized that their lifestyle, work, roles, environment and peculiar needs do not permit them to attend normal sedentary schools, despite their importance to the economic life of the nation. This group must be carried along in terms of education for the achievement of the national objectives. In order to give basic education to this group, the Federal Government launched the National Nomadic Education Programme in 1986, when Professor Jubril Aminu, was the Minister of Education.

Nomadic education has been an effective approach to enhance emancipation from illiteracy, dependence, retrogressive and unprogressive level of a sectional part of the nation to make nomads develop themselves. (Olokede, 2005). Nomadic education is a special educational package designed for the children of nomads in Nigeria to enable them take advantage of Western Education without obstructing their nomadism.

To Tahir (1997), nomadic education entails non-traditional education for the mobile Fulani group, who are severely deprived of basic education, skills, reading, writing, numerical and citizenship to enable them perform effectively in societal and national affairs. Tahir (1998), in another vein also sees nomadic education as: a means of wiping out illiteracy, improving the productive capacities of the youth adults, promoting social justice and equity.

Nomads in Nigeria are a group of people that moves from place to place in search of livelihood. These people include cattle rearers, migrant fishermen and crop farmers. They are mainly illiterates. For the purpose of this paper the pastoralists group is being discussed.

One of the major constraints of the nomads' participation in formal education is their constant movement in search of water and pasture for their cattle.

Possession of a large herd of cattle is their biggest asset. This is not just because of its economic worth but because of its status symbol. The amount of cattle a nomad owns means a lot to him. This is why he goes over a long distance, come rain, sunshine, to secure water and pasture for his cattle. (Akpochafor, 1995). Arising from sincere urge to find grass and water for their animals, they move across boundaries, hence,
Afwata, Oniyama, and Omoraka (1999), refer to them as no respecter of boundaries. They have constantly supplied the country with the animal hides and skin for leatherwork. (Lar, 1989).

The nomads are also the backbone behind the production of milk and meat in Nigeria. In spite of their contributions to the country, they have been socially and educationally marginalized, deprived, denied and disadvantaged. (Ohanazoeze, 2006).

Nomadic Education in Nigeria

On the 8th of September 1982, the National Literacy Day, the Ministry of Education identified the nomads as one of the target groups who have been educationally deprived. Many people especially in the northern part of the country saw the scheme as being designed to bring education to the doorsteps of the nomads. The Federal Government showed interest in the education of the nomads by the establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NONE) by Decree 41 of 12th December, 1989. (Federal Ministry of Information, 1989). The headquarters is in Kaduna. The establishment of the commission is a strategic attempt towards equality of educational opportunities among the nomads.

The NCNE is charged with the responsibility of developing relevant educational curricula for the nomads, taking their peculiarities into consideration.

The intention according to Ahmed (1993), is to design the curricula that provide education, which is at par with what is provided in non-nomadic schools. To ensure that the nomadic children follow their lessons with ease and to achieve relevance, their curricula are anchored on their local culture.

The scope of nomadic education is not comprehensive enough because some people in the target population are left out either on political or geographical basis. (Tahir, 1999).

The aims and objectives of nomadic education were derived from the National Policy on Education. The Blueprint on Nomadic Education recommended and outlined that the content of the nomadic education should include the following subjects - Primary Mathematics, English Language, Fulfude and/or Hausa (Local Language), Primary Science, Social Studies, Home Economics, Agriculture, Health Science and Handicraft.

The specific objectives of nomadic education programme are as follows:
a. Expose the nomadic child to the elementary forms of modern education;
b. Inculcate the spirit of humanity and make the nomadic child realize himself as a member of the Nigerian society;
c. Enable the nomadic child take part in the development of his immediate environment, and the country in general;
d. Make the nomadic child able to improve his living conditions, thus eliminating the hardships and constraints in his life. To help him modernize his techniques of herdsman ship or animal management.
e. Help the nomadic child to appreciate moral and religious practices.
f. Assist the nomadic child to develop himself rapidly, fully, both physically and intelligently to cope with the demands of the contemporary world;
g. Develop the initiative of the nomadic child and stimulate in him scientific and analytical modes of thinking.

In order to ensure the supply of the relevant texts for the education of the children of the nomads, the NCNE in conjunction with the University of Sokoto developed and adopted textual materials, in the various subjects. To ensure that the materials were in conformity with the national standards and within the expectations of the target groups, subject specialists, curriculum experts and professionals who are knowledgeable in the culture and lifestyles of the nomads were involved in the development of these materials.

Some multi-faceted approaches or models were adopted for the purposes of instruction:
1. **Mobile School** - made up of tarpaulins, which are collapsible and can be reassembled after instruction.
2. **On-Site-School** - located along movement routes at fixed points of reference. They are mostly located where the population remains fairly long in the area.
3. **Regular Schools for Settled Groups**
   especially those found in various ranches.
4. **The Shift System** - an equivalent to morning and afternoon school. This is to encourage the pupils to attend school when it is convenient for them.
5. **Evening School** - designed for those who attend lesson at the close of herding.
6. **Radio Programme** - meant for nomads who carry their radios along with them. Instructions are given by radio.

**Problems of the Nomads**

Some of the problems that hinder the implementation of nomadic education include:

1. **Shortage of Grazing Land** - The nomads are compelled to move from time to time looking for favourable places to graze their cattle. In some cases, there is a stereotype hatred and suspicion among the nomads and farmers due to shortage of grazing field and water, which usually result into conflicts and clashes.
2. **Underfunding** - The lack of fund syndrome that has become the slogan of Nigeria government has also affected the programme. The amount of money allocated annually for the programme is hardly enough. This has led to the death of infrastructural materials and the non-replacement of decayed/dilapidated facilities and equipment.
3. **Lack of Supervision and Monitoring**
   Supervision is an essential ingredient of effective school system. Most nomadic schools are located in areas that are not easily accessible. This affects their supervision.
   (Imonivwerha and Enaibe 2007).

4. **Transfer of Teachers** - The transfer, of nomadic teachers to conventional schools without replacement is a big problem in this programme. Some of these teachers were trained by the NCNE. Some of these teachers work out their transfer themselves. This is as a result of lack of motivation from the government in spite of the fact that many of them face dangers and hazards in the bush.
5. **Health Problems** - Not only do the animals face hazards from the tse-tse flies and shortage of water which may affect their health. The nomads themselves also fall sick with no access to adequate health services.
6. **Attitude of the Nomads** - In spite of the fact that the government is trying to bring the programme to limelight, the attitude of some of the nomads is very discouraging. They lack interest in this lofty programme. Many of them especially the girls do not complete the programme. This brings about low enrollment in the final examinations.

**Repackaging the Nomadic Education**

From the discussion, it is obvious that the government’s intention for the pastoral nomads education is laudable. However, the aims and objectives slated for them to attain a considerably remarkable level of literacy are yet to receive positive results. This is why there is need to repackage the system so that there will be an above-average attainment of the goals of this education.

Below are some strategies for improvement on the nomadic education programme:

1. The Federal Government should ensure re-inauguration of nomadic education in all the local government areas where nomads inhabit. This will encourage the nomads to send their children to nomadic schools.
2. The teachers can be pre-exposed to the study of nomadic culture or ways of life at a pre-service training institution. At the end of the training, the teachers would have been grounded to execute the nomadic education curricula.
3. Just as Ezewu, Dienye and Awotua-Efeobo (1997), recommended for the migrant fishermen education, some should be adopted for the nomadic education. Teachers for the nomadic education programme should be given adequate re-training after their initial training at the Teachers' College. This is because the training provided at the regular Training Colleges is not adequate for the execution of the nomadic education programme.

4. In line with the above, apart from training teachers after their TC II for the programme, nomadic education courses should be mounted in the curricula of the universities and Colleges of Education.

5. The teachers for the programme should be made to understand that they will work under difficult and hazardous conditions and therefore, should be equipped with the necessary equipment and skills for survival and functioning in such situations. These teachers should be appropriately rewarded so that their willingness to perform and attain good quality and quantity performance can be guaranteed. This will also reduce the indiscriminate transfer of teachers from nomadic to state schools.

6. Special salary packages should be designed for the nomadic education staff.

7. Teachers for the programme should be preferably Fulbe or any person acceptable to the community who can speak Fulfulde fluently.

8. A competent nomadic teacher must possess a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and the way of life of the nomads. To do this, nomadic teachers should engage in sandwich programmes which will make them obtain a minimum teaching qualification (NCE) as prescribed by the government.

9. The Federal Government in collaboration with the three tiers of government and other interest groups should be responsible for the nomadic education. The funding should not be shouldered by the Federal Government alone.

10. By the virtue of the arid conditions surrounding the nomads, government should establish irrigation system. This could be achieved through the construction of dams, sinking of boreholes construction of elaborate underground reservoirs to store water.

11. The government can establish a pasture land which will provide pasture grasses for the animals. This will reduce the movement of the nomads. Some of the pasture and fodder crops can be stored. To enhance the growth of these fodder crops, the Ministry of Agriculture should ensure that fertilizers are available to the nomads.

12. As regards the health of the nomads as well as their cattle, health centres should be established at different settlements where the nomads can be attended to if need be. The government should reach the nomads with vaccines and drugs to reduce the death incidence among their animals.

13. Adult Literacy Centres can also be established. The nomadic education should not be left for the nomadic children alone. Centres can be organised to educate the parents in the evenings after the day's work. To ensure gender parity, there should be centres for women. The women should be taught how to sew or cook food other than the ones they are used to.

The women can be organised to form cooperative associations. All these are geared towards the attainment of some basic literacy and numeracy skills and acquisition of life skills in modern income generating activities to improve the earning capacities and raise more income. (Tahir, 2002).

Conclusion

Nomadic education is a compensatory education scheme targeted at the nomads who have suffered social deprivation in many respects. Viewing the importance of the nomads
in the country, conscious effort should be made not only to educate them but also to give them some quality and functional education, which will make them not to segregate themselves from the society.

The education will help them to contribute meaningfully to the economy of the country. All hands should, therefore, be on deck to make sure that the nomads are educated since it will bridge the gap between the educationally privileged segment of the nation and the educationally disadvantaged nomads.

References


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