

# NOMADIC EDUCATION AND NATION BUILDING

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## **Abstract.**

Education is considered as a gateway to national progress and development as well as a form of social policy. In this connection, educational programmes are geared towards enhancing literacy at all levels and hence facilitating the achievements of the country in general. Nomads can be described as communities of people that move from one place to another in search of livelihood. Most of them are illiterates. They are the most disadvantaged in the country regarding the provision of formal education. This paper focuses attention on the nomadic education programme in Nigeria regarding its effect on nation building. The paper also examines the economic, social and political effect of nomadic education programme on the nomads and the country in general.

## **Introduction**

In Nigeria, one of the most controversial issues in the educational circle is the question of equality of educational opportunity for all citizens in the country. Many people believe that without education, one cannot achieve his social and economic upliftment in the society. Dubey (1979) asserts that "education is believed to help one acquire the vocational skill needed for the country's economic growth". Equality of educational opportunity has been an enduring concern of all post-colonial governments in Africa particularly Nigeria. Since independence in 1960, huge investments have been made in education in order to reduce inequality of access to education among different social and ethnic groups in the country. Some of these policies implemented by the Federal Government include: the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976, the massive expansion of secondary and tertiary sectors of education, the establishment of special agencies for promoting adult literacy and today the Nomadic Education Programme.

## **Who are Nomads?**

Nomadism is a world wide phenomenon. Nomads are referred to as ethnic or socio-professional groups who travel and migrate in large or small clan groups in search of livelihood within a community. This movement is also to avoid seasonal diseases which affect and extinct the animals. Such wanderings from one place to another usually cut across local, state and political borders.

## **What then is Nomadic Education?**

As maintained by Gbamanja (1997), "Nomadic education can be described as an educational programme that takes care of the nomads, that is to change the way the nomads think, the way they feel and their overt actions" In Nigeria, nomads can be classed into cattle nomads, the migrant fisherman and the farming nomads. These groups of Nigerians especially the cattle rearers have different settlement patterns-total nomads pattern, semi-nomadism, and ranching. Nomadic schools came about as a result of federal government dissatisfaction with the rate of development of education among some groups in Nigeria. This is also a planned programme which suits the nomadic culture as well as their mode of life. The programme is aimed at fostering unity and development. This programme has covered other ecological areas with a view of finding out what type of education such persons need in the overall national development. Nomadic education as designed is to take care of the nomads and the migrant fishermen who have been denied their right to education because of their geographical locations. The programme also aimed at enabling the nomads to acquire functional literacy for general information,

enlightenment as well as basic numeracy for accounting and improved management of stock. Professor fibril Aminu, the founder of this programme should be acknowledged in this regard. Since the nomads play important role in the supply of meal, dairy and leather, a curriculum for the improvement on their cattle rearing techniques and the use of modern-day dairy and animal husbandry. The content of the curriculum is geared towards learning experience and activities which include: Functional literacy. Basic

numeracy, Fishery/Animal Husbandry, veterinary medicine, Health and Physical Education. Social Studies, Religious and Moral Instructions and Home Economics. Agwu (1993) in Gidado and Muhammed (1998) in line with the specification of the National Policy on Education (1981), maintained that, the medium of instruction for the first three years of primary education should be the mother tongue of the nomadic people. He added that the objective should be to enable the nomadic child achieve initial literacy in his mother tongue. Lar (1989) added that, " curriculum is not to give the nomads a special or separate type of education but aim at total integration nomadic education with that of normal education system". However, the complex and the remote nature of the nomadic people's environment are to be greatly considered.

### **Objective of the Programme**

The aims and objectives of nomadic education as derived from the National Policy on Education are: The inculcation of national unity, the development of the right type of attitude and values for (the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society, the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around him and the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences, both mental, social and physical. However, helping the nomadic child to improve in his occupational role, the following specific objectives are derived: To expose the nomadic child to formal education; to inculcate the spirit of humanity and make him realize himself as a member of the Nigerian society; enable the nomadic child take part in the development of his immediate society and the country in general; to make the nomadic child be able to improve his living conditions; to help modernize techniques of herdsmanhip and animal management; to help them appreciate moral and religious practices and to assist them develop initiative. As summarized by Lar (1997) " Nomadic education aims at sensitizing the minds of the nomads to be in line with that of the sedentary people." The education aims at improving the occupational role of the nomads thus stimulating scientific knowledge, acquisition of skill, self development and social integration.

### **Effect of 'Nomadic Education and Community Development**

Education in the wider sense of the term has always been an important factor in the way of life of people. Parents consider education as a sacred trust to discharge their obligations regarding the child's socialization. Throughout the child's daily activities and later in adolescence, he is made aware of material and spiritual fundamentals of life. These include customs and traditions where ideas, norms, attitudes, values belief and cultures are "taught" to the growing child. To the nomads because of their movement, they are non-school society. As such they cannot get easy access to education provided for the sedentary dominant groups. They are reluctant to send their children to school as a result of their mobile mode of life and since they do not own land. Young boys of about the age of 5 years and above are taught and given the task of keeping the calves, tying up the calves in the evening and finally spending the entire family with the cattle. Apart from living a nomadic life, another major distinct characteristic is their isolation from the dominant group. Such isolation has on the other hand, made them to suffer disadvantages and deprivation in the provision of social amenities. With the traditional education given to them by their parents, the nomadic children have been severely deprived of formal education especially in the acquisition of reading and writing skills. Lar (1982) suggested that "in the case of nomads, their constant movement does not seem to favour formal education hence the need to relate it to their cultural life. Non formal education seemed to be best suited to their mode of life." Since the nomads are noted U

be members of a group rather than individuals, their independence should be used to plan relevant educational programme to take form of community education.

### **Economic, Social and Political Effect on Nomadic Education and National Development**

Schools are instruments of the national purpose. Mason (1972) disclosed that "schools are supposed to bring change of attitude, that is they encourage the development of the good values of the society". Nomadic education in Nigeria is essentially a primary and adult education programme designed to wipe out illiteracy, improve the productivity of" the youth and adult, promote social and equity and sensitize the nomads to their basic human and constitutional rights as bonafide Nigerians.

Education has given the nomads the ability to write and compute, since their children can advance along with others. The nomads have improved their animals' productivity and better rural services which has provided them the skills and abilities required for transformation of the economy. In terms of labour markets and health, there is an active participation among the nomads. Today, more women of

child-bearing age are remaining in labour markets, their women are frequently attending clinics during pregnancy and after child birth. In revenue generation, their taxable adult; participate fully in tax payment in various communities unlike before .

Social change is an important part of social life. It occurs and continues as an essential ingredient of societal life in rural and urban areas. Many states in the country have recognized the benefits of educating the nomads and as such devoted resources to eradicate ignorance in the society. The Plateau State in the Middle Belt is rated high as regard the programme. Aboho (2000) maintained that "in Benue and Taraba States, the Nomadic Education learners have been exposed internally as their ability to mix with many societies" He further stressed that "just like in Adult Education, the skills and ideas acquired from the programme has a liberating style on their social behaviour". Through this programme, the nomads have gained their reasoning power, expand their consciousness and have good feeling in their environment and society they belong.

Regarding the effect on politics, education is better felt in the presence of some other complementary factors which help to actualize the development process. These factors include political stability, availability of productive resources, effective communication etc. Education can as well solve the needs of the society politically since it is considered as a social institution. Nomadic education as an aspect of education can develop a society politically hence the active contribution of members in the society.

To encourage more political activities among the Fulanis (Nomads), Aboho (2000) asserts that "during the period of registration, this set of people (Nomads) were adequately registered. They were freely allowed to vote a candidate of their choice in any political party." This assertion shows that the contributions of the nomads in various areas has a great impact on Nigerian politics and consequently on nation building.

### **Conclusion**

The Federal Government of Nigeria has for long recognized that the nomadic population in the country are educationally disadvantaged, since they are denied access to education which is counter to the spirit of the Federal Government Constitution. This again is relevant to the provisions of the National Policy on Education hence the establishment of the programme in 1998 to address the problem of access.

This programme has assisted to alleviate poverty amongst the masses as they have acquired basic functional education for improvement of living standard and income earning capabilities for the nomads and also, the expansion of educational opportunities for the school age children of the migrant populations.

Though the achievements of the programme are not highly recorded as desired goals, some modest gains have been recorded. Generally, the programme is considered a success.

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