

NOMADIC EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper was on Nomadic education: a tool for rural community development in Nigeria. The Historical development of nomadic education in Nigeria was traced and the role of nomadic education in rural community development was discussed which includes access to education, empowerment and capacity building, bridging the education gap in rural areas. The paper highlighted the impact of nomadic education on social and economic development in Nigeria which are: improvement in literacy rates, enhancement of livelihood opportunities, and influence of health behaviour. Challenges facing nomadic education in Nigeria were examined such as inadequate funding, inadequate instructional materials, inadequate and indiscriminate transfer of teachers, curriculum deficiency, banditry and cattle rustling, and government policy constraints. Recommendations were made such as adequate funding, provision of adequate instructional materials, recruitment of more and placement of teachers, review of curriculum, and provision of adequate security.

Keyword: Nomadic, education, rural, community, development

Introduction

Nomadism is as old as humanity. Early men were nomads who moved from place to place with their cattle in search of pasture (Lar, 1997). Nomadic people are described by various terms as traveling people, migrant people, itinerant groups, and wandering people. In other words, it is seen as a movement for economic gains like hunting, fishing, food gathering, and cattle rearing.

There are two main categories of nomads in Nigeria: the pastoralists and the artisanal migrant fishermen. These categories of people wander from one place to the other in search of their livelihood. It is worth noting that these groups of people share some common attributes, in that they live in remote areas and have no access to modern facilities. Therefore, unless special education is designed for them, they

will be left out or have little or no access to formal and non-formal education.

Nowadays, nomadism in Nigeria is mainly dictated by cattle-rearing activities. The Fulani ethnic groups are the predominant cattle rearers. The term nomad has almost been mistaken for Fulani as a tribe. This is a mistaken view because not all Fulani are nomads and not all nomads are Fulani, some of the tribes in Borno are also nomads. For example, the Shuwa Arab, Badawi, Buduma, Kwayami are also nomads. In states where their fishermen like Cross River, Benue, Niger, Anambra States, some parts of Plateau State and other States near the sea or river have fishermen nomads (Lar, 1997). Nomadic Education is essential for providing educational opportunities to marginalized populations.

Rural Community Development helps transform the lives of rural people by alleviating poverty and

creating more job opportunities for income generation as well as ensuring access to resources and enhancing the living conditions. Rural community development empowers the people by making them self-reliant and economically viable to contribute their quota for the development of their respective communities. Disadvantaged and marginalized groups such as women, children, orphans and disabled would have access to education, resources, and opportunities through the provision of rural community development, it equally promotes social justice and helps in ensuring that the gap between the urban and rural areas is minimized. Through rural community development, the people would have access to safe and clean water, and improvement of infrastructure such as roads, schools, and health care facilities would be provided and these will enhance the quality of life of the people and the rural-urban migration would be reduced because social amenities are provided in the rural areas, therefore, there will be no need for migration to the urban areas in search of jobs. Education has been shown to enhance economic and social development in rural areas.

History of Nomadic Education in Nigeria

According to Lar (1997), records show that early efforts to educate the nomads date back to the colonial period. Due to the migratory nature of nomadism, it was a herculean task then, just as it is even today. The "floating school system" the Wase experiment and several other strategies did not produce positive results. The successes attained in Plateau State attracted considerable interest in some neighbouring Northern states with high concentration of nomadic Fulani

The first formal and functional nomadic school was established by the Plateau State government in the early 80s by the Late Solomon Lars administration and the effort of the State Government to provide education for nomadic people was in line with the general national desire to bridge the gap between the

privileged and the under-privileged. Following the establishment of the National Advisory Committee, a mutual working agreement was reached between the Federal and the State Governments where pastoral nomads were largely concentrated. Part of this agreement was that the States agreed to contribute to the promotion of nomadic education in their areas by providing classrooms, teachers' salaries and allowances, welfare facilities especially health clinics for the nomads and their animals as well as grazing reserves. The Federal Government on the other hand agreed to provide matching grants to the States for the execution of approved schemes (Okonkwo, 1990)

The National Advisory Committee later metamorphosed into the National Commission for Nomadic Education Having felt this need; the government evolved a policy that would govern the education of the nomads. The Federal Government of Nigeria promulgated decree 41 of 1989 which established the National Commission for Nomadic Education. The decree enumerated all the necessary administrative arrangements for nomadic education including the objectives it was set to achieve. Three Universities were chosen to conduct research, develop a curriculum and run teacher training programmes for the nomadic education schemes as follows:

University of Jos for Research and Evaluation.

Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto for Curriculum Development

The University of Maiduguri for Teacher training programmes

The commission is charged with the responsibility of implementing the Nomadic Education programme.

The broad goals of the programme are:

To provide the nomads with a relevant functional and basic education; and

To improve the survival skills of the nomads by providing them with knowledge and skills that will enable them to raise their productivity and income

levels and participate effectively in the nation's socio-economic and political affairs (ADEA, 1991)

One of the government intervention programmes was the Nomadic Education programme, which was introduced in Sokoto and Kebbi States in 1990 by the National Commission for Nomadic Education to provide basic Education to children of Fulani cattle herders through mobile classrooms on the move. It used donkey-drawn carts to transport teaching and learning materials and equipment. It incorporated indigenous knowledge and practices into the curriculum and enabled continuous education during the nomadic lifestyle. The program has been praised for its community-based approach and culturally relevant curriculum (Aderinoye, Ojokheta & Olojede, 2007)

Role of Nomadic Education in Rural Community Development

The following are some of the roles of nomadic education in rural community development:

1. Access to education in Nomadic communities: With the establishment of a school in a community members can have access to the school which will provide an opportunity to learn. In an attempt by the federal government to fulfill its obligation to provide unfettered education to all its citizens as stated in the 1999 constitution as amended that "the government shall direct its policy towards ensuring there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels and that government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy among Nigerians". The pastoral nomads are more disadvantaged than the migrant fishermen in terms of access to school, primarily because they are more itinerant. As a result, the literacy rate of pastoral nomads is only 0.28%, while that of the migrant fishermen is about 20% (Federal Ministry Education, 2000)
2. Empowerment and Capacity Building: it provides the human development of the nomads through healthy living. As an empowerment right,

education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities (Okonko & Alhaji, 2014). Education has a vital role in empowering women, and street-working children from exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and controlling the human population (UNESCO, 2003). Programmes should be introduced in the area of community sensitization and empowerment to enhance the quality of life of nomads. It is to harness resources to adequately empower the nomads socially and economically. The use of ICT will also enhance socio-economic well-being and facilitate active participation in the democratic process. Agricultural Extension and Veterinary services should be provided and the relevant skills to adult nomads are critical, especially in this modern-day society.

3. Bridging the Education Gap in Rural Areas: Nomadic communities are often located in remote areas, making it very challenging for children to access educational facilities. Lack of transportation, inaccessible roads, bad terrain, and long distances from school further exacerbate the issue (Adelakun, Adeyemi & Anisulowo, 2023). There is a need for proper orientation because a good number of nomads do not know any lifestyle other than herding, fishing, and farming. Therefore, with a sound education, the nomads will be able to learn new skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will help them bridge the educational gap between the rural and urban. According to Aderinoye, Ojokheta, and Olojede (2007), the inability of the nomads' pastoralists to participate effectively in education is mainly the consequence of their migratory way of life, which involves moving their herds and flocks of animals in search of water for the season from one area to the other.

Impact of Nomadic Education on Social and Economic Development in Nigeria

These are some of the impacts of Nomadic Education on social and economic development in Nigeria.

1. Improvement in literacy rates: Nomadic education programme have contributed to ensuring that nomadic populations acquire the skills for literacy and numeracy which is fundamental for their personal and community development. The programme aimed at providing unhindered access to quality basic education to the nomads. It has been observed that the literacy and numeracy rates of nomads have improved. To improve the literacy rate of the Nomads, the National Commission for Nomadic Education employed various approaches such as on-site schools, the shift system, schools with alternative intake, and Islamiyya (Islamic) schools to provide literacy education to the nomads (Adrinoye, Ojokheta & Olojede, 2007).

2. Enhancement of livelihood opportunities: the programme facilitates the elements of economic diversification and resilience in rural areas. Nomads as the major suppliers of protein in the country, therefore the programme is seen as an important opportunity to enhance their capacity for better economic development. The nomadic population is said to have contributed about 95% of the 12 million cattle in the country. They are the major suppliers of beef, mutton, hide and skins, hoof, horn, dung for manure, bones, and cow urine used in the production of medicine with the Nomadic education programme the enhancement of their livelihood opportunities is ensured. Vocational training for the nomads which includes skills in animal husbandry, weaving, or handicrafts enables individuals to generate income through their traditional skills also teaching business management skills and entrepreneurship empowers nomads to start their enterprises, diversifying their income sources. The programme provides the learners with the skills for financial literacy that will make

them understand savings, investment, and credit options, which can make them make a better financial decision.

3. Influence of Health behaviour: looking at the nature of their life which entails constant movement from one location to the other under harsh and unfriendly environments, mosquitoes, snakes, and other dangerous animals the programme often incorporates knowledge and skills that helps the nomadic population in improving health outcomes. Therefore, nomadic education provides the nomadic communities with the skills and knowledge on how to make informed health choices, it also provides knowledge on nutrition, hygiene, and disease prevention and essential skills such as first aid as well as sanitation practices which have a direct impact on health behaviours. Nomadic education provides social support networks that foster community bonds which provides emotional and psychological support which is very crucial for mental health. It also provides increased awareness of food safety that can reduce the risk of foodborne diseases among the nomadic population. Knowledge of mobile health resources can facilitate timely medical attention during migration. Educated members of the nomadic community can lead community health initiatives, fostering a collective approach to health care and well-being.

Challenges facing Nomadic Education Programme in Nigeria

The following are some of the challenges facing Nomadic Education in Nigeria.

1. Inadequate Funding: this has been one of the major challenges confronting the programme against effective delivery in the country. As the budgetary allocation to the sector is nothing to write home about, it has been observed the budgeted allocation for 2023 was 5.14% of the national budget which is against the 25% recommended by UNESCO. It is too low to make any significant change in the educational sub-

sector. Maduewesi and Ofojebe (2022) identified poor funding as a factor affecting the availability of resources for the implementation of nomadic education programme also Ajayi and Ekundayo (2006) opined that the Nigerian Government has not been meeting the recommended UNESCO 26% of the total budget allocation to the education sector.

2. Inadequate instructional facilities. There are no adequate facilities that will cater to the ever-increasing need of the nomadic education programme. As no adequate classroom blocks are provided. Inadequate instructional facilities make it difficult to provide quality education to the nomadic community. Availability, accessibility, adequacy, and utilization of instructional facilities are very key to the implementation of policies of nomadic education in Nigeria. Kana (2022) in a progress report on a nomadic education programme in Northeast states submits that inadequate classrooms, inadequate furniture, and shortage of instructional materials, such as chalk, chalkboard, textbooks, audio-visual, and audio aids are the most acute problems of the nomadic education programme.

3. Inadequate and indiscriminate transfer of Teachers: The nomadic education programme is facing a serious problem of inadequate, well-trained teachers, who are familiar with the specific needs and challenges of the nomadic communities. It is in the same vein that Tahir, Muhammad, and Mohammed (2018) posit that nomadic education has a history of inadequate manpower to implement the policies of the programme. Some of the teachers were not well trained and paid. Going by the nature of the peculiarities of the programme and the risk attached to it, therefore, there is a need to develop extra packages for the teachers. There are a lot of dangers and hazards that make some of them look for transfers to a safer place and even to some conventional schools.

4. Curriculum Deficiency: it has been observed that the curriculum focuses mainly on the history and culture of the society rather than the teaching of pastoral procedures. The curriculum contents are unsuitable for the nomadic population. It does not provide practical skills to improve their means of livelihood (Adeyemi, 2024). It is very important to consider the needs and aspirations of the nomadic people and their peculiarities. The nomads have some special attributes towards education as such the curriculum should be provided in such a way that it will address their needs. Therefore, their way of life should be taken into consideration. It is very difficult to impose policies of education on them if it doesn't address their peculiar problems.

5. Banditry and Cattle rustling: it is common knowledge how nomadic populations are seriously affected by the act of banditry and cattle rustling, one of the regular questions that these criminals are asked is "Did you attend any form of schooling" the regular or most of the answers given were no. Criminality and crime are not restricted to only nomads as some others are found to be engaging in it. Most of the areas are not accessible to both the teachers and supervisors because of the security challenges that seriously hampered the development of the nomadic education programmes. Because of cattle rustling a lot of nomadic communities migrated from their earlier place of abode to a new place and this constituted a serious setback to their education.

6. Government and policy constraints: many policies were formulated for Nomadic education from its inception. One of the major issues with the policy is that it doesn't take cognizance of the peculiarities of the nomadic population in its development in terms of constant migration, the relevance of the curriculum, physical isolation, and the non-practiced land tenure system.

Conclusion

Education is a means of realizing other human rights and is also recognized as crucial for human

development. Education is a tool for empowering everybody. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which people can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain them to participate fully in their communities. Addressing these challenges needs a multifaceted approach where collaboration is required between communities and government should come together to achieve the desired result. Nomadic education can achieve its objectives if all the key stakeholders can come together towards a common goal. Government should create a supportive framework for nomadic education that empowers communities, enhances learning opportunities, and promotes social and economic development.

Recommendations

Based on the challenges identified the following recommendations are made:

1. Adequate funding: there is a need for the proper funding of nomadic education to achieve its desired objective in Nigeria. More budgetary allocation should be provided to the sub-sector, especially with the current trend of insecurity in the country. The recommended 26% of the total annual budget to the education sector is not a misplacement of priority considering the importance of education to nation-building. Government should also encourage public-private partnerships in the funding of the programme. There should be transparency and accountability in the management of resources to give confidence in the people. There should be a penalty for all officers found to be embezzling the funds meant for the programme. It is advocated for zero corruption in the programme.

2. Provision of adequate instructional material: there is a need to develop instructional materials that are relevant and also reflect the socio-cultural lifestyle of the nomads to the needs. Adequate instructional materials should be provided because it is a strong variable to the achievement of nomadic education goals like the provision of classroom blocks, furniture, chalks, chalkboards, textbooks, and audio-visual and audio materials.

3. Recruitment and placement of teachers: there is a need to recruit special teachers for nomadic education programme and adequate allowances (hazard, rural posting, academic) be provided to encourage and motivate the teachers to give their best for the development of the nation. The teachers need training and retraining. Indiscriminate transfer of teachers should be discouraged as it affects their performance, teachers should only be transferred for a serious reason. Regular supervision and inspection should always be carried out to ensure the programme is in line with the stated objectives.

4. Review of curriculum: the curriculum was designed to suit the needs and aspirations of the sedentary population as such the curriculum should be reviewed in such a way that it will accommodate the peculiarities of the nomadic population. Non-formal education is the best for the nomads because it is flexible and more adaptive to the situation. All the interests of the nomadic population should be taken into consideration in developing the curriculum. The nomads have a certain attitude towards education. The curriculum should be flexible and should be part of the decision-making.

5. Provision of adequate security: considering the nature of the population that they are living in the remote areas and the issue of kidnapping and banditry is seriously affecting the nomads as the majority of them were killed and abducted, cows were rustled and many communities were dislocated. This is a serious problem for the programme as most of them are on the run with little attention to education. Therefore, the government should provide adequate security to safeguard the lives and properties of the nomads to have attention to face the education.

6. Review of the policy: there is a need for the review of the policy to cater to the needs and aspirations of the nomads and to take note of the new developments that are happening in the world today. There are new innovations that were not captured

earlier in the policy that need to be incorporated into the policy now. To be up to date the policy needs to be reviewed regularly to meet the ever-increasing demand of the world of nomads.

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