

NOMADIC EDUCATION AND ITS ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES OF FORMAL EDUCATION FOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Education is a veritable tool for development. Without education, there will be no meaningful development of a nation such as Nigeria. Based on this, this paper focused discussions on nomadic education in Nigeria. The nomads are the itinerant, non-sedentary people having the culture of migrating from one place to another place in a large or small profession. They are people of the same clan groups who migrate in response to certain need factors in the practice of their occupation. Such movement/migration could be within a state or country of origin or beyond the state or national geographical boundaries in search of their means of livelihood occupations. This paper addresses three lineage of nomads that are officially and publicly recognized in Nigeria as the pastoralists, migrant fisher folk and migrant farmers in Nigeria. However, focus on this paper is mainly on pastoralists and fisherfolk migrants who are mainly involve in grazing and fishing. This people as a clan or group have the need for formal education but this has been challenged by some factors such as indigenous traditional education, teacher factor, teacher and quality assurance, good learning environment etc. These have been summarized in this paper. Recommendations on how to improve nomadic education in Nigeria include

Keywords: Fisherfolk, Itinerant, non-sedentary, nomads, pastoralists.

Introduction

Itinerant, non-sedentary people, usually referred to as nomads, have the culture of migration from one place to another place in large or small professional and of the same clan groups in response to certain need factors in the practice of their occupation. Such movement/migration could be within a state or country of origin or beyond the state or national geographical boundaries. Nomads are found all over the world with different engagements or occupations which serves as the means of their livelihood. For example, the Hadzabe around the Rift Valley Lake Fringes of Tanzania and the Isnegs of Kalingo-Apavo in the Philippines, are hunters and fruit gatherers who go from areas of Scarcity to areas of many, depending on seasons at moment in search of money, honey, berries, roots, fruits. The Turkana, Rendel in Kenya, the Massai, the Tuaregs in Lybia, the same in Norway, Finland, Sweden as well as Inuits in Canada, and the Aborigins of Australia are all examples of pastoral nomads who move with their cattle from one place to another place in search of better grazing grounds/fertile grasses. Further, there are migrant fishing communities; seen mainly around artisanal or brackish waters, who move around from one fishing/selling point to another in keeping with the extant tide and type of fish intended to catch. There are also Nomadic workers, the Gypsies and tinkers of Europe, Asia and North America who move from place to place in the practice of hawking, smithery, fortune-telling and other non-sedentary occupations

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which are their means of livelihood. Moreover, in the agricultural-based farming zones of Africa, it is presently known that migrant farmers do exist. These farmers migrate from their original and more permanent domiciles to distant farming zones and remain there for some months with their families during the planting and harvesting periods of the year.

From the short explanation of the nomenclature of the nomadic peoples of the world, a notable common characteristic of nomads could be seen such as the culture of migration with different levels of sedentarisation. This characteristic usually poses a major challenge to the efforts and logistics designed to provide appropriate education programmes and teaching/learning resources and infrastructure needed by the nomads. By explanation, environment is considered at this level to refer to the infrastructural provisions as well as the surrounding physical, religious, traditional, political, human and other socio-cultural factors which make up the context for which the teaching / learning process takes place. This could mar the outcome of teaching / learning process. This paper is designed to address the challenges associated with learning environment in Nigeria. Hence, the paper focused on the followings: Nomadism in Nigeria, Indigenous traditional education challenges of Nomadic populations in Nigeria, a hindrance ,the teacher factor challenge in Nomadic education in Nigeria, challenges of good learning environment in formal Nomadic education in Nigeria and teacher and quality assurance in education for Nomadics.

Nomadism in Nigeria

In Nigeria, three lineage of nomads have been publicly and officially recognized in Nigeria, such as pastoral nomads, migrant fisher folk and migrant farmers. Pastoral nomads in Nigeria are made of five ethnic groups-namely, the Fulbe (Fulani) herdsmen, the shuwa, the Koyam, the Badawi and the Dark Guzu. The Fulbe are found in over twenty states of the Nigerian federation, while the rest are majorly found in Borno state, especially in the Lake Chad Basin Area. Although it is estimated that there are about 698 million pastoral nomads in Nigeria with Fulbe constituting over 75% (5.3 million) of this population (Tahir, 1999). The Nomad, migrant fisher folk are found in the riverine and coastal areas in about twenty states of the federation with majority in the oceanic coastlines and river basins of the Niger Delta region. Rivers and Bayelsa states have the largest concentrations. According to Tahir (1999) the estimated population of migrant fisher folk in Nigeria by the early 1990s was 2.8 million. Identification of migrant farmers in Nigeria, their characteristics and general background, has been a more recent development. Farmers in this category are those who migrate from their original and more permanent domiciles into distant farming zones and remain there for months or years with their entire families for cropping farm maintenance or harvesting. Although migrant farmers have located in some states in Nigeria (including Anambra, Delta, Imo and Rivers), comprehensive studies on their lifestyle and the required educational strategies for coping with their circumstances have not been currently completed as much as in the cases of pastoral nomads and Migrant fisher folk.

Indigenous Traditional education challenges Nomadic population in Nigeria, a hindrance

Nomads in Nigeria, like any other different cultural, social and occupational groups, are not devoid of traditional education (the process of making an individual useful to people and to his society at large through the acquisition and employment of existing indigenous skills and knowledge for survival). Such education, usually of a non-formal and informal nature, occurs in the process of growing up in any given culture. Among the pastoralists, children of that clan are taught herding skills early in life with which they grow along side. In the case of the migrant fisher folk, children also start fishing early. It is in fact known that as early as the age of 12 or 13 years, children of migrant fishing and farming communities are regarded

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as mature enough to begin their own career. They at this period embark on distinct fishing and farming activities and essential work roles related to storage and preservation of crops and fish. Economically speaking, traditional education may be of use in fostering survival within the ambits of indigenous occupational/vocational skill and knowledge development. However, in a world where literacy is held to a high esteem and is becoming a prerequisite for economic, social status and social effectiveness, witnessing the steady progress in science and technology, nomads surely would require some formal education to improve on their occupational skills and knowledge, their income, standard of living and levels of participation in societal/national life. But the extenuating circumstances in which nomads live and work impose constraints/challenges on their participation for the desired system of education. The non-sedentary mode of occupation practiced by pastoralists and other nomads, for example, creates challenges in providing them with formal education, which usually requires the use of fixed structures, facilities and domiciled personnel. Furthermore, the peculiarly inaccessible geographical terrain and repellant aquamarine ecological conditions in which migrant fishing communities operate, often constitute serious obstacles to the introduction of formal/western education programmes to the group. Apart from this, the preponderance of child labour in the economic life of the nomadic peoples (as mentioned early from the preceeding paragraphs) makes nomadic children’s participation in regular formal schooling quite impracticable. The result of these unfavourable circumstances has been poor enrolment (sometimes lower than 25%) of children of nomadic people (pastoralists and migrant fisher folk, farmers alike) in regular formal schools. Irregular attendance has also been indicated as a feature of formal schooling among such children (Adeyemi & Ijomah, 1989). The ultimate effect of the highlighted situation on the formal education of nomadic peoples in Nigeria could be illustrated with the case of 208 fishermen from five fishing locations in Rivers State presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Level of Formal Education of 208 Fishermen from Five Locations in the Rivers State

Educational level	Location					Total
	Bonny	Elem Bekinkiri	Nyemoni waterside	Kono waterside	Kolu Ama II	
No formal Education	19(63%)	25(78%)	10(26%)	35(80%)	22(35%)	111(53%)
Dropped out of Elementary School	5(17%)	1(3%)	20(51%)	7(16%)	15(24%)	48(23%)
Completed Elementary School	6(20%)	6(19%)	9(23%)	2(4%)	26(41%)	49(24%)
Completed any other level of formal Education	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total (N)	30	32	39	44	63	208

Source: Eheazu, B.A. (1988), Table 1; p.32.

As shown in table 1, out of the 208 fishermen, 53% did not benefit from any form of formal education. 23% dropped out of the primary level while 24% completed primary education. None of the fishermen completed any other level of formal education. Looking at the locations, Bonny, for example, had 19(63%) illiterate fishermen, 5(17%) primary school dropouts and 6(20%) primary school graduates out of the 30 fishermen that were interviewed in the location. Except Koluama II, none of the other four locations had

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up to 10% of its fishermen who completed primary education. On the other extreme, except Koluama II and Nyemoni waterside with respectively 35% and 26% of their fishermen as illiterates, the other three locations had more than 60% illiterate fishermen respectively. It is yet to be made known if the educational levels attained by fishermen in other isolated and generally inaccessible fishing locations in the country are in any way better than what is obtained in the five locations shown in table 1 (Eheazu, 1988). The situation in table 1 might have improved since the establishment in Nigeria, the National Commission for Nomadic Education in 1989, but the data obtained remain instructive.

The Teacher Factor Challenge in Nomadic Education in Nigeria

Apart from the poor enrolment and generally low attainment in formal education among the nomadis in Nigeria, research has proved that there is a general lack of enthusiasm among qualified teachers to accept appointment in the usually isolated schools designated for nomads. Two educational researchers, Adeyemi and Ijeomah (1989) recorded a particular case in Ondo State where “placement or transfer of the teaching staff to Ilaje/Esedo fishing areas is considered punitive or an attempt at frustrating an erring staff”. The result, as further registered by the two researchers, was that only 26% of the primary schools in the said fishing areas had their staff quota filled, while the remaining schools had staff vacancies ranging from 7 to 54 percent. Rejection of appointment/employment of teachers to such schools and the level of qualification of the teachers that accepted appointment was another matter altogether before the establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989. Also, before the establishment of National Commission for Nomadic Education (specifically between 1976 and 1986), some States of the federation had made some provisions for the education of their nomadic peoples. Such States are Bauchi, plateau, Kano and Borno. Really, as Ezeomah (1999) has noted, many of the State experiments did not attain the desired success because of some reasons:

1. Lack of government policy to guide the development of nomadic education;
2. Lack of proper administration and co-ordination of the mobile schools;
3. The use of sedentary school teachers who did not understand the nomadic way of life;
4. The use of curricular content (and schools) developed for sedentary children and which had little relevance to nomadic pupils' lifestyle. These were also part of the associated challenges for the nomadic education in Nigeria long before now which may have been addressed to some extent.

Teachers and Quality Assurance in Education for Nomadics

The concept of quality in education may mean different things to different people (Coombs, 1985), but admissible, it refers to the maintenance of high levels of efficiency and effectiveness in the determination and attainment of goals for any educational programme. While effectiveness suggests bringing about an effect that is in line with a desired goal (Awotua-Efebo, 1999) efficiency, on the other hand, suggests achievement of the goal in a prompt and fascinating manner by following the most direct process and applying the most relevant skill, knowledge and/or experience. However, both are geared towards the achievement of a goal. In the light of what has been discussed, quality assurance in education or education quality assurance is to ensure monitoring, assessing, evaluating and reporting objectively on any or all aspects of school life based on stipulated standards. This is to ensure that acceptable standards are attained, maintained and improved upon continually. Therefore, it is important to say that Education Quality Assurance (EQA) processes and practices are dynamic and provide the needed guidance and support to schools for consistent improvement in access and quality of education services. Monitoring and evaluating the prescribed standard/or Minimum Standards help to assess whether the education services provided

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meet the set Standards and are therefore likely to benefit learners. The set education Standards bring about results of inputs, processes and outputs as well as the outcomes of programme objectives. Deducing from what has been said so far, has nomadic education in Nigeria met the need for Quality Assurance in Education?, the answer is no, as we await to hear further explanation on this. Considering the dialectics on quality assurance in education, it would not only be proper to evoke an enquiry into the extent to which the process of teacher recruitment, training and development have been designed to promote teacher efficiency and effectiveness in the achievement of declared goals, but to what extent is the teacher perform his role and extent to which the prevailing learning environment is favourable to the teaching/learning process and the ultimate achievement of the goals of nomadic education. Are there monitoring teams that visits the schools to ascertain level of performance of the teachers and learners? If yes, how regular do the teams visit the schools? Are there evidences to show improvement in nomadic education within their areas of location?

Challenges of Good Learning Environment in Formal Nomadic Education in Nigeria

As mentioned early in this paper, nomadic education in Nigeria presently focuses more on two major groups of nomads; namely, the pastoral and migrant fisher folk nomads. The programme has these components such as formal, non-formal and informal, with different modes of delivery (Pedagogy, andragogy and the electronic media respectively) to accommodate the age, Occupation and availability of the nomads. The focus here is on the formal aspect of the delivery mode. Formal nomadic education is provided mainly for children of the nomads. The curriculum is the same as that for regular primary schools with some modifications in time tabling and content to make allowance for inclusion of the cultural background of these children. The establishment of the nomadic schools is guided by some criteria from the National Commission for Nomadic Education which include (NCNE, 1990b):

- (a) presence of pastoral nomads/migrant fishermen in large numbers, providing at least 70% of the school pupils;
- (b) availability of children of school age;
- (c) willingness on the part of parents to release their children; the expectation is that at least 20-30 pupils must attend the school regularly;
- (d) lack of access to a nearly conventional school;
- (e) accommodation of work roles in school.
- (f) classrooms could be permanent, semi-permanent or temporary in structure.

However, inspite of the above efforts by the NCNE to provide appropriate human and material support, for a good learning environment, as well as guidelines for ensuring appropriate logistics for formal nomadic education in Nigeria, there are still challenges facing the nomadic education in Nigeria. These challenges exist in both the pastoral and migrant fisher folk learning environments. The challenges of the learning environment in pastoral nomadic schooling are exemplified in the recorded observations of an NCNE monitoring team in the course of its exercises in 17 northern States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria in 1988/89 (NCNE, 1999). In the case of migrant fisher folk children's schooling, a number of challenges have also been experienced in the teaching/learning environment. Such challenges have equally been well documented in the Research Report on seven (7) riverine States in Nigeria earlier referred to in this paper (Adeyemi & Ijomah, 1989). The challenges could be seen as follows:

1. Environmental Push-pull factors, involving:

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(a) Availability or Otherwise of favourable occupational factors (eg. Lustrous grazing ground for pastoral nomads, preferred levels of tidal ebbs and type of fish, fruits and game for migrant fishermen, fruit gatherers and hunters respectively);(b) Hostility from neighborhoods, pestilence from harmful insects like the tsetse fly, and harassment from armed bandits, sea pirates or farmers and herders clashes, boko haram, kidnapping as prevailing in the country today.

2. Involvement of children in family nomadic occupations early in life.
3. Erroneous consideration of lucrative nomadic occupations as viable alternatives to formal education.
4. Paucity of teaching staff – especially qualified teachers (see table 2 below) as a result to absence of desirable utilities (such as potable water, electricity, cheap transportation) and facilities like habitable shelter and medical clinics.
5. Dearth of appropriate classrooms, classroom furniture and instructional materials.
6. Inadequate/absence of incentives to motivate qualified teachers to accept postings to/or employment for the nomadic schools etc.

These challenges may have reduced but require further proper intervention strategies, as detailed below, to curb their perceptible and deleterious effects and thus ensure good teaching/learning environment for positive impact on the teaching/learning process of nomadic education.

Table 2: Statistics of pupil enrolment and Teacher Qualification in Selected (sample) nomadic primary schools in Nigeria, 2003. Figures may have changed.

S/ N	State	Types of School	Pupil Enrolment	TEACHER QUALIFICATION					Total	T/P Ratio	% - age of non-qualified teachers (GR IIR, WASC / GCE, Others)
				NCE & above	GR II pass	GR II Ref	WASC / GCE	Others			
1.	Akwa Ibom	MFCS	5,188	11	51	13	9	1	85	1:61	27
2.	Ondo	MFCS	2,988	24	18	4	20	2	68	1:44	38
3.	Rivers	MFCS	5,062	69	68	43	-	-	180	1:28	24
4.	Adamawa	PNPS	6,149	60	92	3	41	47	243	1:25	37
5.	Gombe	PNPS	21,273	41	113	35	26	88	303	1:70	49
6.	Katsina	PNPS	21,969	36	59	59	45	142	341	1:64	72

Source: Co-ordinators of Nomadic Education in the states concerned

Key: MFCS = Migrant Fishermen Children’s (Primary) School

PNPS = Pastoral Nomadic Primary School

Summary of Associated Challenges for Nomadic Education in the Learning Environment of Nigeria

The importance of nomadic education in the schemes of national development and upholding in the right of all citizens to learn (Eheazu, 1998) cannot easily be over-emphasized. However, associated challenges highlighted in this paper as enumerated below should be given urgent attention by education policy makers and stakeholders in the country to ensure that global objectives/goals of education in Nigeria is achievable. Such challenges are:

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- 1.Traditional education usually of a non-formal and informal nature.
- 2.Extenuating circumstances in which nomads live and work impose constraints on their participation for the desired system of education.
- 3.The non-sedentary mode of occupation practiced by pastoralists and other nomads, creates challenges in providing them with formal education which usually requires the use of fixed structures, facilities and domiciled personnel.
- 4.Peculiar inaccessible geographical terrain and the repellent aquamarine ecological conditions in which migrant fishing communities operate, often constitutes obstacles to the introduction of formal / western education programmes to the group.
- 5.The preponderance of child labour in the economic life of the nomadic peoples (as mentioned early from the preceding paragraphs) makes nomadic children's participation in regular formal schooling quite impracticable.
- 6.Reduction of teachers in such schools e.g Ondo State.
- 7.Teachers declining transfers/appointments/employment to such schools.
- 8.Level of the qualification of teachers who accepted appointment to such schools.
- 9.During non establishment of NCNE, some lapses were observed.
 - (a) Lack of government policy to guide the development of nomadic education.
 - (b) Lack of proper administration and co-ordination of the mobile schools
 - (c) The use of sedentary school teachers who did not understand the nomadic way of life;
 - (d) The use of curricular content developed for sedentary children which had little relevance to nomadic pupils' lifestyle.
- 10.Lack of proper recruitment, training, development of teachers and lack of regular check of the schools by team of Quality Assurance Evaluators.
- 11.Environmental push – pull factors, involving:
 - (a)Availability or otherwise of favourable occupational factors (e.g Lustrous grazing ground for pastoral nomads, preferred levels of tidal ebbs and type of fish, fruits and game for migrant fishermen, fruit gatherers and hunters respectively);
 - (b)Hostility from neighbourhoods, pestilence from harmful insects like the tsetse fly, and harassment from armed bandits, sea pirates or farmers and herders clashes, boko haram, kidnapping as prevailing in the country today.
- 12.Involvement of children in family nomadic occupations early in life.
- 13.Erroneous consideration of lucrative nomadic occupations as viable alternatives to formal education
- 14.Paucity of teaching staff-especially qualified teachers (see table 2 below) as a result to absence of desirable utilities (such as potable water, electricity, cheap transportation) and facilities like habitable shelter and medical clinics.
- 15.Dearth of appropriate classrooms, classroom furniture and instructional materials.
- 16.Inadequate/absence of incentives to motivate qualified teachers to accept postings to/or employment for the nomadic schools etc.
- 17.Inadequate supply of teaching materials etc.

Recommendations

The very importance of nomadic education in the schemes of national development and upholding to the right of all citizens to learn (Eheazu, 1998) cannot easily be over-emphasized. In furtherance to this, some

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recommendations are made to promote good and progressive nomadic education in Nigeria free of associated challenges for the successful learning environment. Therefore, it beacons and beholds on the interventionists-such as government, communities and other stakeholders for improved actions. To this end, one would recommend that:

- 1.Governments concerned should provide through appropriate legislation, grazing reserves for pastoral nomads in their territories;
- 2.Non-formal and informal functional adult education programmes should be designed to:
 - (a)Improve the outputs and incomes of the adult nomads to help them appreciate that education/learning could be lucrative.
 - (b)Create awareness among nomadic parents of the necessity for their children to embrace formal education.
- 3.Relevant governments should endeavour to employ and post sufficient numbers of teachers to nomadic schools of different locations;
- 4.Security and public health officers should be assigned by governments to respectively safe-guard lives and property of the nomads and ensure good health provision in their respective areas of operation;
- 5.Pre-service and in-service training and development programmes for nomadic teachers should be a matter of importance.
- 6.Mobile classrooms should be constructed in a large numbers to ensure greater opportunities for nomadic children to embrace formal education;
- 7.Teachers in nomadic schools should be motivated to put in their best and remain in their duty posts. Such motivation could be salary increases, and provision of good housing and transport facilities;
- 8.Nomadic communities as partners in progress should be encouraged, if possible, to assist in providing classrooms and furniture through community efforts, for the education of their children.
- 9.Special Government Funds, International and National Agencies and local external philanthropists should be encouraged to identify with the nomads by giving them potable water, boats, classrooms, transport facilities etc;
- 10.Instructional materials of various types should be provided in the schools;
- 11.Local Education Authorities should be mandated to constitute policies for effective monitoring, supervising and evaluation of the nomadic schools to reduce absenteeism, truancy among the teachers and learners (pupils), to ensure the sustenance of the schools,
- 12.Special transport arrangements should be made to facilitate movement of nomadic children and teachers to and from schools at the designated locations. In the case of migrant fisherfolk, provision of schools-on-boats in the deep sea areas and creeks should be considered a priority for effective coverage of the fishing ports. This should be the responsibilities of the state and federal governments because of its huge nature of the project.

Conclusion

Education is a tool for development. Therefore, nomadic education in Nigeria should be given every necessary attention like other categories of education within the three tiers of government – federal, state and local government whether formal, informal and non-formal system. The challenges associated with nomadic education learning environment have been enumerated in this paper as a focal point and objective of this paper. In line with this, adequate and urgent attention should be given to nomadic education. NCNE should evoke more policies to enhance the programme of nomadic education in Nigeria.

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