

DEVELOPING LIBRARY SERVICES FOR THE NOMADIC POPULATION UNDER THE U.B.E. PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

By

S. I. GAMBA

*Chief Project Officer (Librarian Component),
Nigeria Primary Education Project,
(CR2191-UNI).*

Abstract

Basic education in Nigeria under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme provides expanded opportunities to meet the basic learning needs of children, youths and adults in school and out of school.

Every library meets the educational and informational needs of an identified community of users by providing unrestricted access to a balanced collection of resources.

Therefore, the purpose of the UBE programme and the aims and objectives of libraries are complementary. This complementary relationship is highlighted in the Education For All (EFA) framework for action to meet basic learning needs, (Jomtien, 1990) document, which states that, "There is a need to recognise libraries as invaluable information resources who must work in partnership with school and community workers. Libraries therefore need to become a vital link in providing educational resources for all learners – pre-school through adulthood, in school and non-school settings."

In addition, the framework for action and blueprint of UBE in Nigeria, has also identified library services as a crucial factor in the successful implementation of the programme.

However, judging from the situation on ground in Nigeria today, libraries are either non-existent, side-tracked or under-utilised as information resources in both formal and informal schools.

This paper will discuss library services for the nomadic population in Nigeria, for the overall success of the UBE programme.

Introduction

The UBE programme in Nigeria is an expression of the strong desire of Government to reinforce participatory democracy in Nigeria by raising the level of awareness and general education of the entire citizenry. It is intended as a visible evidence of Nigeria's strong commitment to the Jomtien (1990) declaration of the promotion of basic education for all, as well as to the New Delhi (1991) declaration requiring stringent efforts by the E-9 countries (nine

countries of the world with the largest concentration of illiterate adults) to drastically reduce illiteracy within the shortest possible time frame, to the Durban statement of commitment (1998), and the OAU Decade of Education in Africa (1997-2006) requiring African States to generalise access to quality basic education as a foundation stone for the sustainable socio-economic development of the continent.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which was formally launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo on 30th September, 1999, aims at achieving among others, the following specific objectives:

- Developing in the citizenry a strong consciousness for education;
- The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age;
- Reducing drastically the incidence of dropout from the formal school system;
- Catering for the learning needs of children and adults, through the provision of good library services;
- Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative, life skills, ethical, moral and civic education.

The universalisation of basic education is keeping with the requirements of the construction of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) Section 18 stated as follows:

- i. "Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels."
- ii. "Government shall eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide:
 - Free compulsory and universal primary education;
 - Free secondary education;
 - Free university education; and
 - Free adult literacy programmes."

The UBE programme is intended to be **UNIVERSAL, FREE and COMPULSORY.**

These terms imply that appropriate types of opportunities will be provided for the basic education of every Nigerian child of school-going age, parents have an obligation to ensure that children in their care avail themselves of such opportunities and that sanctions will be imposed on persons, societies or institutions that prevent children, adolescents and youths from benefiting from the UBE programme.

The Universal Basic Education programme is also an excellent opportunity for Nigeria to confront head-on the challenges and to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by new information and communication technologies for improving the quality of education. The information age is also the age of knowledge.

No educational system can afford to stay outside the knowledge age while operating in a world that is now run by knowledge. The way out of the dilemma is the integration of computer awareness, computer appreciation, and computer literacy and computer application into the UBE programme.

The Federal Government of Nigeria is not unmindful of the magnitude of the problems inherent in a gigantic programme of this nature.

In view of the key role of Education in personal and societal development, however, there can be no arguing out of the UBE programme.

Government expects that the entire Nigerian populace will patriotically assume ownership of the programme.

No sacrifice will be considered too great in ensuring the sustainability and success of UBE. All the nation's creative energies will therefore be mobilised for this purpose, as **"EDUCATION FOR ALL IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL"**.

The nomadic population in Nigeria

In general, nomadism is practised in many parts of the world for various reasons ranging from freedom seeking, economy, to cattle rearing.

According to Lar (1989) the human race is by nature full of adventure. Nomadism is a common characteristic of human beings. As one looks round the world history, one is bound to find that movement must have taken place in the life of all nations of the world. Their history could be traced from one part of the world to another. During the course of such movements, some groups spread all over the world, while others concentrated in small areas; although most of such movements resulted in the establishment of big settlements.

Nigeria's nomadic population comprises cattle Fulani nomads (pastoralists), migrant fishermen and nomadic farmers, who are found in several States of the federation. The pastoralists are predominantly the Fulbe (Fulani) who are found all over West African sub-region. Tahir (1995) estimated that the Fulanis are found in nearly 25 States in Nigeria. Other pastoral groups are the Shuwa-Arabs, the Koyam, Buduma and the Badawi, they rear mainly sheep and goats, and are found mainly in Borno and Yobe States of Nigeria.

Migrant fishermen are found on the Atlantic coastline of Rivers, Lagos, Delta, Akwa-Ibom and Cross River States, as well as States in the hinterland like Benue, Kogi, and Adamawa.

Migrant farmers can be found in Benue, Kogi, Edo, Ebonyi and Cross River States. Nomadic communities are mobile groups, whose pattern of activity is determined by the needs imposed on them by the requirements of the animals or crops they tend and cultivate.

Nomadic education in Nigeria

Tahir (1995) stated that prior to the establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1990, the literacy rates in Nigeria's nomadic communities had ranged between 0.02% among pastoralists and migrant farmers, to 2.0% among migrant fishermen. There is therefore no doubt that nomadic communities need education to induce change for better living in their communities

Because of the above known facts, the Federal Government of Nigeria recognised from the onset that the nomadic populations of this country were educationally marginalized since they have no access to education. Consequently, the government evolved a programme of action in 1989, in order to address the problem; this resulted in the establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1991. Soon after this, implementation of the nomadic education programme commenced with the establishment of schools, permanent, mobile and on-site, to provide basic education for the nomads. However, it is disheartening to see that no proper arrangement was initially made to cultivate a reading habit among the nomadic pastoralists through the provision of library facilities, equipment and services.

This means that the nomadic pastoralists through the provision of library facilities, equipment and services.

Therefore, the only means of providing them with sufficient access to education is through distance learning with the support of mobile libraries.

According to Tahir (1998), as at December, 1995, there were 890 nomadic primary schools in 298 Local Government Areas of 31 States of the federation of Nigeria, that cater for the educational needs of the children of pastoral nomads. This shows that nomadic education is gradually taking its roots and the time is now ripe for the NCNE to consult with the NSLA to address the issue of the provision of library facilities, equipment and services for nomads.

Mobile library services for nomads

Professional educators, all over the world have recognised the fact that libraries are a useful and necessary component of the teaching/learning process. Libraries are not just collection of books rather they house knowledge. They are the *memories of the human race and the beehives of information.*

Therefore, if the nomadic education programme is to succeed, mobile libraries must be provided in order to meet the needs of both the teachers and pupils. In some countries of the world, similar provisions have been made for

their migrant population. In the former Soviet Union, special education arrangements were made for the Kazakhs in Siberia, the Swedish government for the Lapps in Scandinavia, and the American government for the Mexicans and Puerto Ricans.

Jackson and Ezeomah (1984) gave details about such provisions in their article. In the United States of America, the government made portable classrooms housed in caravans. Some of the caravans have libraries, audio-visual equipment rooms, reading rooms and science laboratories.

In China the Chinese government created centres along migratory routes for the education of their migrant population. At such designated centres, Chinese teachers and librarians live and work among them. The schools and teachers/librarians for the migrant population are stationary, but their pupils are always on the move; from one centre to another.

In a paper recently presented by Baffour-Awuah (2000) at the IASL conference by Malmo Sweden; the paper looked at how an outreach library service (The Book Box) of the National Library Service of Botswana to a remote area primary school: Phuduhudu, had made a difference, in the level of pupils' individual work and the school's overall examination results.

In Botswana, The Book Box service started in 1976 with 12 participating primary schools. It is available to primary schools located at least eight kilometres from the nearest public library. It provides reference and reading materials, mostly for recreation and entertainment (80-200 books per box). The Book Box Service at the end of the 1998 financial year involved 262 staff members, out of which 238 are teachers and 24 are librarians. As at July 2000, there were 264 participating primary schools.

In the librarianship profession, the idea of the mobile libraries has helped a lot in bringing library services to neglected readers. Therefore, there have been pick-up vans with the interior fitted with shelves and quality books.

With this type of outreach approach, library services have not only been brought to the doorsteps of neglected but potential readers, but have also actually contributed to the edification of such people.

In the case of pastoral, fishing and farming nomads, mobile vans cannot be used to reach them because they move along routes or footpaths that are impassable by cars, buses and pickup vans or even lorries. Therefore, the use of horses, camels, motorcycles, donkeys, bicycles and boats, to carry books in boxes, manned by qualified librarian can serve as good alternatives. By doing so, the three types of nomads in Nigeria will enjoy library services and benefit better from the UBE programme.

Conclusion

In this paper, efforts have been made at reviewing the library services provided by other countries for their migrant population. After examining the workability or otherwise of each method, the author of this paper, strongly feels that Nigeria should adopt a cheaper, easier but realistic method of rendering library services to nomads.

Therefore, the Book Box approach, using motorcycles, bicycles, horses, camels, donkeys and boats as cheaper means of transport, is recommended. This will provide a wider coverage of rural areas and ensure that books reach the ends of as many nomads as possible. It is hoped that, Federal and State Governments, SPEBs and LGEAs will provide sufficient funds for the purchase of all that is needed to ensure good library service for nomads, under the UBE programme.

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