Improving the Quality of Nomadic Education in Nigeria for Value Re-orientation and National Development

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Abstract

The quest to the universalization of access to basic education has given rise to increased interest in the provision of quality basic education to nomadic and other educationally disadvantaged groups in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, advanced initiatives aimed at improving the quality of nomadic education programme in Nigeria. These quality components include, teacher training and refresher courses, design and production of teaching materials, curriculum development, community awareness and empowerment among others. The paper also contends that nomadic education is a major instrument for national development if adequately harnessed. Furthermore, it highlighted the essence of repositioning nomadic education in Nigeria for good values and national development.

Key words: *Nomad, Education, Programme, Value, National development, Reorientation.*

Introduction

The need to extend educational opportunities to all has heightened interest in the provision of quality basic education to nomadic groups in Nigeria. These groups of people have serious limitations to equitable access to basic education through the conventional education system. Out of the estimated 9.3 million nomadic people in Nigeria comprising pastoralists and migrant fishing groups, about 3.1 million are children of school age (Mohammed &Abbo, 2010). Also the participation of the nomads in mainstream formal and non-formal basic education programme is very low, with literacy rates ranging between 0.2% and 2.0% (UNESCO, 2008).

The Nigeria nomadic pastoralists comprise the Fulani *(5.3m)*, Shuwa (1.0lm), Koyam (32,000), Badawi (20,000), Park Buzzu (15,000) and the Buduma (10,000). The Fulani are found in thirty one out of the thirty six states of Nigeria. The migrant fishing groups number about 2.8 million, made up of numerous tribes, and are found in the Atlantic coastline, the riverine areas and river basins of Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Education, 2005).

The Nomadic Education Programme is aimed at providing an unhindered access to quality basic education for nomads. The National Commission for Nomadic Education established by Decree 41 of 1989 has the mandate to carry out the following functions towards the implementation of the Nomadic Education Programme (NEP) in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Education, 2005).

- Formulate policies and issue guidelines in all matters relating to nomadic education in Nigeria;
- Provide funds for research and personnel development for the improvement of nomadic education, the provision of equipment and instructional materials, construction of classrooms and other facilities;
- Determine the standards of skill to be attained in nomadic education;

- Arrange for monitoring of agencies concerned with nomadic education;
- Establish, manage and maintain primary schools in the settlements earmarked for nomadic groups;
- Collate and publish research information relating to nomadic education in Nigeria;
- Inspection of nomadic education activities in Nigeria;
- Provide reliable statistics of nomads and their children of school age and
- Act as the agency for providing all external aid to nomadic schools in Nigeria.

The above mandate of the Commission has no doubt facilitated the expansion and strengthening of access to nomadic education in Nigeria. Presently, literacy rates among the Nigerian nomads have improved. In Nigeria, the nomad's major constaints to participate in existing basic education programmes emanates from the following:

- Constant migration in search of water and pasture for their livestock, in the case of the pastoralists, and for fish and other aquatic creatures in the case of migrant fishing.
- Critical role of their children in their production systems, which makes parents and guardians not willing to release them to participate in formal schooling;
- The unsuitability of the formal school curriculum which are designed to meet the needs of mainstream group;
- Physical isolation and minimal social interaction with the larger society, and
- A land tenure system that makes it difficult for the nomads to acquire land and have permanent grazing land (Federal Ministry of Education,
  2005:15).

The focus of this paper is to proffer some quality initiatives aimed at not only improving the quality of the Nomadic Education Programme

(NEP) but also reposition the programme for greater values and national development.

Conceptual Framework

This section of the paper provides some conceptual clarifications imperative for the paper. Nomadism is any type of existence characterised by the absence of a permanent or fixed settlement (Akinpelu, 1993). Elujomade, (1988) sees nomads as members of a tribe that wander from place to place with no permanent settlement. According to Elujomade the movements of nomads cuts across local government areas, communities and states in Nigeria. There are basically three types of nomads in Nigeria; the pastoralists (herdsmen), the migrant farmers, and migrant fisherfolks (Chima, Ugwuegbulam&Chinwe, 2014). Nomadism is not peculiar to Nigeria, but found in other parts of the world. Pastoralism denotes an occupation with major focus on the breeding and care of herds (UNESCO, 2008). The pastoralists move with their family including children thereby preventing them from acquiring formal education in a conventional school environment.

The migrant farmers are another group of nomads who take to farming as their occupation. They leave their homes to settle near farms throughout the farming season. The migrant farmers can be found in different parts of Nigeria. In the Northern states they can be found in Katsina, Pankshin, Sokoto, and Kano among others. While in Edo State they are found in Auchi, and the Eastern State they are located in Nsukka, Bende, Udi, Ohaji&Ohaozara (Chima et al, 2014).

The migrant fisher folks are men, woman, children and wards who accompany their families to fishing ports and migrate to other places as determined by season. For this group of nomads, fishing is a source of livelihood. They migrate with family members and settle along the creeks and coastal lines. These groups of individuals are found in Rivers State, Ondo State, Delta State, Cross River State and AkwaIbom State (Uche, Okonkwo, Ozurumba, &Nwagbo, 2007).

Arising from the above, nomads are highly migratory group. Thus, a nomad is an individual who lives his life moving or travelling from one place to another in search of a livelihood. Also, nomads are very conscious of the seasonal trends and sensitive to such changes capable of affecting their wellbeing (Ibara & Okogbaa, 2015).

Value-Reorientation and National Development in Nomadic Education Programme (NEP)

Value denotes **a** quality that renders something desirable or valuable. For centuries one of the crucial problems confronting philosophers and educators is the problem of values. According to Bolarin (2009) value is the worth or esteem given to a person or an idea. Thus, values influence people's behaviour and serve as a standard for evaluating the actions of people in the society. In education values are paramount for they are highly linked to the general idea of education and operation of schools. Thus, the nomadic Education Programme should be a programme worthwhile, and being worthwhile has value implication. Consequently, value implies acceptable or desirable standards, ideal way of doing things, which should apply to NEP. However, the process of value re-orientation involves changing direction from previous course of action or idea to a new way of doing things. Thus, value reorientation in NEP implies that previous implementation strategies or course of action are not yielding the desired results, hence the need to improve the operations of the programme.

National development on the other can be seen as the creation of the conditions by which individuals in a society attain the fulfilment of their basic human needs. The Human Development Reports (2012) indicates that the most basic capabilities for human development involve long healthy lives, knowledge and access to the resources needed for a descent standard of living. Quite clearly national development is the development of a nation's human and materials resources, hence, the task

of nomadic education programme in preparing the nomads to participate in national development (Osokoya, 2010).

Challenges Confronting Nomadic Education Programme (NEP)

Inspite of the human and financial resources committed to nomadic education, it still has some challenges as follows:

- Low rate of pupil's enrolment in the programme. For instance, situation report on nomadic education recorded a low enrolment figure of 203,844 out of the estimated population of 3 million nomadic children of school age in Nigeria.
- High dropout rate of pupils in the programme. This problem is as a result of their migratory nature and response to seasonal changes.
- Inadequacy of teachers. Teachers available for the nomadic education programme are inadequate in terms of quality and quantity.

  According to Adazie (2010) NEP utilizes teachers drawn from conventional schools and volunteer teachers. Some of the teachers do not possess the requisite skills and training for imparting knowledge. In terms of quantity, record from the Imo State Universal Basic Education Board (2013) indicates that there are 53 nomadic schools with a total of 190 teaching staff, translating to a ratio of about 4 teachers per school.
- Inadequate supervision of nomadic schools. Regular supervision can give prompt attention to the needs of nomadic schools, but motorcycles supplied for supervision and monitoring appear not to have been put into proper use.

Initiatives for improving the Quality of Nomadic Education Programme (NEP)

Some initiatives aimed at addressing the challenges of quality improvement of NEP are highlighted below:

- Community sensitization and empowerment. A more result-oriented community sensitization and mobilization using extension services need to be adopted. This should involve the use of the mass media, provision of functional literacy and numeracy for adults. Also, important is the provision of agricultural extension and veterinary services to livestock. The provision of relevant skills to adult nomads is critical in dealing with the complexities of modern day society.
- Pedagogical refresher courses and development. These initiatives are aimed at producing adequate and well trained teachers for the NEP and also improving the quality of instruction. This approach involves producing and retaining critical mass of teachers required for NEP. It equally involves training new teachers with nomadic background, and retraining serving teachers to understand the peculiar needs of the nomads. The content of the training should address the cultural background and lifestyle of the nomads, teaching methodologies, and effective delivery of nomadic education curriculum.
- Development of instructional materials, this initiative targets the development of instructional materials that are relevant and also reflects the socio-cultural lifestyle of nomads. The development process should involve the synchronization of the various sections of the curriculum for each subject, namely objectives, content, teaching and evaluation techniques. The development of these new curricula and instructional materials should involve commissioned writing, development workshop and critique workshop.
- Development of infrastructure. The provision of appropriate and conducive environment for teaching and learning is critical for improving the quality of the NEP. This initiative will support the provision of adequate classrooms and furniture for pupils and teachers. Infrastructural development should address the provision

of mobile collapsible classrooms, purpose built motorized boat schools, and permanent classroom structures.

- Needs Assessment. It is important to have proper need assessment of learners. The education offered to nomads must agree with their needs to ensure it succeeds. To this end, the content of the curriculum should cover pastoral activities, farming and fishing skills.
- Re-orientation of learners. This entails proper re-orientation of learners. It is possible that a good number of nomads do not know any kind of lifestyle other than herding, farming and fishing. Thus, re-orientation will help the quality of the programme through inculcating the right type of values.
- Improved funding. The NEP is no doubt constrained as a result of poor funding. This is evidenced by non-payment of nomadic teachers' salaries and allowances. Thus, financial support is needed for recruitment, payment of existing teachers and special training workshops.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The challenges of improving the quality of the nomadic education programme are to ensure the attainment of the objectives of the programme. A key component of the quality improvement drive is pedagogical renewal, design and improvement of instructional materials as well as basic infrastructure among others. The active synchronization of these components coupled with value re-orientation will impact significantly on national development.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion, the following recommendations are advanced.

1. Regular seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized for nomadic pupils and teachers to equip them with the various trends that would enhance the quality of the programme.
2. Pedagogical renewal, through regular teacher development and re-training should be an integral part of quality improvement initiatives.
3. The Nomadic Education Programme should be learner-centered and community-based. This is important given that community support and participation are key components for success.
4. The integrated approach to the provision of nomadic education should be adopted. This approach will attract the interest and involvement of more stakeholders.
5. The issue of adequate funding should be addressed to ensure payment of teachers' salaries, allowances and procurement of basic infrastructure. Also, it will address the problem of insufficiency of materials such as textbooks, exercise books and writing materials for the programme.

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