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Counselling for Effective Management of Nomadic Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

Irrespective of the heuristic channel through which education is acquired, be it formal, informal or non-formal, educating an individual remains an essential ingredient for socio-personal empowerment. Education remains a veritable vector for enhancing human quality. This in turn empowers an individual in making his impact felt on society in which he is an integral part of. Nomads in Nigeria are grouped among the neglected individuals that are denied this important means of human empowerment. Our paper therefore advances counselling approaches towards appropriate education and re-integration of nomads to become part of policy makers and decision making in the country. This will make for their having a sense of belonging and contribution to national development.

Key words: Counselling; Education; Fisherfolks; Pastoral; Nomadics; Nomads

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INTRODUCTION

Irrespective of the dimension from which one views the subject matter of education, whether from the formal, informal or non-formal, it remains an essential ingredient

in the life of every individual. Education offers one an empowerment right and serves as a means through which socially and economically disadvantaged children and adults can liberate themselves from the jaws of poverty and make their importance felt in the community and towards national development. According to Chima and Inaja (2013), acquisition of knowledge through heuristic channels still remains the vital instrument for improving and enhancing human quality, healthy living and uplifting the social standing of individuals. Quality and skilled knowledge through education serves as an instrument for transforming and empowering individuals to be conscious of their environment and be able to maximize their potentials (Garuba, 2011). UNESCO (2003) reports that education has a singular advantage of empowering women and street-working children from exploitation, hazardous labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and controlling population growth. Considering the importance of education, article 26 of the United Nations 1984 Universal Declaration on Human Rights states that everyone has the right to education. Education is not only seen as a right but a means towards achieving other rights (Iro, 2006).

In contemporary Nigeria, countless citizens yearn for special needs ranging from the educational to the social. This group of people according to Uche, Okonkwo, Ozurumba and Nwagbo (2007) are referred to as neglected individuals. They are the nomads, the handicapped, the gifted, women, urban and rural poor groups and the illiterate adults. Meeting the educational needs of this apparently endangered group will entail organizing relevant and needed programmes to enable them acquire functional skills and knowledge. Such an action inevitably serves as a conduit pipe towards a change of attitude that would give birth to meaningful existence in their environment and at the same time contribute to national development. This explains

the need for proper management of formal and non-formal education for nomads which will no doubt help in improving human quality, development of social consciousness, empowerment, social inclusion and participation and offering employment opportunities (Ribich, 1968; Valley, 1998; Preece, 2005; Akoojee & McGrath, 2006; Garuba, 2011).

1. NOMADISM AND NOMADIC GROUPS IN NIGERIA

A nomad is a person who lives his life moving or traveling from one location to another in search of a livelihood. What this means is that nomadism is not an exclusive characteristics of cattle rearers, migrant farmers, fishermen and those who possess overt nomadic qualities. Anybody who engages in a kind of work that warrants traveling from one place to another either locally or internationally can be referred to as living a nomadic lifestyle. If a child changes school severally as a result of the parents' kind of job, that child can be said to be involved in nomadic heuristics. Children of soldiers, customs officials, diplomats, policemen, even teachers can engage in nomadic education depending on how often their parents or guardians are being transferred or reposted. Nomadism, according to Akinpelu (1993) is any type of existence characterized by the absence of a fixed domicile. For Elujomade (1988), nomads are seen as members of a tribe that wander from place to place with no permanent settlement. Movement according to him, cuts across local governments, states and some cities or villages.

There are three basic categories of nomads in Nigeria: the migrant farmers, migrant fisherfolks and pastoralists (herdsmen). Nomadism is not a peculiar Nigerian phenomenon. Nomads are found in other parts of the world such as Europe, Asia, Tanzania, Canada, Australia, North and South America. In Nigeria, nomads are found around Cross River, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Ondo, Edo, Delta, Lagos, Abia and Imo States. The Fulani nomads (Mbororo) wander along Borno State, Benue, Taraba, Zaria, Jos, Niger, Gongola. They are present in almost all the Northern states of Nigeria.

1.1 Nomadic Pastoralists

Pastoralists are usually made up of the Fulanis who happen to be the largest of all nomadic groups. Their population is estimated at about 7 million out of the total number of 9.4 nomads in Nigeria including school age children (UNESCO, 2008; Mohammed & Abbo, 2010). This group of nomads are found in 31 out of the 36 states of the federation. They are essentially cattle rearers known for raising animals such as camels, buffalos, reindeers, goats and sheep. This informs why they migrate from one location to another in search of greener pastures for their flock. The pastoralists most times move with

their family members including school children thereby preventing the latter from acquiring formal education in a conventional school setting. Animal rearing is seen as a status symbol among the Fulani folk and they train their children towards succession and inheritance of their company of animals.

1.2 The Migrant Farmers

This is another group of nomads who take to farming as their source of livelihood. They therefore leave their traditional homes to settle near available farms throughout the farming season. The migrant farmers are located all over Nigeria. In the Northern States, they are found in Katsina, Pankshin, Sokoto, Kano, Okene. In Edo State, they are found in Auchi while in the West they can be located at Okitipupa. In Delta State—Ughelli and Warri, Eastern States—Nsukka, Abakaliki, Bende, Orlu, Udi, Ohaji, Ohazara.

1.3 The Migrant Fisherfolks

Uche et al. (2007) described the migrant fisherfolk as men, women, children and dependants who accompany their families to fishing ports and migrate to other conducive places as guaranteed by the season. For this group of individuals, fishing is a source of livelihood and they migrate with their family members and settle along creeks and lagoons. They are found among the Ijaws, Ijebus, Efiks and Ibibios. Etulo, Jukun and Nupe who live near river Niger and Benue are good examples. The FME, Education Sector Analysis (2000) reports that fishermen are concentrated in Rivers, Ondo, Edo, Delta, Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.

2. EDUCATION FOR THE NOMADS

The nomadic population of Nigeria is marginalized and disadvantaged educationally. This is mainly because of their lifestyle of migrating from place to place in order to meet up with the quest for economic survival. Constant movement denies their children access to formal education. UNESCO (2008), Mohammed and Abbo (2010), as well as Shobola, Omoregbo and Olufemi (2012) report that out of 9.4 million nomads, 3.1 million are children of school age. The literacy rate of pastoral nomads is at 0.28% while that of migrant fishermen is about 20% (FME, 2000). Nomadic education according to Adazie (2001) is the provision of formal and basic functional literacy and numeracy for the children of the migrant cattle rearers, fishermen and farmers wherever they settle.

In the Federal government's effort to reduce chronic illiteracy and render free and equal sustainable educational opportunities in all Nigerians and in order to bridge the literacy gap, the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) was established by Decree 41 of December 1989. The Commission was charged with the responsibility of providing nomads with relevant and

functional basic education, knowledge and skills to help raise their productivity, levels of income and participate effectively in national development (Osokoya, Atinmo, Sanimi, Lawal, Ajayi & Osokoya 2010, Shobola et al., 2012). They were also entrusted with the responsibility of:

- (a) Formulating policies and issue guidelines in all matters relating to nomadic education in Nigeria;
- (b) Arranging for effective monitoring and evaluation of activities of agencies concerned with nomadic education;
- (c) Establishing, managing and maintaining primary schools in the settlements for nomadic people;
- (d) Providing funds for nomadic education programmes and related activities.

The NCNE, in collaboration with states, local governments and local communities, is started by providing primary education to nomadic children in various states of the federation. As at March 2001, there were 1,584 nomadic primary schools in all the 36 states of the federation with a total number of 4,907 teachers (Situation Report on Nomadic Education, (undated). Statistical data on nomadic schools for the year 2012 in Imo State recorded 53 migrant primary schools in 16 Local Government Areas. This is made up of 20 migrant fisherfolks, 10 pastoralists and 23 migrant farmer's children's schools. The conditions for establishing those schools include prerequisites as:

- (a) A school must be located not less than 3 kilometres away from the nearest conventional or public school.
- (b) Communities involved must be migrant, enthusiastic and willing to embark on the programme in terms of readiness to pay volunteer teachers.
- (c) There must be presence of children of school age who are willing to read and write.

The NCNE made frantic efforts towards enhancing the functionality of nomadic education and improving the literacy rate of nomads. This was done through several approaches according to Iro (2006) and Shobola et al. (2012) as follows:

- (a) On-site schools whereby schools are located within the vicinity of the nomad
- (b) Shift school system: In shift school system children run morning and afternoon sessions so as to make it convenient for them to help with their animal rearing, fishing and farming.
- (c) Mobile school is a collapsible classrooms that can be assembled or disassembled within thirty minutes and carried conveniently by pack bulls. Motor caravans are now replacing pack animals and with that a whole classroom with the furniture and teaching aids can be moved from one school to another as the nomads migrate.

(d) Use of radio and television: The NCNE introduced education through radio and television. The nomads can be reached through this means while rearing their animals.

Studies have shown that radios are easily accessible, affordable and more handy to use in reaching the target audience than television.

The government through NCNE supply learning materials and post teachers from conventional schools. It is sad to note that despite all the efforts made by the federal government to bring education to the door steps of nomads, the programme still faces monumental challenges.

3. CONSTRAINTS TO EDUCATION OF NOMADS

Regardless of the huge financial and human resources plunged into nomadic education, it still faces huge problems. The problems of nomadic education as outlined in the DPDENCNE (undated) are low levels of enrollment of students, high drop out rate, inadequate teachers, inadequate instructional materials and infrastructure, inadequate supervision and inspection of schools as well as funding.

The rate of pupils' involvement in the programme is low. In Imo State, the total population of all nomadic pupils in schools is 5951. The situation report on nomadic education by the DPDENCNE (undated) recorded a low enrollment rate of 203,844 out of the estimated population of 3 million nomadic children of school age in the federation. The problem of drop out may be as a result of their peripatetic nature and suitability of time to accommodate both schooling and their economic venture (herding, fishing, and farming). The inadequacy of teachers is in terms of quantity and quality. According to Adazie (2010) nomadic education makes use of teachers drawn from conventional schools and re-deployed to teach in nomadic schools as well as volunteer teachers. These teachers lack training on the skills and methods of imparting knowledge. They also do not possess the competence required for maintaining and sustaining the interest of these nomads. The DPDENCNE (undated) recorded that there were 4,907 teachers for 1,574 schools in the entire federation. This translates to a ratio of about 3 teachers per school. Even here in Imo State, record from Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) in August 2013 shows that there are 53 nomadic schools with a total of 190 teaching staff which comes to a ratio of about 4 teachers per school.

The next problem is that of inadequate supervision and inspection of schools. Regular supervision and inspection of schools in order to give prompt attention to the needs of the learners should be undertaken by the Local Government Education Authorities and State Primary Education Board (SPEB). Information from SUBEB shows that the federal government supplied motorcycles for easy supervision of schools. Inadequate instructional materials and infrastructure is another major constraint

to nomadic education. Insufficiency comes in terms of materials such as textbooks, exercise books and writing materials. Other facilities such as classroom blocks and furniture are inadequate. Classes are held under trees or make shift raft tents and mats.

Other problems that may face nomadic education include insufficient funding, non-payment of teachers, mismanagement of funds, and late release of funds, defective policy, and faulty school placement, incessant migration of learners, unreliable and obsolete data, cultural and religious taboos. The problems of nomadic education have to be tackled and the programme properly managed if the national goal must be achieved. Based on the identified problems of nomadic education, there is need for counselling for the following:

(i) Counselling for appropriate enrollment

The managers of the programme should be guided on appropriate enrollment of pupils for the nomadic education. For the nomadic education, there are three categories of students-farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolks. Managers should ensure that pupils enrolled in these schools are children of particular groups. Schools for pastoralists should be for children of pastoralists only. There should be awareness and wider enlightenment to the prospective pupils and students so as to increase the enrollment rate. Parents should be encouraged to send their children to school.

(ii) Counselling for appropriate employment

Organizers and commissions in charge of the educational programme should be made to understand the implications of employing unqualified staff to serve as teachers and facilitators. There should be training for teachers of nomadic schools. Teachers should be adequate in terms of quantity and quality. Use of volunteer teachers who are being paid by the local communities should be discouraged. This may cause some nomadic students to drop out of school. Iro (2006) noted that request from schools for children to bring learning kits dampen the spirit of parents who think they have already made enough sacrifice by sending their wards to school rather than go on grazing and other pastoral assignments. Special motivation should be given to teachers in the rural areas if they are to be retained.

(iii) Counselling for adequate funding

Aderinoye, Ojokhefa, and Olojede (2007) reported that the Nigerian government has spent millions of naira to support special educational programmes. That notwithstanding, more financial support is needed for recruitment and payment of teachers, special training and workshop for teachers to meet the special needs of learners, adequate provision of infrastructures and teaching materials and facilitating supervision and inspection of teaching and learning. Organizers and managers of such programmes should source for fund from government, NGOs and international bodies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, ETF.

(iv) Counselling for re-orientation of learners

Management should understand the socio-cultural predicament of nomads and plan for proper re-orientation of the learners. Most of these nomads do not know any other kind of existence other than herding, farming and fishing. Pastoralists are mainly Moslems and would fear contamination in their religion through western education. There is therefore need for re-orientation of learners to imbibe the spirit of national consciousness and unity. This can be achieved through inculcating the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and that of the society.

(v) Counselling for proper needs assessment

It is imperative to work towards a proper assessment of needs of the learners. The educational programme offered to learners must agree with their needs otherwise it will not be meaningful. The content of the school curriculum should cover pastoral procedure, herding, as well as farming and fishing skills. Learners will frown at education that is foreign or at odds with traditional practices. Different groups of learners should be kept in separate schools based on their needs.

(vi) Counselling for psychological adjustment

Nomads are classified among people with special needs because of their disadvantaged natures, they are bound to be affected psychologically knowing fully that other children are in conventional schools. There is need for counselling to manage inferiority complex. Proper psychological adjustment will help enhance their participation and involvement in the programme.

(vii) Counselling for social re-integration of products of nomadic education

This group of learners may lack confidence in social interaction and integration with other people in the wider society. There is need for counselling to make them understand that they are important in their own way contributing to the economic development of the nation. There should be counselling to acquire a rational mental set for understanding and interpretation of the world around them. Arrangement should also be made to support those who would want to further their education after completion of primary education. This is prefixed on the fact that it is only through education that they can become part of the policy makers and decision making.

(viii) Counselling for policy review

Education to these individuals is only meaningful as far as it can agree with their various circumstances in terms of location, migration, race, religion, culture and economic nature (means of livelihood). The education to be provided has to tally with their way of life and means of livelihood. Namir (1990) maintains that formal schools provide the literacy needed in modern times but their content is too foreign to the pastoralists. They teach the value of sitting in offices behind desks rather than the value of the land. Nomadic learners will be more receptive to western education, if such learning places a reasonable

premium on the importance of nurturing flora and fauna. Their education should include what will make them be meaningful in their economic pursuit since they are also contributing to the economic growth of the country. That should be adequately considered in the educational policy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study has sufficiently demonstrated the impact of appropriate counselling in bringing positive insight to effective management of nomadic education programmes. This is expected to produce students who will be so equipped and self sufficient to understand themselves and the world around them. Based on the above findings, it is recommended that:

a. Professional counsellors be attached to all the nomadic education centres in all the Local Government Areas in Nigeria.

b. Regular seminars, workshops and conferences be mounted for nomadic education organizers and officers in order to equip them with the various trends that would enhance the quality of their programme.

c. Nigerian Government takes seriously the empowerment of its citizens through nomadic education. This is premised on the fact that education is a potent tool for empowerment and acquisition of self-worth and confidence.

d. Government also tries as much as possible to maintain adequate funding of the programme as well as enhance the quality of teaching staff.

e. Vernacular should serve as language of instruction.

f. Since according to research by Iro (2006) about 80% of pastoral nomads are willing to go to school, government should give the necessary support to these individuals to be able to further their education to the highest level.

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