

Cultural Identity and Sustainability of Basic Education for Nomadic Children in Northern Nigeria.

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Abstract

The need to provide modern education for nomadic children is important and necessary for all those concerned with realizing education as a tool for development, fundamental human right and economic sustainability. The neglect of any segment of the population is a minus to the national development crave. As an inevitable step to encompassing national development, the urge for universal basic education for all citizens necessitated the establishment of nomadic education programme to take care of nomadic group in Nigeria. Education is seen as a right of every Nigerian child. This paper examines the sustainability of basic education for nomadic children taking cognizance of nomadic cultural identity of mobility. Based on findings that education of nomadic children is anchored on adaptive and integrative education, using the curricula and calendar of sedentatised education, recommendations were made for putting in place curriculum that is relevant to the cultural identity of nomads and also using the traditional method of pedagogy for cultural identity and sustainability of basic education of nomadic children in Northern Nigeria.

Keywords: Basic education, cultural identity, Nomads, Sustainability, Northern Nigeria

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I. Introduction

Education is a veritable tool for sustainable national development, societal transformation and economic sustainability. This is because any nation that anchors fully on education rank very high on the index of development. No nation can rise above its education level. Globally quality basic education is seen as essential for the full fulfillment of the human person, survival and development. Based on its relevance for societal transformation, Nigerian society in compliance to the United Nations Charter of education as a fundamental right insistson equal educational opportunities for all and sundry without discrimination of sex,tribe, race, religion and nationality (cultural identity). Education For All (EFA) is a universal commitment aimed at meeting the learners needs in the society. (United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (UNESCO) 2000).

It is worthy to note that the Federal Government of Nigeria insists on equal educational opportunities in for all citizensirrespective of cultural identity difference. The Universal Basic Education programme is a programme for all Nigeria children and is free, compulsory and last for 9 year duration comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary education. (FRN, 2014). Despite the gains of education, some children do not have access to education and other facilities. These are regarded as disadvantaged or marginalized people. Ojuekaiye (2014) identified the marginalized people as nomadic Fulani's, migrant

Fishermen in the riverline areas and adults that did not have opportunities for formal education at their youthful age.

Nomad is used to identify individual or ground that wanders from place to place in search of pastures. The major identity of the Nomadic groups is mobility. Cultural identity according to Ennaji (2005), is part of a person self conception, self perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality or any kind of social group that has its own culture. This implies that cultural identity associates and links one to a heritage that can be shared and transferred to others who have the same traditions and basic beliefs systems. The following are identified as the cultural identity of the nomads: child labour, ethnicity, language, gender based discrimination, traditional practices (early marriage, education and others), and mobility that is opposed to modern sedentarised education. Ezeomah (2000) succinctly explain that consented efforts made by different nations to settle the nomads failed because of lack of understanding of the life style of the nomads and the need to consult them on the changes intended for them.

The gap between the nomads and mainstream populations made evident through different standard of living, available infrastructures and basic amenities significantly necessitated the introduction of nomadic education as a step to bridge the gulf. It must be noted that the gulf is not unrelated to the cultural identity of the nomads and the fundamental requirements of modern education. In order to ensure equal access to basic education for this disadvantaged group, in 1986, Nomadic education programme for the Nomadic Fulani's was launched by Prof. Jibril Aminu who was then the Minister of Education. Nomadic education according to Ezeomah (2000) is the informal education provided by the nomadic peoples within their cultural contexts as well as the formal and non formal education provided by the nomads, national governments and international agencies aimed at promoting the culture of nomadic peoples and equipping them with relevant knowledge and skills to develop themselves and their communities.

Notwithstanding the achievements of the nomadic education programme in enrolment, provision of collapsible classrooms, boarding schools among others, the study tends to examine the sustainability of basic education of nomadic children taking into consideration the cultural identity of the nomads. Oxfam (2003) rightly observed that the mobility of nomads (cultural identity) is a significant issue in considering the gains of basic education for the nomads. As a result of their mobility, nomadic children are unable to attend a static school during the usual daytime hours of a conventional school year. Furthermore the main intention of ensuring equal access of basic education is not for loss of cultural identity, but to improve the standard of living and economic growth through education.

The sustainability of basic education for nomadic children taking into cognizance their cultural identity boggles the mind gravely. This is because school buildings, classrooms, benches, desks, teaching equipment and timetables of subjects and activities for the term which are features of modern education are all irrelevant for people who do not stay in one place for more than a few weeks at a time. Nomads cultural identity is opposed to anything that could necessitate their loss of identity. Though the underdevelopment of pastoral communities could be explained as a result of a number of factors, including lack of access to basic education, yet availability of modern and sedentarised education cannot be assumed a panacea for the sector's problems. Notwithstanding, it is a general belief that education is a key to progress and that its purpose is the liberation of nomads from the restraints and limitations of ignorance and despondency. This belief sprouted nomadic education programme in Nigeria to enable nomads gain access to basic education, since it is fundamental right. This is the backdrop of this study as the issue had plagued the delivery and sustainability of education to pastoral nomads and also retarded their individual fulfillment and socioeconomic growth. The thrust of this study is to examine nomads cultural identity, basic education and sustainability of basic education of nomadic children in Northern Nigeria.

II. Literature Review.

Nomad cultural identity

The word Nomad comes from a Greek word 'nomas' meaning one who wanders for pasture. A nomad is a member of a community of people who live in different locations, moving from one place to another in search of pasture. Ezeomah (2004) described nomads as migrant ethnic populations that have common traits and occupations. Nomadic Fulanis are pastoralists who does not have stable place. They move about different regions to search for green pasture for their animals. The necessity of regular migration shapes almost all aspects of nomadic society and culture, due to the fact that they are members of community that moves from one place to the other.

The reasons for constant mobility include;

1. Animals food. Nomads migrate to source for herbage for the animals
2. Trade. Many nomadic peoples are involved in trading as a means of supply. They will move from city to city or civilization to civilization with goods to barter. This will provide them with a substantial income in order to buy what they need.
3. Seasonal vegetation. The movement is conditioned by the different seasons. They avoid cold weather.

4. No knowledge of permanent settlement technology. Many nomadic groups do not have the knowledge to develop agriculture, forcing them into a migratory lifestyle. (Miller, 2016).

Gupta, (2012) itemised the advantages to the environment from this continuous movement to include:

(i) Continuous movement of the nomadic tribes allowed the pastures to recover; it prevented their overuse and intensive grazing, which would lead to deterioration of pastures.

(ii) Enabled pastoralists to set up relationships with farmers on the way so that the herds could graze on the stubble of the harvested field. This helped in weeding the soil of left over's and the cattle also helped manure the soil.

(iii) Nomadic pastoralism provided a way out for supporting a population in a difficult environment and presented a sustainable approach to land use,

Nomads have special ways of adapting to the arid and unreliable climatic conditions. They have strong and viable social system and strong community organization which enhanced their self-reliance and survival capacities to meet their needs, even at times of disaster such as drought, epidemic disease and others. As a survival technique, pastoralists have developed their own methods of treating livestock and themselves. The major problems of nomads as identified by Iroh (2005) include inter alia:

1. Climatic limitations: climatic variances directly or indirectly influence the quality, quantity, and distribution of livestock.

2. Drought and water scarcity: persistent drought and scarcity of water is a disaster to the animals. During droughts, animals die from thirst, hunger, and exhaustion.

To minimize the negative effects of drought, the authorities in Nigeria have built dams and boreholes. In some places, they have planted protective windbreaks to retard desert advancement

Classes of nomads

Generally there are three classes of nomads, namely:

i. the hunter- gatherer: Hunter-gatherers or foragers are the oldest type of nomad that dates back since the beginning of human history. They move about frequently in search of wild fruits, vegetables and animals that change with the seasons.

ii. pastoral nomads: A pastoral nomad according to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2017) owes domesticated livestock and migrate in established territory to find pasturage for these animals. They could be described as a livestock owner who keeps the productivity and survival of his herds through extensive cyclic wandering in areas where there are not enough resources to remain in one place permanently. The following characteristics are identified as attributes of pastoral nomads:

(1) dependence on domesticated animal husbandry;

(2) migration along established routes between focal grazing areas;

(3) mobility of herds, people, and their habitats; and

(4) predominant economic dependence on the herds and their products. (Encyclopædia Iranica, 2017).

Six nomadic groups are identified in Nigeria as the Fulanis, the Shuwa, Buduman, kwayan, Baduwi and the Fishermen.

iii. Peripatetic nomads: The "Peripatetic nomads" are mobile populations moving among settled populations offering a craft or trade. The peripatetic move around with their craft and services scouting for those in need of their wares. This is supposedly the rationale of Socrates' education.

Quality Basic education

In line with the Article 26 of the UN Charter, the 1999 Nigeria constitution that declares education as a fundamental human right of all; the 1990 EFA declaration, the MDGs adoption of EFA goals and the 2015 SDGs declaration of inclusive and quality education, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2000) established National Council for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in an attempt to examine the strategies for educating the Nomadic groups in Nigeria. The reasons for establishing the nomadic education programme are:

(a) the current economic situation in the country which affects animal production;

(b) emergence of the cattle disease, especially around 1987 when many animals died;

(c) importation of cattle from neighbouring Niger and Chad republics became more difficult and more expensive; and

(d) the ever migrating nature of the cattle Fulani and the need to get them settled and educated.

The broad goals of the programme are:

1. to provide the nomads with relevant and functional basic education; and

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

3. also participate effectively in the nation's socio-economic and political affair. (NCNE, 2014)

Because of the distinctiveness of the nomads' ways of life, the blueprint further breaks the above objectives into two: Short Term Objectives and Long Term Objective: Those aims and objectives of the programme which are achievable within a short are classified as Short Term while the Long Term one are those which could only be achieved over a relatively longer period of time. The Short Term aims and objectives as identified from the general objectives can be summarised as follows:

- (a) acquisition of functional literacy and numeracy in order to comprehend the activities.
 - (i) about payment of tax
 - (ii) about instruction in health and animal treatment
 - (iii) about information in national dailies
 - (iv) on simple instruction about voting and choices
 - (v) about communication with relatives, agricultural officers and other government agents
 - (vi) about record keeping on statistics of herds, lands, births and deaths.
- (b) development of scientific outlook
 - (i) to their problems
 - (ii) to issues affecting their relationship with government and her agencies.

In ensuring a successful implementation, therefore, provision was made for the setting up of two very powerful bodies. The first is the National Commission on Nomadic Education, which is empowered with the implementation of the programme nationwide. The commission is to be made up of 25 members; one of which is the Chairman appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Honorable Minister of Education. The second body is the Centre for Nomadic Education. It is expected to conduct researches into the culture of the Nomads to develop and select curriculum contents to train Nomadic Education personnel to evaluate (on regular basis) the Nomadic Education Programme and so on. This centre has, already been established and located in the University of Jos, thus satisfying Section 2.6 of the Blueprint on Nomadic Education which provides that the Centre must be located "in a University with adequate facilities.

Factors inhibiting nomadic children education

a). cultural identity factor

Although the initiative is laudable, the following are the constraints to nomadic education that is based on nomadic cultural identity.

- i) constant migrations/movements in search of water and pasture in the case of the pastoralists;
- ii) the centrality of child labour in their production system, thus making it extremely difficult to allow their children participate in formal schooling;
- iii) the irrelevance of the school curriculum which is tailored to meet the needs of sedentary groups and thus ignores the educational needs of nomadic peoples;
- iv) their physical isolation, since they operate in largely inaccessible physical environments; and
- v) a land-tenure system that makes it difficult for the nomads to acquire land and settle in one place. (National Commission for Nomadic Education, 2014)

b). School related factors

Modern education has elements that tend to prepare nomads to forego education for their life style. The following school related factors are identified;

- (a) Curriculum relevance. The contents of the curriculum are generally considered inappropriate for the children of pastoral nomads. It does not provide practical skills to improve the livelihood of nomads. Rather, it is believed, it focuses on academic achievements that only suit the needs of urban children.
- (ii) Quality of schools/Teachers. The collapsible schools which pastoral nomads may have access to are qualitatively poor in terms of facilities and teaching staff.
- (iii) School Calendar. The calendar for modern education cannot be effective for the nomads. The time table of education programs and schools for nomads should be adapted to their particular environment. The school calendar should be flexible to suit the pattern of nomadic life.

Sustainability of basic education for nomadic children and cultural identity

One of the principal elements of cultural identity of nomads is roving around in search of pastures for their livestock. As a result of their mobility, pastoralist and nomadic children are unable to attend a permanent school during the usual daytime hours of a conventional school year. Sedentarised or conventional education system is sharply opposed to the cultural identity of the nomads. Amadi (2015) maintained that to give good and qualitative education to the nomad, the problem surrounding his existence need be appreciated.

Sedentarisation of Education for the nomadic children is sharply opposed to the identity of the nomads, but rather tends to:

- (1) reducing pastoral movements by 'stopping' children's mobility to gain education;

(2) withdrawing children from pastoral duties in order to live a sedentary lifestyle in the school dormitories or with families that lived close by (Demberel & Penn, 2006).

The government policy on nomadic education tends towards sedentarisation of the nomad group and unsympathetic according Ardo and Agbaoso (2000) to nomadic cultural heritage.

However, this primordial intention of sedentarised education can be inferred from the one of the reasons given above for introducing nomadic education, which was: the ever migrating nature of the cattle Fulani and the need to get them settled and educated, thereby paying little attention to the other three reasons that are:

If the above three were considered, better ways of sustaining nomadic education would have being utilized rather than using the adaptive and integrative education and building of dormitories for children whose identity is mobility. The main problem of modern schools characterized with adaptive and integrative education, starting with missionary schools during the colonial time, is that they withdraw children from society and inculcate them with values and knowledge that make it difficult for them to return to their society. This is one major fears silently expressed by nomads. In Nigeria, the nomad children were faced with a set of values embedded in the curriculum and teaching methods meant for sedentary children. As a result of this, the nomadic children failed to achieve high academic standards, their attendance to school was irregular and many became maladjusted (Ezeomah, 2000). The obvious consequences of sedentarisation of basic education to the nomads are catastrophic and are highlighted thus;

Loss of cattle: Nomadic herding is adversely effected by permanent settlement. Any attempt to settle the nomads is often met with massive resistance and major losses and confiscation of livestock.

Loss of cultural identity: sedentarisation means permanent abode and is opposed to mobility that characterize nomadism.

Basic education that is meaningful and relevant for nomadic children must be relevant and easily applied to the life circumstances of the nomads. The central content of the traditional education curriculum of the nomads are survival and earning a living according to Ezeomah (2000), from the tender age, children are taught by parents, adults and peer groups how to survive and earn a living. Further he buttressed that from childhood children are taught good herding techniques through examples, oral instruction and storytelling. This education is entrepreneurial in nature and through supervision of herding activities, adult ensure that children acquire the necessary characteristics to survive and earn a living through herding.

Thus the sustainability of nomadic children basic education demands that policy makers identify what motivates nomads and pastoralists to send their children to school, understand the expectations and motivations of the children and then develop strategies that take account sspedagogy, which is especially unsuitable to the needs and circumstances of the nomadic Fulani. Instead of teaching pastoral procedures, formal schools spend too much time on teaching history and culture of societies that at times the pastoralists consider irrelevant. Conventional education neglects the desirability of the apprenticeship model, thereby closing a vital channel of skill transfer (Aleyidieno 1985).

The curricula make it difficult for the students after school to go back to the pastoral life after graduation. The major problem that confronts the nomads is what will become of their children when they finish school. They fear that children after modern education may abandon their native occupation of herding and nomadism.

This study is against the conviction of Amadi (2015) that the best method to educate the nomad is to settle him, to give him a permanent abode where he can be located and taught. The followup question is: what happens to the well being of the cattles' and the cultural identity of the nomads.

Nomads should be provided with functional literacy programs with the intention of helping pastoralists to achieve greater mastery of their occupations, increase their knowledge, advance their careers and continue with their herding occupation. Therefore, literacy training for nomads should be complemented by practical lessons on public health care, environmental education (overstocking, overgrazing, etc), nutrition, population education, veterinary knowledge, etc. these are relevant contents that promote herdism and nomadism (nomad cultural identity).

Thus the sustainability of basic education amongst the nomadic population demands to include animal rearing and marketing practices, health, etc. in the curriculum, and not western style education that prepares them for white-collar jobs.

Also to be considered is the traditional methods: story telling Folklore, dance etc that were used to inculcate knowledge. These methods were effective and should be adopted to sustain basic education.

The time table of education programs and schools for pastoralists should be adapted to their particular environment. The school calendar should be flexible to the pattern of nomadic life, i.e. breaks or holidays are to be taken when children are needed most to help their families. Amadi (2015) suggest the way to accommodate and teach the nomads is to make the programme an evening affair where the nomadic teachers come and teach them at the period of their rest.

III. Findings

The following are the findings of the study;

The main identities of the nomads are mobility and child labour. Due to constant movements the living condition of nomads are very poor compared to that of the mainstream population. Describing the living conditions of the nomads, Ardo and Agbaoso (2000) noted the nomads live in the bush and have no access to basic amenities. Due to constant mobility, they live in make shifts huts located in unhealthy and hostile environment that is prone to diseases. Also their means of survival is through rearing of cattle, goat and sheep. The import of the child is to help adults provide herbage for these animals.

Basic education was introduced to improve the living standard of the nomads. The fundamental principles used were the adaptive and integrative education that tends towards the permanent settlement of the nomads through modern education. this approach according to the study is in opposition to the nomadic cultural identity.

IV. Conclusion

Although nomadic peoples contribute substantially to the overall national economy and to government revenues, they are conspicuously disadvantaged because their standard of living is poor. The Nomadic Education Programme (NEP) was established as a remedy. Basic education is relevant for the self fulfilment and development of the nomads. Despite its gains nomadic cultural identity is opposed to sedentarisation of education. Nomadic Children cannot attend modern schools on a regular basis without loss of identity. The adaption and integration techniques' more or less is the explicit or implicit policy of the national governments for sedentarisation of mobile peoples through sedentarised education. The sustainability of basic education taking into consideration the nomadic identity is ensured through relevant curriculum, use of the traditional pedagogy methods, available qualified teachers and calendar that favour the nomadic people.

V. Recommendations

1. School calendar for the nomadic children education should be flexible to allow children perform their duties.
2. A reorientation programmes to be organized for nomadic groups on better ways of living, modern methods to rear and raise their animals, and prevent them from diseases and drought.
3. The curriculum should be mainly entrepreneurial in nature taking the needs and expectations of the nomads into consideration.
4. For the sustainability of basic education, the language of the nomads must be developed and used as the medium of instruction.
5. The insistence and maintenance of the traditional pedagogy of the nomads is needed for sustainability. Emphasis should be laid to fortify and strengthen these methods so as to carry the nomads on the ambient of their cultural identity.

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