

AN OVERVIEW OF NOMADIC EDUCATION POLICIES IN NIGERIA, 1996-2008

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Abstract

During the past four decades, there has been an increased involvement of the federal government of Nigeria on the nomadic education programme. The rationale for the government's participation was to integrate the nomads into the mainstream of the Nigerian society. This objective is far from being accomplished considering the incessant conflicts between the host farmers and nomadic pastoralist which resulted in loss of lives and properties in recent times. However, the perceived deplorable situation in which the nomads faced compelled the federal military government in Nigeria to initiate and establish nomadic education programme for the training of nomadic population. This paper is out to examine the lack of consensus on the conceptualisation of 'nomads' within the global and Nigeria context and led to rest the appropriateness of the meaning of nomads. Furthermore, efforts were geared towards examining different nomadic education policies enacted between 1996 and 2008. The paper is qualitative in nature. Six participants and documentary evidence were the two major sources of data generation. In line with qualitative research approach, content analysis was adopted to analyse the data. Findings indicated that nomads can be conceptualised as group of people that migrate orderly, logically, systematically and purposefully from one particular geographical location to the other in search of their means of livelihood. Secondly, it was established that nomadic education boarding policy of 1996, universal basic education policy of 2004, nomadic girl-child education policy of 2006 and radio education policy of 2008 were some of the policies enacted for the smooth implementation of nomadic education programme in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Nomads, nomadic education, nomadic education policies, Federal Government of Nigeria.*

Introduction

During the past four decades, there has been an increase involvement of the federal government of Nigeria on the nomadic education programme. The rationale for the government's participation was to integrate the nomads into the mainstream of the

Nigerian society. This objective is far from being accomplished considering the incessant conflicts between the host farmers and nomadic pastoralist which resulted in loss of lives and properties in recent times. The general belief in the minds of Nigerians is that if the objectives of the programme were attained, nomadic pastoralists would not been seen on the streets with cattle and other ruminants destroying people's farmlands in the name of grazing. It was reported on the Sahara Reporter (online newspaper) dated 12th June, 2018 that over 8000 lives were lost and about 52000 people were internally displaced due to the activities of nomadic pastoralists. Despite the destruction of lives and properties, there has been a general belief in government circle that the nomads have been marginalised in all sphere of life. Educationally, before 2005 nobody with nomadic background ever had access to university education in the country. From the available official government documents, the highest level the nomads attained educationally was senior secondary school level. The big question is who is to blame when the majority of our past leaders were from the Northern region where the nomadic population are mainly found? The perceived deplorable situation which the nomads faced compelled the federal military government in Nigeria to initiate and establish the nomadic education programme for the training of nomadic people. In the light of the above, this paper is designed to examine the conceptualisation of 'nomads' within the global and Nigerian context. Furthermore, efforts will be geared towards examining different nomadic education policies enacted between 1996 and 2008.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework on which this paper anchored is education policy. Countries the world over operate different types of education system in line with the country's philosophical and ideological background. Looking at the education policy of a country, it is borne in mind that it is interwoven with the country's general policy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009). The achievement of the fundamental issues either in defence, technology or economy by any country lies heavily on the type of education policy formulated and implemented. Education policy is the statement of intent of the way in which identified educational needs of the target group are to be solved (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 2017). In a similar vein, Ball (2012) asserts that education policy is the statement of intention of the government and the envisaged means of achieving those aspects of its national objectives that have to rely on the use of education as a tool.

The concept of education policy, therefore, denotes the determination of major objectives, the selection of methods of achieving these objectives and the continuous adaptation of existing policies to the problems that face a government. In his own contribution to the debate on the concept of education policy, Awokoya (2010) affirms that education policy is directed towards increasing the quality of life of the nomads. Awokoya (2010, p.12) came up with a clear analogy thus: "a rural community that is troubled by a high rate of infant mortality, no doubt, would

worship gods that would reduce the social malady while the more advanced society that fears nuclear war would concentrate on the production of weapons of war to keep the enemy at bay.”From the perspective of the opposite and extreme positions, Awokoya highlights three basic objectives of education policy to include: satisfying individual needs; the community or societal pressures and the degree of complexity and sophistication to which specialised personnel must be educated and trained to meet these demands. This idea was previously conceptualised and put forward by Ukeje (2008) who submitted among others that the formulation of educational policies may arise from public opinions. This position was earlier canvassed by Foucault (2004) who argued that ultimate education policy must be formulated from the public domain, not through governmental power. Within the Nigerian context, education policy originates from the government not from the people as canvassed by Foucault. This might have been the reason why most of the policies enacted are often rejected by the people. From the foregoing discussion, it is appropriate to adopt education policy as a lens to examine nomadic education policies enacted between 1996 and 2017 in Nigeria.

Significance of the paper

The education of nomadic population has for decades been considered by governments of affected countries, concerned agencies and organisations as a major ethical, cultural, political, social and economic problem deserving special attention. International and national attempts have been made to resolve this complex challenge. Globally, there is growing interest in nomadic education and its implementation (Ruto, Ongweny & Mugo, 2009; Devereux, 2010; Dyer, 2012; Dyer, 2014). For instance, in African countries like Mali, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Algeria and Namibia where nomads are found, there is emphasis on nomadic education. Akaranga (1997) argues that in order to develop nomadic education to an acceptable level the government has to take into account specific cultural, linguistic and environmental contexts as well as the needs of different categories of nomadic groups. In light of the above, this paper is of significance because it will inform African governments of the type of nomadic education policies to be enacted that will be acceptable to different types of nomads. In another vein, Khazanov (1994) asserts that nomads and nomadic education are of great interest and concern to educationists, sociologists, anthropologists, geographers and economists. However, an array of studies has been done by great scholars such as Danaher, Cook, Danaher, Coombes, and Danaher, (2013) and Dyer (2014) on nomadic education. A glance at the literature indicates that there is a big gap particularly in the area of government’s dynamic role in the formulation and implementation of nomadic education policies. Therefore, this study will not only ultimately fill this gap but it will be a reference material for subsequent studies on this theme.

Research methodology

This paper is located within qualitative research approach. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013), qualitative research can be regarded as any kind of study that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. However, Creswell and Creswell (2017) argue that a qualitative researcher is often interested in the process and meaning of experience rather than outcome. Furthermore, Creswell (2009) opined that qualitative research enables researchers to gather in-depth data by asking questions and listening to research participants' descriptions in their own language and on their own terms in an authentic world.

In line with the adoption of qualitative research, interpretive paradigm was employed to make sense of the various nomadic education policies enacted between the periods under investigation. For clarity purpose, in this paper two distinctive methods were used as sources of data gathering namely: face-to-face interview with participants and documentary evidence. In the context of face-to-face interview, six participants (Peter, Hanson, Samuel, Glory, Aminu and Dayo) were purposively selected. The research participants selected were some principal staff of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) volunteers to give information relating to nomadic education policies. In the qualitative research approach such as the one deployed for this paper, it is not the large number of participants which is important like in quantitative research approach, Lem, Coe, Haley, and Stone (2013) argued that small or a sizable number of research participants are usually employed in qualitative approach in order to provide an in-depth information needed for the paper. Fifteen questions that bordered on nomadic education policies were developed. In line with the qualitative approach, the instrument was subjected to credibility and dependability evaluation. During the face-to-face interview with the participants, audio recorder and field-note were used to ensure that all information is recorded verbatim. In furtherance to the above, certain words such as concepts, policies, among others from the participants were written down in the field-note.

Similarly, the documentary evidences such as texts, nomadic education policies, encyclopaedias and academic journals was extracted from the National Commission for Nomadic Education library. The data collected was transcribed and was subjected to an open coding in line with the qualitative research approach in which Smith and Davies (2010, p.155); Saldaña (2013), Saldaña, (2015) argued that open coding does not constitute the totality of data analysis, but it is a method to organise the data so that underlying messages portrayed by the data may become clearer to the researcher. After open coding and categorisation, the themes that emerged were analysed using content analysis. Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Learmonth & Motl, 2016; Silverman, 2016).

Findings and discussion

Understanding the concept ‘nomads’

The concept ‘nomad’ is originally a Greek word for ‘*Nomos*’ (Kradin, 2004). This term ‘nomos’ means pasture which are hectares of grassland which people use to rear their animals such as cattle, sheep, goats and other ruminants (Kradin, 2006). The continuous movement in search of the pasture for the animals by rearers might have been the reason people tag them as nomads. There are a lot of documents highlighting the meaning of nomads. It is worthy of note that the conceptualisation of nomads provided by scholars who are in different fields of specialisations such as anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, geography, agriculture history and education, however, makes it complex and nebulous. Most times the meaning of the nomads is tilted towards the author’s field of specialisation. An appropriate working definition of ‘nomads’ will be developed by drawing from various fields listed above. From the perspective of anthropology, Kradin (2004) describes nomads as people who wander from one place to the other for pasture. In the same vein, Sadr (1991) states that nomads are members of tribe, nation, or race having no permanent home but move about constantly in search of food and pasture. Vitanen (1982) says that true nomads are people who make their living wholly off their flocks without settling down to plant (pasture). Here, these scholars emphasize the custodianship of a flock of animals which defines the nomad. However, this may be regarded as not only narrow, but also negatively skewed. Vitanen appears to be silent on other nomads who move around hunting, gathering food and even fishing without the duty of custodianship of a defined flock of animals. In rejecting Vitanen’s submission Salzman (1985) argues that nomads are also applicable to other groups, whether ethnic-professional groups such as gypsies, or the so-called maritime nomads of Southern Asia, or shifting horticulturalists, or certain groups of workers in contemporary industrial societies. None of these groups shares ownership of a pastoral custodianship. In other words, the responsibility towards herding animals alone as suggested by Kradan (2004) cannot define a ‘nomad.’ In other fields such as Sociology and Cultural Studies, Briggs (1985) in his work ‘*Tribes of the Sahara*’ used the nature of mobility of nomads as a basis for clarifying the definition of the concept. He states that nomads are a group of hunters and food gatherers who have no permanent home. Jacob (1998) deviated from Brigg’s position substantially as he argued that nomads are fishermen who migrate along the ocean, sea and river banks fishing. The meanings given by Brigg and Jacob are very narrow because they restrict the meaning of nomads to only hunters, food gatherers and fishermen. It is worthy of note that there are other nomads outside those ones mentioned such as pastoralists, food extractioners, Kuchi, Aborigines, among others (Spooner, 1975).

From the geographer's perspective, Carr-Hill and Peart (2005) see nomads as pastoralists who move with herds of cattle from one geographical region to another in search of water, and grasses. This conceptualisation is lopsided, because if all mobile pastoralists are described as nomads, it could lead this researcher into an excessive broad and imprecise use of the term, since there are very many different categories of mobile pastoral nomads in the world today. Bacon (1988) in her text 'Types of Pastoral Nomadism in Central and Southeast Asia' expanded this conception when she argued that nomads are people who migrate around without exploiting agriculture as the dependent practice for livelihood. Tapper (2008) described the nomads in India as '*Kuchi*' which literally means those who move from one part of the country to the other and this is being determined by the availability of food and water for cattle. From all indications, this meaning (reference to search for pastoral availability) is vague and capable of causing confusion when expanded outside of the context of India.

Within Nigeria context, there are multiplicities of documentary evidence on the meaning of nomads. For instance, an historian Osokoya (2004) was of the view that nomads are groups of people whose occupation makes them wander from one place to another. This, however, described a practice of mobilities (migration) without an explanation of the purpose of such. From the educational point of view, Ezeomah (1983) said that nomads are referred to as ethnic or socio-professional groups who travel and migrate in large or small clan groups in search of means of livelihood within a community. Ezeomah's opinion on the nomads appears lopsided. He absolutely failed to explain whether the 'travel and migration' of the nomads is more of a search of means of their livelihood. Furthermore, Ezeomah's assertion that the nomads migrate within community is problematic and unsubstantiated because we have seen them moving across various geographical boundaries. Similarly, Lar (1997) posited that nomads are an ethnographic group who would move from place to place with no fixed home. Lar's submission on nomads is knotty because it failed to explain why they are 'homeless.' It seems to be that Lar (ibid.) intends to politicise the categorisation of nomads ethnically.

It is a truism that nomads could not and have never been identified with a fixed residential site in all their life due to the type of lifestyle they happen to find themselves in. It is also worthy to mention that the term 'nomadism' is now a common and easy metaphor for endless movement. From the analysis, it is appropriate to distance and out-rightly reject the conceptualisation of nomads as given by notable scholars and researchers. The position is occasioned by the fact that the movement of nomadic people or group is far from being aimless wandering, rather, nomadism is both pre-determined, logical and systematic. The conscious rationale for the movement of the nomads is organised and managed: in the sense that, before the journey commences, the group (or its leaders) declare the search for

the pasture to be embarked upon; it is strategically conceptualised, planned and set-out. From the perspective of their thorough planning, it is evident that the movement of the nomads could not be seen or regarded as “endless movement” rather it is always purposeful and constantly pregnant with achievable aims and objectives. In other words, nomads can be conceptualised as group of people that migrate orderly, logically, systematically and purposefully from one particular geographical location to the other in search of their means of livelihood.

Evolution of nomadic education in Nigeria

Various nomadic education policies enacted from 1996 to 2017 were as follows: nomadic education boarding policy of 1996, universal basic education policy of 2004, nomadic girl-child education policy of 2006 and radio education policy of 2008. Before the researcher look at the nomadic education boarding policy of 1996, it is pertinent to highlight the evolution of nomadic education in Nigeria in order to provide a roadmap for the dynamics of nomadic education policies enacted. The officials of the NCNE interviewed revealed that certain dynamics such as the National Policy on Education of 1977, the Universal Primary Education Policy, MACBAN and some international institutions such as UNESCO, World Bank, and UNDP, promoted the evolution of nomadic education in Nigeria. Before the actual presidential pronouncement for the establishment of the nomadic education programme, there were pockets of interventions on nomadic education specifically by the regional governments in the Northern part of Nigeria way back in 1953. It was maintained that various attempts were made in 1957 by the former North Central Regional Government of Nigeria to establish *KAKAKO* nomadic primary school in the present day Katsina State. The situation changed in late 1986 when the federal military government of Nigeria organised a stakeholders’ workshop to brainstorm on the possible way of establishing nomadic education for the nomads. The workshop was held in Yola (capital of Adamawa state), and was chaired by the then Minister of Education, Prof. Jubril Aminu. This workshop was attended by various groups of people with special interest in nomadic education. At the end of the workshop, a recommendation for the establishment of nomadic education was made. Relying on the panel’s report and the workshop’s recommendations then head of state General Babangida pronounced the birth of nomadic education on Tuesday, 4th November, 1986.

Nomadic Education Boarding Policy (NEBP) of 1996

Aminu and Samuel indicated that the major problem before the federal government was how the nomads could be conscribed into the nomadic education programme that was newly introduced in 1986. One of the measures adopted was the introduction of boarding facility in all nomadic schools in the country. Before the enactment of NEBP, NCNE discussed the proposal in its 32th general meeting in

1995. After the meeting, a decision was reached that government should provide boarding facilities in all nomadic schools in Nigeria. By so doing, the nomads would not only be conscribed into the school system, but they would also be settled in a particular geographical location. The proposal was communicated to the Minister of Education who in turn tabled the proposal before the federal government. In 1996, the federal government of Nigeria on the advice of the Minister of Education came up with another policy known as Nomadic Education Boarding Policy of 1996.

From the narration, it is evident that the reasons why the federal government introduced the boarding policy for nomadic people were two-fold namely; ensuring that nomadic people embrace the formal education programme provided and turning nomadic people from the highly mobile group to the sedentary population.

Nomadic Education Feeding Policy (NEFP) of 1998

Before the introduction of nomadic education feeding policy, the federal government of Nigeria in 1997 received a ministerial report on the 'situational analysis of nomadic education boarding policy'. Hanson narrated that the report indicated that the newly introduced boarding facilities in almost all nomadic schools in Nigeria were under-utilised due to the absence of nomadic children. The report further suggested the intervention measures that would be adopted. One of the intervention measures suggested was the introduction of the school feeding programme in nomadic schools. This resulted in the enactment of Nomadic Education Feeding Policy. The objectives of this policy are as follows:

Reduction of hunger among nomadic school children in Nigeria, improvement of nutritional health status of nomadic school children, increase nomadic school enrolment, attendance, retention and completion, and enhance comprehension and learning performance of nomadic children (Nomadic Education Feeding policy, 1998, p.6).

From the interpretive point of view, this policy aside from addressing absenteeism among nomadic children, it was aimed at improving the nutritional status of nomadic school children in the country. This narrative is supported by Rao and Casimir (2003) that Mid-day Meal was introduced in nomadic schools in India so as to address the problem of hunger and malnutrition experienced by nomadic children. Similarly, Carr-Hill, Eshete, Sedel, and Souza (2005) submitted that the newly introduced School Feeding Programme in Kenya was directed towards improving nutrition, access and sustaining enrolments of nomadic children in all schools.

The Universal Basic Education Policy of 2004

Few months after the enactment of nomadic education feeding policy in 1998, the militarisation of Nigeria political space finally came to an end on 29th May, 1999. The end of military administration saw the enthronement of democratic administration in Nigeria. With the transferred of unstable political terrain, unresolved social problems and messy education issues to the new civilian administration in 1999, the concern of this new government was on how to address myriad of issues left behind by the military. One of such issues that needed government's immediate attention was the repositioning of education sector in Nigeria which was at verge of collapse. Exactly four months after the sworn into office of elected president (President Olusegun Obasanjo), Universal Basic Education was launched. Four years after, the newly introduced draft bill on Universal Basic Education Programme was passed into law by the National Assembly. The Mission Statement of the policy (Universal Basic Education Programme Policy) reads:

To operate as an intervention, coordinating and monitoring agency to progressively improve the capacity of states, local government agencies and communities in the provision of unfettered access to high qualitative basic education in Nigeria. However, at the end of an uninterrupted nine years education, every child that passes through the system should acquire appropriate levels of literacy (UBEP, 2004, p. 2).

From the policy, the programme was equated with nine years basic education for children between the ages of six to fifteen years. For uniformity purpose and sustenance of its quality, the programme was centralised in the context of curriculum provision and qualification of teachers by the government. From the narrative, it was discovered that government did not only make UBE free and compulsory, it also stipulated the penalty for person(s) that contravene the law. UBEP (2004, p.10) stipulated that; "A parent who contravenes section 3 (2) of this policy commits an offence and is liable on first conviction, to be reprimanded; on second conviction, to a fine of N2, 000.00 or imprisonment for a term of one month or to both; and on subsequent conviction, to a fine of N5, 000.00 or imprisonment for a term of two months or to both."

From the excerpt, it was also discovered that the law establishing Universal Basic Education empowers the government to set up commission called Universal Basic Education Commission. The commission's headquarter is in Nigerian political capital Abuja.

Nomadic Girl-child Education Policy of 2006

The Federal Ministry of Education in conjunction with the Department of Monitoring, Evaluation and Statistics of National Commission for Nomadic Education began the verification of staff and learners in all nomadic schools in Nigeria. The aim of the verification exercise was to identify areas of most serious needs and the viability of the available option for change. Additionally, to specify particular areas where new allocation of present resource can promote the most cost-effective changes and provide a basis for and advocacy for funds for the mobilization of resources and policy change. At the end of the verification exercise, it was discovered that there was serious gender disparity in all nomadic schools in favour of boys in Nigeria. In bridging the gender gap, Peter said that the federal government of Nigeria passed the Girl-child Education Policy of 2006. The objectives of the policy were as follows:

To increase participation of nomadic girl child in school; reduce attrition rate of girls in nomadic schools; and increase the participation of nomadic girls in primary science; health education and HIV/AIDS education; mobilising and sensitising nomads on the need of sending the girl children to school and provision of girls' friendly resource materials in nomadic schools (Girl-child Education policy, 2006, p.).

The enactment of the Girl Child Education Policy of 2006 by the government notwithstanding, Glory (2018) revealed that the number of nomadic girl children in all nomadic schools across the country did not increase as expected. This was due to lack of enlightenment and sensitisation of nomadic people on the needs in sending nomadic girl children to school. The above quotation is in agreement with the position of Mangla (2015) who submitted that girl child education policy enacted by Indian government was one tool that helped in the transformation of nomads.

Mobile Education Policy of 2007

Another nomadic education policy enacted after the Nomadic Girl-child Education Policy of 2006 was the Mobile Education Policy of 2007. This policy came into existence as a result of nomads' rejection of regular school calendar. The regular school calendar fell within the period when nomads' occupational engagements were at its peak. This often happened between the month of January and April of every year. The narrative indicated that during this period of the year, the nomadic pastoralists in the Northern Nigeria migrated with their herds of cattle to the Southern Nigeria for fresh grazing land. Migration of the nomads to Southern Nigeria from the North at this period of the year was because of the dry season in the North, which dries pastures and other roughages which cattle and other ruminants could feed on. In the South, there is availability of pasture because of the availability of rainfalls in this region. Hanson reported that the rejection of the regular school calendar by nomads was reflected on the number of nomadic

children withdrawn from the school. To check this attrition, the government introduced mobile schools.

From the all indications, Aminu stated that the mobile schools were made up of collapsible materials that can be moved from location to another freely. The policy also made room for the provision of movable tables and chairs along with the school. Similarly, another participant (Peter) said that government's decision to introduce mobile classrooms was to ensure that nomads' occupational activities are not disrupted since they are the main suppliers of meat the nation. A similar assertion was reported by Idris (2011) who said that the enactment of mobile education policy by the Kenyan government was done in order to help nomadic people adapt to the recurrent drought and ensure that every nomadic child's right to an education is not violated.

Radio education policy of 2008

One of the themes that feature prominently in the policy document was the Radio Education Policy of 2008. Aminu and Dayo reported that in every nomadic family there is a small transistor radio that is powered with dry cell batteries. Furthermore, they said that the nomads have unquantifiable passion to listen to radio programmes, especially those ones broadcasted in their local dialects. In realisation of this, the government introduced lessons to be aired on the radio since it was the easiest and quickest means of information dissemination. In the month of April 2008, a pilot programme was introduced. A report received from the nomads indicated appreciable acceptability of the programme. This report was subsequently forwarded to the government. Few months after the receipt of this report, a Radio Education Policy was enacted. In the policy document(Radio Education Policy of 2008), its objectives are stated in Part 2 as follows:

To mobilise and sensitise nomads to appreciate the value of modern education, to encourage nomads to contribute meaningfully towards education of their children, increasing the level of support and enthusiasm of nomads with a view to improving learners' enrolment and attendance and, to inform nomads of modern animal husbandry practices as well as acquaint them with their civil responsibilities including the formulation of cooperatives and radio listening groups.

From the above quotation, the whole idea of the enactment of radio education policy was to complement face-to-face method of impacting knowledge on nomadic children since some of them still find it difficult to attend school regularly despite various nomad friendly policies enacted. Moreover, it was aimed at widening access to quality basic education for the nomads, boost their literacy and equip them with skills and competencies.

In another vein, it was reported by Dayo thatthe World Bank provided 1000 pieces of non-battery wind up radio and audio cassette recorders in addition to 500 units

of blank audio cassettes and 140 mini tape recorders to be distributed to the nomads. Aside the World Bank intervention project, South Africa through one of her agencies known as 'Open Learning System Education Trust' donated 200 units of radio/cassette players, 19,800 copies of audio cassettes, 170 copies of teacher's guide, 10,000 copies of readers, 11,000 copies of activity books, 200 copies each of wildlife, colour charts, farm, and African pictures and letters of the alphabet. With the provision of radio sets and other accessories to the nomads by some international institutions and country, nomadic radio education programme took off in Nigeria. On a weekly basis, a new lesson was introduced.

Conclusion

It was argued that nomads are not endless wanderers as postulated by some scholars and researchers, rather, their migration are planned, purposeful, orderly, logical and systematically embarked upon to achieve their set goals. In another vein, it was established that various nomadic education policies were enacted for the smooth implementation of nomadic education programme in Nigeria. It is worthy to submit that the overt and covert reason for the enactment of these nomadic education policies by the federal government of Nigeria was to change the nomads from highly mobile population to sedentary group.

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