

345

REFORMS IN NOMADIC EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF NIGERIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT

By

DR. MUHAMMAD GARBA MAHUTA

Department of Education,
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

Abstract

The National Commission for Nomadic Education was established in 1989 with the aim of providing education for the nomadic pastoralists and later in 1990, effort was made to incorporate the education of migrant fishermen children into the National Nomadic Education Programme. There are various educational reforms in Nigeria and the National Commission for Nomadic Education may not be left out of these national reforms. The main thrust of this paper is to examine the education reforms in Nomadic Education and the future of Nigeria. Having delineated the concepts of educational reforms, nomads, nomadism and nomadic education, a brief and concise theoretical framework was put in place so as to give the paper a sociological focus. The paper examined the reforms that should be put in place in Nomadic Education with a view to having a better Nigeria. Lastly, some recommendations were made such as: the Federal Government should, in collaboration with the pastoral community and minority group leaders, sensitise their peoples in the bush encampments with a view to making them appreciate the need and relevance of formal education for their children. The provision of education for nomads would enable them make use of it for personal and national development in the modern age of globalisation.

Introduction

Education reforms are usually geared toward educational integration and consolidation for improvement. The foundation of educational reforms is the National Policy on Education and it seeks to improve the educational strength of the country by providing all necessary teaching and learning facilities for enhanced educational delivery. Educational reform is a national issue with a broad aim and can only be achieved by equality and the provision of quality and quantity education for all children devoid of socio-cultural, religious, geographical location and socio-economic inclinations. One of the major concerns of the educational reforms is the provision of basic education for all. This is in addition to the provision of skills, technology and socio-economic development and political awareness in a competitive manner with the global world. In order to justify the goal of education for all, the universalization of education remains a fundamental factor, as it covers every individual including the minority groups, the nomadic groups, the fishermen, the indigenous Kambari and the itinerant and other pastoral groups. The inclusion of all these categories of peoples into the educational system of the country is capable of making Nigeria to actualise its goals of the educational reforms in general and the nomadic education in particular.

Education is essentially regarded as a social process for capacity building, socialisation, social integration, development and the maintenance of the society. In order to meet up with the modern challenges of life and globalisation, education is a weapon which is capable of equipping people with knowledge and skills so as to be able to survive in the modern world of science, technology and globalisation. However, the aim of this paper is to examine education reforms in nomadic education in the context of the future of Nigeria from a sociological viewpoint. In a more specific context, the aim of this paper is to examine what reforms are required in the Nomadic Education Programme in order to create a better future for Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Sociological paradigms or perspectives are theories used by sociologists and sociologists of education in attempting to understand the problems of human society. These problems could, of course, be those of education, population, life chances, gender, minority and conflict and so on. Some of the major sociological theories include: functionalism, conflict or Marxian, symbolic interactionism, feminism, phenomenology and ethnomethodology.

However, for the purpose of this paper, the functionalist theory was adopted to examine the various contributions of nomadic education programme in the provision of education for the nomadic peoples, minority groups and indigenous groups in Nigeria. This is done bearing in mind that the functionalist perspective is concerned with the role of different parts of the social system to the maintenance and survival of the whole. This therefore, means that since the contribution and role of different people in society is required for its survival and development, then functionalism is seen to be the most relevant sociological perspective for this paper.

The issue of educational reforms and nomadic education in the context of future Nigeria is stressed under the consensus sociological perspective. In this view, the various parts of the social system in the society are interrelated, working together to form a complete system, for example, the polity, economy, education, religion and family. The educational institution remains a very sensitive organ in the society as it functions to maintain the production of manpower, to teach value consensus of the society and to unite the society through schooling as well as provide egalitarian society by means of universalizing access to schooling or the provision of educational opportunities for all and sundry, devoid of all forms of discriminations.

These features, which are the aim of educational system in Nigeria, can be used to justify this paper to be viewed under the functionalist perspective. The reforms in nomadic education can help to improve the standard of nomadic education for future Nigeria. The education of the nomads is to be unified with all other educational plans and systems in the country. However, this is capable of paving the way for sustainable development. By and large education provides opportunity for personal growth and development as well as social integration and cohesion in the society.

Conceptualising Education Reforms in Nigeria

Reforms in education come as a result of the need for change and transformation. It is also a strategy for rescuing any social endeavour or phenomenon. This is to rescue the present and existing education system which is observed to be facing problems both in quality, quantity and relevance. Most educational systems face challenges that warrant reforms in learning content, learning structure and change or renewal of pedagogy or teaching strategies.

Educational reforms mean educational transformations, innovations or educational changes. Education is an agent of change and development in the society. The fundamental assumptions of education are that people in society can change and educators and educational environment can effect that change. Every educational plan and its objective are for the well-being of the people. Education provides for individuals the enabling social environment to think critically, identify, use and manage the environmental resources for personal and society's development. The reforms in education in Nigeria are to provide the people with new paradigms that recognize the structural nature of reality and a system of education that seeks to manifest sustainable development in the society, capable of competing favourably in the modern age of globalisation.

Nigeria education reforms are faced with the challenges of equality and access to basic education, making education meaningful, relevant and more effective. The scopes of the reforms include formal and informal or non-formal school systems. This is aimed at shaping the culture, improving the capacity to face the challenges of global economic competitiveness, and enhancing the living standard of Nigerians. According to Karabel and Halsey (1977), educational innovations are targeted at improving and maximizing educational resources such as educational finance, personnel, instructional facilities and educational structures. However, it is pertinent to

mention that educational changes usually occur when the current or present educational practices are challenged and a search for more efficient and effective ways of achieving educational goals are undertaken by researchers in order to find more effective ways of carrying out educational activities for the achievement of the set goals and objectives in education.

Umezulike (2007) has observed that over the years, perhaps a major step taken in the country towards educational reforms and development was the 1981 National Policy on Education, which marked the end of 6-5-2-3 system and the emergence of the 6-3-3-4 system. This was aimed at making education more relevant and functional to its citizens. Its main objective was to diversify educational services for Nigerian children. Furthermore, the Universal Basic Education was also introduced in 1999 by the immediate past President of Nigeria, President Olusegun Obasanjo. This was meant to ensure the provision of Universal Basic Education for all children by the year 2015. It may not be out of place to mention that there were many educational reforms in Nigeria. However, this paper takes specific interest in nomadic education in relation to the future of Nigeria as an entity.

Nomadic Education Programme in Nigeria

Nomads are referred to as ethnic or socio-professional groups, who travel and migrate in large or small class groups in search of means of livelihood within a community, a nation or cross international boundaries. Nomads are also groups of people whose way of life involves frequent movement from place to place. Usually nomads live in tents, grass-covered shelters, or other temporary or mobile dwellings (Tahir, 1996).

However, the contemporary definition of nomadism, according to Akinpelu (1994), connotes any type of existence characterised by features of the absence of a fixed domicile. It is clear that nomads are hunters, food gatherers, migrant fishermen, pastoralists and indigenous peoples such as the indigenous Kambari in Kebbi and Niger states of Nigeria whose population is yet to be established. Furthermore, according to Akinpelu (1994) Nigeria has the following categories of nomadic groups, namely:

- the Fulani, (with population of 5.3 million)
- the Shuwa (with population of 1.0 million)
- the Buduman (with population of 35, 001)
- the Kwayam (with population of 20, 000)
- the Badawi (with population yet to be established)
- the fishermen (with population of 2.8 million).

Tahir (1996) states that, in Nigeria there are broadly two categories of nomads. These are the pastoralists and the migrant fishermen. In his view there are about 9.3 million in Nigeria and 3.1 of these populations are children of school age. The migrant fishermen are about 2%. The Pastoralist number is over 6 million and they are the most disadvantaged group in Nigeria with extremely low participation in formal education. In this regard Tahir (1996) has outlined five major factors that are responsible for their exclusive characteristics of non-participation in education, namely:

- the constant movement of nomads;
- the irrelevance of curriculum to their values, problems, needs and life styles;
- the centrality of child labour in the nomadic system;
- physical barriers particularly the inaccessibility of areas where nomadism is practiced; and
- the nomads (especially the pastoralists) have remained unconcerned with the system of land holding.

In an attempt to provide education for every citizen of the nation as stated in the National Policy on Education (FRN 2004), the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 further strengthened the justification for the provision of education for all Nigerian citizens and

348

thus stated that education is a Fundamental Human Right. This fact justifies the creation of the Nomadic Education programme which was evidently backed up by Decree 41 known as the National Commission for Nomadic Education Decree of 1989. Under this provision, clear guidelines were outlined to meet the stated aims geared towards integrating the nomadic people into the main stream Nigerian society.

Filani (2007) observes that the aims and objectives of the education of the nomads (either in a formal or non-formal setting) were derived from the National Policy on Education with the following broad objectives:

- the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- the inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around him that is training in scientific and critical thinking, and
- the acquisition of appropriate skills, and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competence as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

Presently, the education of the nomads is an attempt to justify the universalization of education in the country. The educational programme of the nomads seems to be flexible and accommodative to their pattern of life and targeted towards a purposeful living. The system of education for the nomads should satisfy the different categories of the nomads in the Nigerian society. In the new structure of educating these unique groups the cultural and socio economic life style of the nomads of every kind is supposed to be taken into consideration.

However, the issue of educating the nomads is not the only concern of the nomadic people. The process of safeguarding their cattle, culture and general norms and values and their way of life is, of course, very fundamental, while education is considered as a secondary factor. No doubt, education remains the prime factor that will help the pastoralists to improve their lot. This has made the government to face the challenge of providing concrete plans to educate the nomadic groups and their children. The provision of education to the nomadic children is in line with the formal school structure which, as mentioned earlier, brought about the setting up of the National Commission for Nomadic Education by Decree 41 of 12 December 1989.

The basic responsibility of the commission is to provide primary education to the children of the nomadic pastoralists. Currently this responsibility is shared with the states and local governments that are involved. However, for the provision of education to be feasible, strategies were mapped out and these include: on site schools, the shift system, school with alternative intake and Islamiyyah schools. The nomadic education system has many arrangements designed to meet the peculiar socio-cultural characteristics of the children of the nomadic pastoralists and migrant fishermen.

The Aims of Nomadic Education Programme

The objectives of Nomadic Education are derived from the National Policy on Education. The following specific objectives are expected to be achieved:

- To expose the nomadic child to formal education.
- To inculcate the spirit of humanity and make him realize himself as a member of the Nigerian society.
- To enable the nomadic child take part in the development of his immediate environment and the country in general.
- To make the nomadic child able to improve his living conditions, thus eliminating the hardships and constraints in his life.
- To help modernize his techniques of herdsman ship and animal management.
- To help the nomadic child to appreciate moral and religious practices.
- To assist the nomadic child to develop himself rapidly and fully, both physically and

- 349
- intellectually so as to enable him cope with the demands of the contemporary world.
 - To help the nomadic child to develop initiative.

Problems Inhibiting the Growth of Nomadic Education

There are so many problems inhibiting the provision of education for nomadic peoples in Nigeria. According to Tahir (1998), nomadic education is confronted with myriads of problems, namely:

- There is dearth of teachers in terms of quality and quantity. Most of the nomadic schools have no teachers and most of those available are unqualified. There is the presence of other categories of teachers in nomadic school other than the holders of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and Teachers Grade II (TC II). These teachers are, namely, Higher Islamic Studies Certificate Holders (HIS), locally trained Arabist (LTA), First School Leaving Certificate Holders and Secondary school leavers.
- There is general lack or inadequacy of supervision and monitoring by both local and state supervisors and inspectors. This situation has to do with the lack of means of transportation for the purpose of supervision, monitoring and inspecting school performance.
- The NCNE is under funded and even the funds that are approved for it are sometimes not released in good time. Furthermore, there are some state governments who tend to refuse budgetary allocation for the programme.
- Low level of enrolment in Nomadic schools.
- There is relatively high dropout rate of nomadic school products that passed to junior secondary schools.
- Decaying of infrastructural facilities, inadequate instructional materials, low teacher morale and weak institutional capacity.
- Lack of proper demarcation of cattle routes and grazing reserves in the country hampers the programme, because there is rampant Fulani and farmers clashes, the repercussion of which is displacing the nomadic communities and rendering them unsecured.

Reforms in Nomadic Education for future Nigeria

The education reforms are generally for the-rapid improvement of the education system. It covers every ethnic group and other minority groups with unique characteristics. It is on this basis that the reforms will possibly universalize the access to education with emphasis on compulsory attendance and basic literacy skills. It is hoped that the reforms in nomadic education would address the needs and aspirations of minority groups in Nigeria. When this is done, it will serve as an opportunity to promote educational balance and make basic education more accessible to nomads, minority groups and the indigenous peoples for a better Nigeria.

In considering every citizen in Nigeria it is observed that all Nigerians are supposed to have access to basic education, at least to be literate to some level and this is the challenge of the education reforms. In addition, it is the right of all citizens to participate in the educational provisions with special consideration for the minority groups, the nomads, migrant fishermen and the indigenous peoples. It is pertinent to mention that the future of Nigeria lies in the hands of all Nigerians irrespective of socio-cultural and socio-economic inclinations or whether this one is minority or majority. Therefore, the responsibility of having a better Nigeria is the responsibility of all. Education is therefore capable of providing opportunity for contributing to sustainable development of Nigeria as well as the ability of facing the challenges of the modern world of science and globalisation.

The Federal Ministry of Education (2000) observed that the nomads have a large population and negligible literacy rate. The education of the nomads under UBE is therefore a priority area. No doubt the educational provisions made for the nomads has increased their literacy rate significantly, but there are still some shortcomings in the provision of education for the nomads. The nomads and minority groups deserve qualitative and compulsory education

considering their peculiar socio-cultural and geographical inclinations, coupled with their contribution to the socio-economic development of the nation.

It is pertinent to note that nomads in the modern times need more than just reading and writing skills. However, they require education for social survival, economic growth, political and cultural advancement and progress. If education is properly given to them they will fully be integrated into the mainstream Nigerian society. The integration of the minority will help in their participation in the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria. This is capable of making Nigeria to have a better future. The education sector remains a valuable tool for cultural transmission, economic planning, national growth and development. This therefore, requires reforms in nomadic education for future Nigeria. Essentially speaking, the concern of the education reforms in nomadic education is for the improvement of the educational programmes for the nomads and minority groups. This should aim at making individuals able to compete favourably with the rest of the world and more especially in the modern world of science, technology and globalisation. In view of the desirability of reforms in nomadic education, the paper proposes the following reforms in nomadic education with a view to having a better Nigeria:

Recommendations:

Firstly, there is the need for change in the nomenclature of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) to the National Commission for Minority Education (NCME). There are so many minority groups in Nigeria that can be described as having the same problems in the provision of education. As such they need to be captured in the NCNE. In view of this, one of the reforms in Nomadic education programme which the paper is proposing is the change in the nomenclature of the commission so as to incorporate other groups who have peculiar situation with the nomadic pastoralists.

Secondly, there is the need to incorporate all the nomadic groups in Nigeria. Policy provisions should be made to incorporate the other nomadic groups in Nigeria in the new name NCME that is proposed in this paper. Some of these social groups are, the indigenous Kambari, the migrant school children, the less privileged boys and girls and so on. All the educationally disadvantaged groups in Nigeria such as the nomads, hunters, food gatherers, and the indigenous farmers can fall under the proposed National Commission for Minority Education (NCME).

Thirdly, there should be Minority Education Departments in all states that have these peculiar groups which should be directly under the control of the NCME and not the state Ministry of Education. This can help significantly in avoiding the problem of lukewarm attitude exhibited by many states and local governments in the provision of education for nomads.

Fourthly, the NCME should endeavour to conduct a comprehensive census to determine the population of the nomads and minority groups in Nigeria. By so doing the commission would have a comprehensive data base of the nomadic groups in Nigeria. This will provide the tool for adequate planning.

Lastly but by no means the least, there is need for the establishment of special training programmes for teachers of the nomads and minority groups. As part of the reforms in nomadic education, there is the need for the establishment of special programmes for the training of nomadic teachers. This would provide an opportunity to train teachers who are familiar with the peculiar characteristics of nomads, minority groups and the indigenous peoples.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The struggle for human development, profitable and competitive education, economic growth and the eradication of illiteracy in Nigeria, led to the national education reforms. This was as a result of the zeal to universalise the educational provision in the country, by providing equal educational life chances irrespective of clan, ethnic group, geographical location, socio-economic status and religious inclinations. Reforms in nomadic education would help to integrate the nomads and minority groups into the mainstream society as well as provide

opportunity for participation for the development of Nigeria.

The Federal Government should, in collaboration with the leaders of the pastoral community and minority groups, sensitise their peoples in the bush encampments with a view to making them appreciate the need and relevance of formal education for their children. The provision of education for the nomads would enable them make use of it for personal and national development in the modern age of globalisation.

Education reforms in nomadic education should be universal in nature with a view to providing educational access to all groups and the minority in the society. It should also be flexible and broad-based to be able to cater for all school age children.

The nomadic groups should be involved in the present universalization of education through the provision of good structures, qualified teachers, flexible educational strategies and culture favoured curriculum to enhance a positive improvement in their life and that of their communities.

The reforms should provide and monitor the programme of UBE, to eradicate corruption and provide sustainable policy framework for continuity and development. The provision of education should come with lucrative and feasible gains and privileges to capture as well as attract the minority or the secluded populations, by involving them in national issues and programmes.

Government should monitor the provision of education by enforcing the utilization of the facilities provided. The citizens of Nigeria should see this change as change for good, which is geared towards eradicating illiteracy, disease and backwardness in the society. There should be a strong working force in collaboration with other agencies to achieve the broad aim of education in Nigeria, with a view to joining the rest of the world in the pursuit of education for sustainable development, globalization as well as Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

REFERENCES

352

- Akinpelu, J. A. (1994). Education for special groups. In O. O. Akinkugbe (ed). *Nigeria and Education: The challenges ahead*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National policy on education*. Lagos: NERDC press.
- Federal Ministry of Education (2000). Universal Basic Education for Nigeria Abuja *Proceedings of the Education mini submit*. Monday 29 November (1999) ABU Press limited.
- Federal Ministry of Education (2007). *Educational Reform Act*. Abuja: Federal Government press.
- Filani, O. (2007). *Issues in teachers education: The Nigeria experience*. Abeokuta: Research and Publications committee, FCE Ogun state.
- Karabel, J. & Halsey, A. H. (1977). Social transformation and educational change. In J. Karabel and A. H. Halsey (eds) *Power and ideology in education*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tahir, G. (1996). Nomadic Education in Nigeria. In G. Tahir (ed.) *Nomadic education in Africa*, Kaduna: NCNE.
- Tahir, G. (1998). Nomadic Education in Nigeria: Issues problems and prospects. *Journal of Nomadic Studies*, 1 (1), 10-26.
- Umezulike, N. A. (2007). Educational reforms and attainment of adult education objectives in the 21st century. In E. J. Maduwesi (ed). *Nigerian Journal of Teacher Education and Teaching*, 3, (1), 124.