

CHALLENGES ON DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION OF NOMADIC CHILDREN IN SOKOTO STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT: *Globally, education as birth right and sustainable development in human capacities and societal progress are being pursued with vigour. The nomadic Fulani are the second largest population of inhabitants in Sokoto state. However, they are among marginalised, underserved, underdeveloped and less educated group not only in the state but the country at large. The paper identifies nomadic life styles, inadequacies in policies and provisions for nomadic education and wide spread corruptions as major sources of constraints to development and education of Fulani children thus affecting the sustainable development prospects. The paper suggests the need for more concerted efforts form individuals and government, need for accurate census figure, mass mobilisation, wide spread campaign and use of culture-friendly integrated health, socio-economic welfare and education packages for all nomads. The paper concludes that it seems obvious that the nomads prefer sending children to cattle rearing than schooling because to the nomads a child who can rear and milk cow is more desirable than a certificate-holder that has no job or cannot breed cattle, thus it is imperative to make nomadic education more relevant to ideals and values of nomads for sustainable development to be a reality and achievable.*

KEYWORDS: challenges, development, education, nomadic children, Sokoto, State

INTRODUCTION

Virtually child development is affected by so many factors among which are heredity, socio-cultural terrain, physical environment and even climatic condition in which a child is born into. These in turn determine the virtues and vices a child learns, develops and expresses as his / her potential strength or weakness in terms of behaviour, attitude, attributes abilities and skills. The nomads are dispersed group and are found in 31 out of 36 states in Nigeria, Sokoto state inclusive. Thus, this paper explores how pastoralism and nomadic way of life affect development and education of nomadic children. It is worth to note that while pastoral nomadism is considered a difficult terrain by people to the nomads its virtue that they cherish, sustain, prefer and live for.

Actually, Sokoto state government has made efforts (Sokoto State Education Strategic Plans, 2010) to enhance participation and involvement of pastoral nomads in education and development programmes but this has remained a mirage. Despite the glaring merits associated with the modern education on life and civilisation, many nomads and their children are not in formal education. Tahir, Muhammad and Muhammad (2005), indicated that out of the estimated 9.3 million nomads, 3.1 million are school age children, the enrolment rate of the

nomads in formal and non-formal education is very low while the illiteracy rate was put at 0.2% and 2.0%.

Even in 2017, many Fulani are not educated, they remain apprehensive and resistance to external intrusion, acculturation, and modernisation. Iro (2016) laments that Fulani pastoralists are difficult to educate and indicated that only about 10% of the males and 2% of the females are literate and numerate. While Ujorh (2017) opines that nomadism as a way of life was a logical, valid and productive mode of existence as pastoral nomads were able to resist external forces this explain why till date their lifestyle and culture could not be overrun by modern civilisation. Virtually, Nomadic Fulani children are born and raised in strict adherence to customary practices, with inhibitions and apprehensions to cultures and practices outside theirs. Due to their mobility, social environment which is limited and restrictive yet children are socialised to adore, adopt Fulani lifestyle and cultural heritage which have been preserved and transferred from parents to children and from generation to generation.

Available literature shows efforts made by government at State, Federal and International levels to provide equal right and equal opportunities to all children globally by Child Right Acts of 1956, Education for All (EFA) goals of 1990-2000, Millennium Development Goal of (MDG) 2000-2015 and the on-going Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2015-2030. It is important to note that Sokoto state is among the educationally disadvantaged state in Nigeria with high percentage of its inhabitants being the nomadic Fulani constituting high percentage of the illiterate populace in the state. The fact is that these groups of inhabitants cannot be served by the conventional modern education facilities therefore; they need specialised programme to reach to the bushes, remote areas and serve when they move with their cattle. In this regard, Nomadic Education Programme and National Commission for Nomadic Education were established in 1989. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC 2015), indicated its renewed holistic, ambitious and aspirational education agenda of leaving no one behind as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4 which read as 'to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.' The purpose of this paper is to identify how this goal is reflected in different dimensions of development and education among nomadic children in Sokoto state with view to proffer viable suggestions that could enhance the lots of children and achievement of SDG.

Contextual Definition of Terms

The term nomads have been subjected to different definitions and usages. Etsename (2006) defines nomads as people whose existence are characterised by absence of affixed domicile and categorised them into three namely the hunter-food gatherers, itinerant workers and pastoralists. In this paper, Nomads is used to refers to Fulani ethnic-cultural people in Sokoto state, Nigeria whose means of survival and dominant occupation is cattle rearing, they engage in travelling and moving with their families and goods from one place to another in search of grazing or conducive climatic condition for their animals.

In Sokoto State, there seem to be no accurate census figure of nomads at date, however, Aderinoye, Ojokheta and Olojede (2007), put the numerical population of nomads in Nigeria at 9 million, which were classified into five groups with the Fulani having 5.3 million, the Shuwa 1.0. million, the Buduman 35,001, the Kwayam were 20,0000 and the Badawi were not established (Abdulrahman, 2006). Contextually in this paper Nomadic children refer to

offspring of nomads not in sedentary settlement but belong to pastoral Fulani family within the chronological age of 0-12 years equivalent to formal primary school age group.

Development: refers to physical changes and attributes, socio-emotional and moral behaviours, attitudes and character, traits and dispositions possessed by children as they pass through ages based on exposures, experiences, handling, training, socialisation and interaction processes with nomadic life style and surrounding environment.

Education refers to forms of knowledge, information and skills acquired or possessed by nomadic Fulani. These include the indigenous, Islamic and western type of education.

Developmental Process among Pastoral Nomadic Children

The developmental processes of pastoral nomadic children could be observed from the following:

The life style of nomadic Fulani: life style of nomadic Fulani (makiyaya) revolves round their cattle (Etsename 2006; Said 2016), every aspect of their life is focused on promotion of cattle production and preservation of their customary values, thus from onset children are raised, trained and preoccupied with cattle rearing practices and activities, it is source pride, food, occupation, income, their socio-cultural, religious, economic activities and routine life engagements and achievements are connected to the cattle. Yusuf (2017) indicated that most pastoral nomadic (Fulani) have their recognised camp with make shift homes, but they move all year round for favourable grazing land and water as season changes but at some point they return to the base or household (Ruga). Their socio-political structure consists of ethnic, kinship group, clan, lineage, family and ruga the superior political and spiritual head is called Lamido chosen by king makers, while the lineage is headed by a chief (Ardo) chosen through consensus and compromise. The Nomadic society is a democratic, cohesive and harmonious quasi-government system and the nomads (Makiyaya) live a life of self-denial, and restrain, seeming poverty, no much recreation, merriment, luxury and flamboyant life.

The Pastoral Nomadic Children: are born and reared through a very close knit marriage, family unit, social linkage and structure engrained through a patrilineal system of inheritance. They engage and encourage a practice known as (koogal) marriage to first cousin and (Deetuk) marriage to clan members. This provides strong family tie and stability among them and serves as basis for interaction, inculcation of virtues, socialisation and development of children. Early marriage is encouraged as Said (2016), found that girls are married off to avoid immoral relationship and considered it an abomination for a lady to experience her first menstrual period at her patrimonial home. The pastoral nomads only consider, accept and celebrate and cater for children born through lawful marriage contract.

Personality Development: The development of different dimensions and capacities of Fulani children (physical, social, moral, spiritual, emotional, intellectual) are not in fragments or segments but occur as a whole embracing and all inclusive life processes. Children learn and develop their personality and conscience by being conscious of themselves as individual and as nomad. Personality development of the nomadic children is built around a lifestyle of wandering, mobility, uncertainty, inadequacy and vulnerability which features in daily life of nomads. Iro (2014) submits that due to their mobile and non-sedentary nature their socio-cultural, religious, economic activities and life style do not allow them to build concrete permanent abodes or structures or accumulate material wealth. They move about with their

family and luggage. It seems that the nomads are contented with what they are and how they are, thus they are hard to penetrate and change. This explains why modern education or modern ways of life have not impacted very much on them. Most of the educated Fulani are from the sedentary settlements, some are exposed that they almost loosing grip of their language, culture and lifestyle as they adore and adopt modern life style.

Physical Health development: The environment they live are isolated, remote, inaccessible, forest, bush areas they have temporary camps such as tents, thatched huts as living houses which are not conducive for health, it makes them prone to risk and hazard such as insects bites, harsh climatic conditions, wild animal attacks and diseases generated from their contact with their animals etc. Equally, no access roads, modern means of transportation water, electricity supply and health facilities. Thus they lack adequate access to modern prenatal, antenatal, postnatal health care services and medical treatment. Home delivery through traditional birth attendants is still the common practice among the nomadic Fulani people. This explains reasons for high rate maternal morbidity and infant mortality. After the delivery traditional herbs and concoctions are used for the mother and baby meant to enhanced their wellness and wellbeing. children are fed on breast milk, cow milk, yoghurt, and after weaning are introduced to millet and yoghurt brand (fura da nono), food made from millet, rice, cassava cake, vegetable salad (gwabe). The issue of balance diet is very uncommon and food supplies are not as constant as it should be, these explain why children are often malnourished or slim. Similarly, hygiene and sanitary conditions are issues that are not given much attention, they rely on the same source of water used by their animals, no toilet facilities, no waste disposal facilities. This makes children very vulnerable to six child killer diseases. Due to isolative nature of nomadic population it has led to difficulty and in accessible health care services which in turn has resulted in increasing morbidity and mortality and also blocked their value system from appreciating knowledge and education (Agbor, 2017; Okwonkwo & Ibrahim 2014; Omar & Omar, 2000).

Child abuse and neglect: The issue of child abuse and neglect is also prevalent in nomadic environment. Children are introduced at very early stage of life to routines of cattle rearing and movement from place to place. Quite often they travel long distance in harsh climate and environment exposed to various form of risks such as attack by wild animals, robbers, kidnapers and raiders etc. Play, recreation, games and sport are rare activities as they are preoccupied to keep watchful of the animals especially when they graze in farm lands. In addition they lack adequate rest, nap and sleep as nights are the only time they have. In addition to child labour and exploitations, their non- sedentary home setting made the children more prone to neglect and various form of abuse. The fact is that they are powerless, dependant, and at the mercy of parents or guardians, while they are made to obey and perform task willingly or unwillingly. Their basic needs; physiological, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation as postulated by Maslow in (Santrock 2007) are not met adequately, because they are surrounded by many inadequacies environmental, humanitarian, infrastructural facilities, provisions of feeding, clothing, education, skill and vocations. This was justified by findings made by Agbor (2017), she conducted a descriptive survey with randomised sample of 400 nomads on impact of psycho-social deprivation on emotional health and education of nomadic children in Nigeria. The result shows that nomadic children encounter emotional, intellectual deprivation and deprivation on health care services and social amenities among others. The study concluded that nomadic children experience high rate of psycho-social deprivation in Nigeria.

Emotional Development: The nomadic way of life is associated with hardship, struggling, self-restrain, self-reliance, and strong will as well as survival capacities. They have high endurance for hardship, pain, disaster, and harsh life. According to Ujorha (2006), Adedeji (2016) the nomads have special ways of adapting to the arid and unreliable climatic conditions such as droughts, epidemic diseases. The Fulani nomads operate and function as a formidable functional group with self-contained system built on individualistic potential and strength to enhance a balanced social structure based on complimentary coexistence where the needy is supported through clan or marriage relationship. The hurdles and modes of living among nomads has permeated and influenced children mode of thinking, feelings, emotions, and how they behave or respond to issues. Fulanis are known for peculiar attitudes and attributes such as shyness, highly temperament, self-enclosed and secretive nature. They tend to hide their feelings, endure pains, withstand calamities, also they are strong-minded, disciplined and morally conscious, they try to restrain from anything that is considered taboo or will damage their reputations. They flee from the environment whenever they are found wanting. These traits are passed to younger ones through apprehensions, imprinting and modelling, but not much of punishment. Children are trained to conform to rules and adhere to customs, norms, and associated values that suppress their emotions. Children go on cattle rearing alone which enhances their skill, knowledge, resilient, courage and confidence to move about in the bush or forest without fear.

However, children are affected by absence of permanent home environment, parents engagements and parenting style such as shyness and deliberate neglect of first child, some women will not breast feed the child in the midst of in-laws, visitors, or in market or public places, some show no attachment to their biological children who are left to be catered for by other relatives. These and other practices by nomads somehow pose limitations and problems to development, education, occupation and wellbeing of the children.

Social development: Usually requires a well-developed social structures, adequate interpersonal relationship, some social facilities and groups which are often absent in nomadic environments. They live in bush and forest areas; this means to say children are not inadequately exposed to social interaction or accommodate others which result in communal conflict especially over grazing land with farmers. There is absence of permanent settlement and other agents of socialisation such as home, school, peer group, media, social clubs, markets and enriched standard of living which are needed for social development in children. This explains the belief that Fulani people are anti-social and uncivilised. According to Etsiname (2006) the Fulani due to their mobile nature and poverty rate do not have elaborate material and social culture, they are more concern with purity of their race, their language, traditions, customary values and above all their cattle (herds). These values are entrenched into children by adults to maintain and preserve their heritages. For instance, It is a taboo for a Fulani man/woman to eat inside the market or in public places.

Socio-cultural festivities and ceremony are usually carried out during the wet seasons because the vegetation and climate affect cattle production they used to camp in upper hills. This period is used for the nomads, cattle and land to rejuvenate and rest. It is during this time that they engage in socio-cultural activities through which children are socialised to host of activities like sharo, geerewol, singing, poetry, epics, music and dances. Children are also told expository tales and exposed life styles and adornments of nomads. They are made to adore, adopt and preserve and guard their cultural heritage with pride. This explained why till date the Fulani

have retained and maintained considerable grip of their original cultural heritage in terms of their hair style, music, dresses, fashions, bangles, extra- large ear-rings, anklets and amulets calabash decoration etc. Yusuf (2016), Etsaname (2017) indicated that the nomadic Fulani have been able to jealously guard their values so jealously as evident by high percent of their original and indigenous life styles which has made many to see them as culturally untainted.

Intellectual development: It is worth to note that nomadic Fulani children are exposed to informal education, which includes knowledge, skills, relevant information, training and problem solving skills through accumulated experiences and exposures gained in the course “pastoral of movement” from one place to another with their herds, through bushes, forest, deserts and unpredictable conditions, they are also guided and thought by adults on survival and bravery skills, knowledge of herbs to cure themselves and their animals, they are exposed to independent decision making process when left alone with herds, they develop resilient to hardship, dedication, commitment and hardworking attitude to enhance their animal productivity, obedience and loyalty to adults and serving as family ambassador. On western education, Hussaini in Ujorh (2017) estimated that about 90% of nomadic Fulani are not learned, they have no education except cattle rearing. Yusuf (2016) also noted that the Fulani and their children are restrained due to their culture of mobility from the benefits of regular schooling or western-conventional educational system. Same challenges exist in Sokoto state till date.

It is equally worth to note that there are Fulani children from sedentary settlements and few nomads that were given the opportunity and have excelled in various field of education, career and professions. Some have become prominent, reputable and famous at local, national and international levels, the like of Professor Jibril Aminu, Professor, Rilwanu Lukman in Sokoto the descendants of Shehu Usman Danfodiyo and family of Waziri Junaid etc are from Fulani descendant and others whose contributions, achievement and success are worthy to note, so it is not that the nomads cannot be educated. Tahir, Muhammad and Muhammad (2005) identified reasons for low indices in education attainments as constant travel and migration in search of pastor land, involvement of children in economic system, and curriculum that does not match the need of nomads. In an effort to promote nomadic education, in 2014 the Federal Government announced its intention to provide 100 billion naira for states to setup mini ranches and planned to bathe movement of cattle all over the country. It also planned to strengthen the nomadic education to reach about thirty million nomads in disperse settlements across Nigeria, not only on literacy and numeracy but also entrepreneurship and civic education (Ujorha, 2014). The Sokoto state government established first nomadic secondary school for nomads in Dallijan, kebbe local government area in September, 2017, and intends to establish more nomadic schools. Report shows that there are 185 teachers and 12,000 pupils in 80 nomadic schools in Sokoto State (Premium Times 2019). Shehu Shagari College of Education runs an NCE programme on nomadic education to address personnel requirements.

Vocational Development: To nomads rearing cattle is not just an occupation but a vocation that must be learnt from the childhood. This includes rearing of animals, goats, sheep, cattle production and related activities such as milk, cheese, rope making and selling of cattle as main source of their financial income and material possessions. Implication of this due to the way pastoral Fulani children are raised, they become jobless, hopeless and devastated without animal to rear. It is evident that they do not engage in all form of jobs. This created problems

for those who lost or have no cattle, most of rustling activities are said to be conducted by nomads who do not have the cows.

Spiritual development: Fulani are predominantly Muslims as such their children are provided with Islamic religious education to enhance their belief and practices. UNICEF (2006) indicated that children of pastoral nomads go without modern education but not without education at all. They receive traditional education from parents and elders and religious education from Muslim clerics (Mallams) who go along with them as they move and change their place of living. Said (nd) and Yusuf (2016) indicated that spiritual and religious knowledge is an important component of the nomadic life style. The cattle is the source of their zakat, funds for hajj, marriage, naming ceremony and other needs.

Economic development: Cattle breeding is the major source of economy for nomads and contribute also to national economy. They rarely sell their cattle without genuine reason such as capital intensive projects. Livestock productions have been recognised as an efficient cost effective method for economic generation by nomads. Children are given cattle by parents or they acquire them through inheritance. Riches and wealth among the pastoralist Fulani are attributed to number of cattle a person possesses. They do not engage in extravagant or flamboyant life style. They are good managers of their material and financial resources as such their food, clothes, settlement are in-expensive, they live a simple life. According to Ujorha, (2014); Adedeji, (2016) once the nomads lose their cows to lack of grazing, and rustling, conflict, calamity and climatic changes, their livelihood are devastated and destroyed and may not be able to meet the basic needs. This explains why they engage in odd options of rustling, robbery as they have no other skills.

Implications for Sustainability

The paper duly acknowledged that there are merits and demerits in the practices and life style engage by nomads in training, education and development of their children in Sokoto state. The implications are no doubt enormous. Some practices have positive impacts and others play negative role in short not all the practices are good for sustainability. Children mental health network (2014) observed that nomadic children developmental needs are ripped off by consistent movement of nomads from one settlement to another. This implies that children health, social, emotional, moral, intellectual, general wellbeing, sustainable development and education are affected. Usually, there are difficulties and adjustment problem from constant change of environment.

Literature and reports cited are quite indicative that several efforts made to provide nomads with quality education have not yielded much positive results, factors like discrimination, marginalising, deprivation, they are underserved and disadvantage group. This implies some loop holes in machinery of government causing setbacks, this can be deduced from lack of accurate statistical figure, information and up to date demographic data and indices related nomads. Similarly, empirical researches, reports data and documents on various dimensions are scanty and limited due to the difficult terrain, research on nomads are capital intensive and difficult to conduct. Implication is that the plight of nomads can be improved through updates from researches and literatures. Tukur in ujorha (2014) argues on large scale neglects of pastoralism being responsible for wide spread incidents of cattle rustling in various part of Nigeria and believed that the punishment of two years or option of 5000 naira only increases the incidences.

Also, there are some misconceptions about the nomads as they are viewed with negative impressions which results in mockery, teasing, amusements, they are seen as dispersed, aimless, obstinate and inferior sort of people, therefore tagged as uncivilised, anti-social and awkward customer for government services, education and civilisation. The implication of this has caused low self-esteem, inferiority complex and remorse and lack of participation in government programmes.

Since 1989 Nomadic Education Programme (NEP) and National Commission for Nomadic Education were established, yet not much has been achieved. Issues of lack of teachers who can speak their language, and inadequate model and mentors from among the pastoral Fulani, lack of personnel and funds are major problems for NEP.

Issue of insecurity, communal clashes, climatic conditions, are causing havoc to nomads, the demographic features of Fulani environment is so porous and exposed them to insecurity and danger in the hand of arm robbers, kidnappers rustlers, thus issues loss of herds, life, property, maiming, raping have become common phenomena experienced by nomads and their children, thus causing them to be rebel, attack and destroy others in retaliations as revenge. But the implication is that there cannot be development or education when there are security challenges. Sokoto state government has done a lot to reduce occurrences. Yusuf in (Ujorha, 2014) explained that the reason why Fulani enter business of cattle rustling and kidnapping is because when the nomads experience disaster or loss of cows the government do not come to their aids. And Baba Ngelzarma in (Ujorha, 2014) also argues that an average Fulani enjoys nothing from government. The implication is that there discrepancies between what the government is claiming to do and complain of the Fulani people.

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that Nomadic education should orient the nomads and society at large with knowledge, skills, educational training facilities that will help to improve dependency on cattle for livelihood. They need to be part of the global competition for improvement of human capacities for sustainable development at all levels. The nomads have un-tapped potentials and resources which if adequately and properly exploited will lead to realisation of SDGs.

Recommendations

In line with issues discussed and implications outlined in this paper relating to overall development and education of nomadic children, the following recommendations are offered:

1. There is need for the state to embark on extensive awareness, sensitisation, enlightenment and motivation for nomads to join the global mission and for public to support, encourage, and participate in education and development of nomads.
2. The paper recommend for adequate integrated approaches to promote wellness and wellbeing of nomads through provision of health, social and welfare amenities and services, to reach out to their various camps.
3. The need to provide incentives for Fulani and additional one to non-Fulani to study Fulfulde so as to boost and increase the manpower supply in term of salary packages, hazard and disturbance allowances and other reinforcement to entice people to study and specialise in areas of nomadic education and entrepreneurships services and special n-power packages.

3. State government should improve on provision of facilities and projects like road network, health care centres, social welfare centres to address various issues related development and education of nomadic children and population at large.
5. There is need to use guidance and counsellors and psychologists for proper understanding and handling of underlying factors inhibiting the nomads from participation in education and sustainable development.
6. The paper suggests for increase in political will and funding to be generated from alternative sources funding in order to promote the condition of grazing lands, and other support services to the nomads

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