

Contemporary Issues in Nomadic, Minority and Almajiri Education, Problems and Prospects

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Abstract

This paper looked at the issues in nomadic, minority, and almajiri education. It sees education as both human right in itself and an indispensable means for realizing other human rights. The different nomadic groups found in Nigeria were also discussed, they are those who wander from place to place for pasture for their animals and the migrant fisher-folks who live around the riverine areas and earn their living from the sale of fish. A brief history of nomadic education was discussed. The paper also discussed the blueprint of the nomadic education which was published in December 1987. The blueprint broke down the objectives into two, the short term objectives and the long term objectives. The term street children was given as those children who are experiencing homelessness who primarily reside on a street of a city. They include the “children in the street” and “children of the street”. Another group of street children are the almajiris which is an Arabic word “almajiri” meaning immigrant. The origin of the almajiri education was also given briefly. The paper looked into the new almajiri modern schools established by the federal government of Nigeria and sees it as a welcome development and also recognized the need for the reform of more than a century old system. And that it will help in the moral training and model skill acquisition of the almajiri. Some issues arising from this modern almajiri and nomadic education has been observed, which include: low enrollment into the schools, faulty school placement, continual migration of pupils and so on. Finally some recommendations were made.

Keywords: Nomadic, Minority and Almajiri education.

Introduction

Education occupies a centre stage in Nigeria’s social and economic development. The importance of education has been adequately documented in the literature. Education serves as the spring board for social and economic change “all who have mediated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the state of empire depends on the education of the youth” Wennergren (2001). The importance of education in Nigeria is evident from the large budgetary allocation in the national development plans. The government of Nigeria believes that learning is the means of upgrading the social economic condition of the rural population. The population particularly the nomads, are difficult to educate with less than ten percent of the men and two percent of the women nomads formally literate, the number of lettered men and women in western style education among the nomads fall below the national average.

Education is a necessary medium through which anyone can participate on an equal footing with others in the labour market and also be able to understand, define and promote their right to freely participate in political, social and other aspects of life with little or no hindrance Atta in Hilda (2007, pg. 225). Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNESCO 2003) articulates:

Education is both a human right in itself and indispensable means of realizing other human rights. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. Education has a vital role in empowering women, street working children from exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and controlling population growth (UNESCO, 2003 pg. 7).

Clearly achieving the right to education for all is one of the biggest challenges of our time. The second International Development Goal, addresses this challenge through the provision of universal primary education in countries by 2015

The Nomads

The nomads wander from place to place for pasture for their animals and another group of the nomads are the migrant fisher-folks, they earn their living from the sale of fish, they are still predominantly poor, hungry, dwell in dehumanizing environmental conditions, exposed to all manner of infections including HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other dangerous diseases. Women in fishing ports often go through nine months of pregnancy without a single antenatal visit. Worst still, they deliver their babies under the eyes of fellow fisher women. The children grow up without immunization due to the absence of health care facilities as well as absence of safe transportation facilities to convey health workers to and from the high sea locations of the fisher-folks.

Nomads, both pastoralists and migrant fisher-folks alike are predominantly illiterates. Most never had a one day opportunity to be at school. The nature of their occupation keeps them far away from modern and

heterogeneous community life. They live in homogenous communities of either only illiterate pastoralists or only illiterate migrant fisher-folks. They are cut off from development.

Children of migrant fisher-folks are born into such communities without proper health care services. Abraham (2006, p. 90), they grow up sailing from one fishing port to another following the tide for good catch. They grow into adulthood not having the opportunity for formal education, nor proper socialization. Their world begins and ends at the fishing port. Migrant fisher-folks, like nomads are socially alienated in all ramifications. They contribute immensely to national development through the production of meat and fish, though their voices are not heard elsewhere. In fact, they possess all the qualities of alienated groups as identified by Unugbo (1999), namely powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation and self-estrangement.

According to Akinpelu (1993), the contemporary definition of nomadism refers to any type of existence characterized by the absence of a fixed domicile. He identified three categories of nomadic groups as : hunter/food gatherers, itinerant fisherman, and pastoralists (aka, herdsmen). In Nigeria there are six nomadic groups:

1. The Fulani (with population of 5.3 million)
2. The Shuwa (with population of 1.0 million)
3. The Buduman (with population of 35,000)
4. The Kwayam (with population of 20,000)
5. The Badawi (with population yet to be established)
6. The Fishermen (with population of 2.8 million)

The last group, the fishermen is concentrated in Rivers, Ondo, Edo, Delta, Cross River and Akwa-Ibom state, (Federal Ministry of Education, Education Sector Analysis 2000). The first five nomadic groups listed are considered pastoralist nomads’.

History of Nomadic Education

The idea of Nomadic Education Program for the country was first discussed at the 1976 meeting of the National Council on Education held in Lagos, about the same time that the Universal Primary Education became a federal government policy. However, nothing tangible was done until 12th December 1987 when the Babangida administration came out with a bold policy on nomadic education. Various reasons could be adduced for this sudden action of government, these include:

- a. The economic situation then in the country which affects animal production;
- b. Emergence of cattle diseases, especially around 1987 when many animals died;
- c. Importation of cattle from neighboring Niger and Chad republics became more difficult and more expensive;
- d. The ever migrating nature of the cattle Fulani and the need to get them settled and educated.

Blueprint on Nomadic Education

In line with the resolution of government to start the programme, the Federal Ministry of Education published a blueprint on nomadic education in December 1987 after the federal government had formerly launched the programme in Yola, then Gongola state. The ministry distributed the blueprint to all state ministries in the country. Section 1 of the blueprint highlights the aims and objectives on Nomadic Education:

- a. the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- b. the inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- c. the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around him (i.e. training in scientific and critical thinking); and
- d. the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence, both mental, social and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in his society and to contribute to its development.

Because of the distinctiveness of the nomads’ ways of life, the blueprint further breaks down the above objectives into two: short term objectives and long term objectives. Those aims and objectives which are achievable within a short term are classified as short term while the long term ones are those which could only be achieved over a relatively longer period of time. For example the short term aims and objectives as identified from the general objectives can be summarized 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, birds and deaths.

- b. development of scientific outlook:
 - i. to their problems
 - ii. to issues affecting their relationship with government agencies.

In a paper presented at the 6th Pan Commonwealth Forum on open learning (PCF6) on Theme “Access and Success in learning: Global Development Perspective”, held from 24th to 28th November 2000 at Le Meridian, Cochin resort and convention centre (Kochi Kerala), India. The executive secretary of National Nomadic Education observed that the estimated population of the nomads was 9.3 million comprising of 3 target groups namely; nomadic pastoralists, migrant fisher-folks and migrant farmers. According to her, the goals of Nomadic Education Program, are to provide nomads with relevant and fundamental basic education and improve their survival skills by providing them with knowledge and skills that will enable them raise their productivity and income and as well as empower them to participate effectively in the socio-economic political affairs in the country. In order to attain these goals, the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNA) has the mandate to

- a. formulate policies and guidelines in all matters relating to nomadic education in Nigeria,
- b. provide fund for research and personal development for improvement of nomadic education; to develop programmes on nomadic education and provide equipments, instructional materials, construction of classrooms and other facilities for nomadic education.

To meet the challenges effectively, the commission devised a sense of innovative approaches and strategies which includes a distance learning scheme for adult pastoralists and interactive radio instruction for nomadic children and youths, the use of radio as a strategy overcomes the barrier of space, time schedule and constant migration. It permits flexibility in time-tabling and scheduling of tuition for nomads.

Delivering of education services to the children of nomadic groups tended to follow the lines of the formal school system. Special attention was paid to these groups by the Nigerian government when it set up the National Commission for Nomadic Education by Decree 41 of 12 December 1989 (Federal Ministry Of Education 1989). Of the estimated 9.3 million people that currently comprise Nomadic groups, approximately one-third that is 3.1 million are of pre-school and school age. The pastoral nomads are more highly disadvantaged than the migrant fishermen, in terms of access to school, primarily because they are more itinerant. As a result, the literacy rate of pastoral nomads is only 0.28%, while that of the migrant fishermen is about 20% (Federal Ministry of Education 2000). The responsibility of the Commission for Nomadic Education, among others is to provide primary education to the children of the pastoralist nomads- a responsibility shared with the states and local governments. To provide education to ease nomads, a multifaceted strategy has been adopted by the commission that includes on the site schools, the shift system, schools with alternative intake, and Islamiyya (Islamic) schools. The current mobile school system in the strictest sense remains sparingly used, primarily due to the enormity of problems associated with this model, some mobile schools, however, are in operation in the River Benue area of Taraba, Benue, Adamawa, Nassarawa, Borno and Yobe states.

By the beginning of the 1995/1996 school session, there are 890 nomadic schools in 296 local government areas of 25 states of the federation catering for the education needs of the pastoral nomads alone. Of these, 608 schools are owned and controlled by states, 130 by local government and 152 by local communities. Together they serve 88,871 pupils of the estimated population of the 3.1 million nomadic school aged children. Of this number, 55,171 (62%) were boys and 33,694 (38%) were girls. There were 2,561 teachers, a majority of whom 1,326 or 51% were teacher-aides, who were unqualified and in need of upgrading. This has been the usual practice because of the nature and characteristics of the nomadic populace.

As of 1993, 661 schools had been built for pastoral nomads out of which 24% (165) had permanent classrooms and 46% (293) had temporary classrooms built of grass, mat, canvas tarpaulins and so on. subsequently, mobile collapsible classrooms were procured. All together, the schools had an enrollment of 46,982 children taught by 1,896 teachers. This number however, only scratches the surface of the problem as it only serves an estimated 3.1 million primary age nomadic children. The Comprehensive Education Analysis Project provides the enrollment figures during the 1990s in table 1 below (Federal Government of Nigeria 2000), Table 1

Enrollment of Pastoral Nomads in the 1990s

Pastoral Nomads	Population
1993	46,982
1994	49,617
1995	64,459
1997	118,776
1998	116,944
1999	122,517

- 1996 enrollment was not taken

Note that between 1993, 46,982 students were enrolled and 1990, 122,517 students were enrolled; there has been

an increase of 260.8%. Considering that there are an estimated 3.1 million pastoral nomads in Nigeria, however, there is still a long way to go.

Table 2

Migrant Fishermen	Population	Number of teachers
1998	38,842	With 860 teachers
1999	40,826	With 847 teachers

Source: ESA (2000)

In spite of these efforts, access to education is still a major problem affecting Nigeria's pastoral nomadic people and migrant fishermen see tables 1 and 2.

The school system of the Nomads

The genesis of the introduction of open and distant learning programmes for nomads in Nigeria was hinged in the adoption of multifaceted approaches in the implementation of Nomadic Education Programme. The multi approaches identified to be likely appropriate in different cases are:-

1. **Regular school:** these may be used for settled groups, "helping teachers" may be used to help nomadic children whose performance fall below expectation as a result of unfamiliar curricular content and teaching methods. It is noted that regular school syllabus or curricular content and pedagogy are used for the mobile children. Consequently, cattle rearers and migrant fisher-folks' children appear weak due to curricular foreign to them
2. **On site schools:** this may be used for semi-sedentary nomadic groups. Such schools should be sited along movement routes at fixed points.
3. **Mobile school (portable classrooms):** this may be used for mobile families depending on their number within a clan cluster. Then the Quranic mallam model could be incorporated. Here, the mallams move with the nomads teaching them

Street Children

Street children is term for children experiencing homelessness who primarily reside on the street of a city. Homeless youths are called street kids and street youths, the definition of street children is contested, but many practitioners and policy makers use UNICEF's concept of boys and girls aged under 18 years, for whom the street (including unoccupied dwellings and wasteland) has become home and/or their source of livelihood, and who are inadequately protected or supervised. Street children is used as a catch-all-term, but covers children in a variety of circumstances and with a wide variety of characteristics. Street children in Nigeria emanated from the almajiri in the northern part of Nigeria. There are different categories of street children; they sleep under the bridge, in the market stalls, open fields without access to secure places to sleep. They move about without any adult to protect or guide them and it seems that there is no way they could escape from the street. A child becomes a street child when there is a high striking poverty line in the family to take care of essential needs such as provision of school fees, clothing, shelter, food and provision of other basic needs. Some children are forced to become street children simply when they lose their parents and when their relatives or guardians cannot help them. Street children as conceptualized by Khamala in Akpama (2006, p. 216) are young boys and girls who roam the street in the cities, car parks, recreation centres, gambling places, entertainment spots and so on. Ebigo (1988) categorized street children in to two "children in the street" and children of the street. Children in the street are engaged in income generating activities such as hawking of wares or goods and rendering menial services. This class of children hawk their wares or render their services and thereafter retire to their respective homes or families. On the other hand, children of the street live and subsist on the street. This group of children explore and employ an array of anti social survival strategies to sustain their lives. Stealing or pilfering, gambling, violent acts, cheating and similar criminal tendencies exuded by children of the street. Street children are the primary victims of exclusion who are often forgotten by government agencies responsible for their education and socialization and held in disdain by society at large. Gali (2006) observed that the longer children live in the street the more difficult it is to pull them out of the street. When they live for more than two consecutive years in the street, they usually adapt to street life, including changes in their attitudes or behaviours to deal with harsh environment exploitation and cope with perils.

There are several reasons provided as to why street children decide and walk on the street, among these according to Gali (2006) are macro economic factors, reduction of social capital in community, domestic violence, traumatic occurrence at home/school, existence of sub-culture and economic deprivation among families.

The Almajiri System

The almajiri system was imported into northern Nigeria from northern Africa. Almajiri is it from the Arabic word "almahijir", meaning immigrant. The Hausa use the word to refer to both a student and a beggar. This

group of marginalized children refers to children who for one reason or the other are in the street for the greater part of the day. The almajiri system involves entrusting children in to the care of a learned person, a mallam, with whom or to whom they migrate to a different settlement where it is assumed that a conducive learning environment for the study of the Holy Quran exists. These children are brought by their parents or guardians to an Islamic scholar for Islamic and Arabic scholar training. Not all the almajiris are found on the street, the vulnerable ones are those who suffer rejection and are neglected, that is deprived of material and emotional support- and are maltreated and exposed to hunger, poverty, deprivation and shelter. The situation of this group found in almost all the states of the federation can be put into its proper context from the description given by Jamila in Abdulfatah (1998), she described the typical almajiri as:

*A muslim child far away from his home sent
out ostensibly to read the Quran but usually found in
ragged clothes with dry, cracked skin, tattered
looks, unclean and filthy appearance, roaming
the streets, chanting rhyme, begging and begging
for food with bowl in hand, sleeping anywhere,
mainly on the street day and night.*

A matter of grave concern among informed Nigerian circles is the possible involvement of the almajiris in crime, most significantly, there is also evidence about their involvement in violent sectarian and religious conflicts that have plagued the cities of Kaduna, Kano, Jos and Bauchi in recent years. Boko Haram in Borno, and Yobe states, and Kalla Kato in Bauchi state, are fundamentalist Islamic movements reportedly involved in religion based violence. Recently, the CNN interviewed an almajiri who confirmed that he was recruited to fight in the sectarian conflicts that engulfed the city of Kaduna in 2000.

Origin of Almajiri Education System

The word Almajiri is derived from the Arabic word “almuhajirun” meaning an immigrant. It usually refers to a person who migrates from the luxury of his home to other places or to a popular teacher in the quest for Islamic knowledge. It is hinged on the Islamic concept of migration which is widely practiced especially when the acquisition of knowledge at home is either inconvenient or insufficient.

During the pre-colonial era, the Almajiri education system, originally called the Tsangaya was established under the Kanem-Borno Empire, one of the oldest ruling empires in the world extending from the frontiers of northern Nigeria across the Chadian region up to the borders of Libya. It was established as an organized and comprehensive system of education for learning Islamic principles, values, jurisprudence and theology. It was a replica of Islamic learning centres in many Muslim countries such as the Madrasah in Pakistan, Malaysia, Egypt and Indonesia and so on. The system was funded by the state treasury and the Saka funds, and was under the control of the emirs of the traditional government system that existed before the coming of the British. Since Islam encourages charity to wayfarer and to a student of learning, the community as well readily supported this Almajiri most of whom came from faraway places to enroll in the Tsangaya schools. In return, the almajiris offer services such as laundry, cobbling, gardening, weaving, sowing and so on as charity to the community that contributed to their well being; hence they gave the society what the society gave to them.

The almajiri system, though funded was over dependent on the state. The students were at liberty to acquire vocational and occupational skills in between their Islamic lessons and so were involved in farming, fishing, well construction, masonry, production, trade, tailoring, small businesses and so on. Many of them were the farmers of the northern Nigerian cotton and groundnut pyramids. They formed the majority of the traders in the commercial city of Kano. They were the leather tanners and leather shoe and bag makers in the old Sokoto Empire. The weavers and tailors in Zaria city were said to be almajiris. Thus, they formed the largest percentage of the community work force and made significant contribution to the economy of the society before the introduction of white collar jobs. After colonization, they were recruited by the British as columbite and tin miners in Jos city which was then under Bauchi before the creation of Plateau state.

The system also produced judges, clerks, teachers and so on, and laid an elaborate system of administration in northern Nigeria. They provided the colonial administration with the needed staff. The first set of colonial staff in northern Nigeria was provided by the almajiri schools and this went on for years. In fact, the almajiri system was a civilizing agent second to none, before they were gradually replaced, phased out and indeed abandoned.

The Fall of The Almajiri Education System

In 1904, the British invaded and colonized the northern Nigeria territories and took control of the state treasury. They killed and disposed those emirs who resisted the foreign rule, while those who were subjugated lose control of their territories and accepted their new roles as mere traditional rulers used only for the indirect rule. The British also refused to recognise the almajiri education system as an important education system and deliberately

abolished its state funding arguing that, they were mere religious schools. Boko, meaning western education was introduced and funded. Circumstantially, all the learned people who were at the helm of affairs in pre-colonial north fell in one swoop and were considered illiterate or uneducated (at least to the government), in the new status quo making them not only unemployed but unqualified to be employed despite being able to read and write. Islamic scholars who were revered professionally for controlling the moral fibers of the society gradually became neglected. An Imam who may be the source of arbitration to the people of his community was relegated to delivering sermon once a week at the local Friday mosque. The same Imam is considered not qualified enough to have a say in government or to sit in the chambers of the state house of assembly to deliberate on the laws and constitution of the state because he was considered uneducated and illiterate. With loss of support from the government and the helpless emirs, the almajiris thus collapse like a pile of cards. The responsibility of the almajiriwas then taken over by the local scholars who deemed it a moral and religious duty to educate these pupils for the sake of Allah. Although there was scarcity of funds and overwhelming number of people to cater for, the system continued to flourish with the support of the immediate community and begging was still not a norm instead they resorted to odd menial jobs to make ends meet. Disregard for the almajiri system in preference to western education ignited animosity and antagonism from the mallams, the people and the society at large. The case scenario is worsened by the belief that the western education (boko) wss a Christian European origin and therefore anti Islamic. It bread the fear that a child with western belief would eventually lose his Islamic identity and embrace vices that negate the values and principles of Islam, such as alcoholism, fornication, semi naked dressing, partying, abandoning the prayer, fasting, sakka and so on. This predicament is often reflected in the grievances vented out at those attending the western schools as echoed in a popular almajiri song “dan makaranta bokoko, ba karatu ba sallah sai yawan zagin mallam” meaning “oh students of western education, you do not learn the Quran and you do not pray except to be mocking the mallam”.

With the increasing level of poverty in the country, the care of the almajiri became overwhelmingly burdensome for the mallams who were left with no choice but to send these little boys out to beg from the good will of the society. To make ends meet, some of these mallams began to impose on the almajiris what is called “kundin sati”, a form of weekly fees for the lessons they derived. They were re assured that to beg was better than to steal. These boys swarm into the society with no bearing, moving from street to street, house to house, vehicle to vehicle. They were everywhere..... markets, car parks, restaurants, university gates, and so on. They became a burden as well as a nuisance to the society. They sang, begged and prayed appealing to the mercy and good will of the people. It is really sad when you see these almajiris, hungry, malnourished, wounded, rushing for fly invested left over food, searching through trash can for little morsels just to stay alive. They consume all kinds of food, fresh or stale. Their common food called “jagala” which is stored by an almajiri over a number of days, is a combination of locally corn food (tuwo), pasta and boiled yam altogether like a fresh vomit.

They roam about dirty, tattered, bare foot, pale with flies pecking on their cracked lips and dry faces which is filled with rashes or ring worm. They sleep on worn out mats in uncompleted building, goats may not find the small rooms where about 15 almajiris sleep conducive as there are no windows for cross ventilation and the walls have given room to cracks as if it will fall the next minute.

The New Almajiri Modern Schools

The government of president Goodluck Jonathan in a bid to better the lot of the Almajiri has decided to establish almajiri schools where they will obtain western as well as Quranic education so that they will be removed from the streets. Early in April 2012 president Goodluck Jonathan inaugurated repackaged and rebranded almajiri schools in Gaji area of Sokoto state. During the inauguration of the modern schools, the president stated that,

Our administration believes that the time has

*come for the nation to build on the moral
foundation of the traditional system by
providing the almajiri with conventional
knowledge and skills that will enable
them to fulfill their creative and productive
potentials*

Alechenu (2012)

The president in the above statement recognized the need for the reform of the more than a century old system, so that it will enable the moral training and modern skill acquisition of the almajiri and that they in turn can contribute meaningfully to society. The model boarding school which is in phases entrust four responsibilities to the federal government:

- Provision of funding for construction of the schools, accommodation, equipment and furnishing;
- Provision of textbooks;
- Designing of curriculum for use in the schools;
- Provision for capacity building training for teachers.

Similarly, Niger state governor and chairman of the Northern Governors Forum, Dr. Babangida Aliyu, had at a recent forum, admitted that:

The system of almajiri served a good purpose in the past... But we have passed that stage now. We have now reached a situation with respect to Almajiri where we have to be 'wicked' in order to be good to ourselves. We must say 'NO' to this system and then work out how to integrate them (Almajiris) properly.

The vice president maintained at a meeting of the almajiri education program, that the almajiri program would be spread across the 36 states of the federation in order to accommodate indigent children who cannot afford basic formal education in Nigeria. A total of 102 schools were approved for construction for the year 2012, 66 were handled by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), while the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETF) constructed 36, the first batch of which covered the 19 northern states and Edo.

Government estimate for the number of indigent children in the street begging for alms exceed 9.5 million. These children resent their parents, authorities and society at large, do not have access to basic care and education. Surprisingly, the unveiling of the repackaged nomadic and almajiri projects was seen as a milestone in Nigeria, especially in northern region, the most educationally backward part of the country. The initiative is particularly commendable in the light of the age old deprivation, neglect and abuse these children have been subjected to. The new system will undoubtedly and for the first time in the lives of most of the almajiri children, insure that they are properly clothed and have access to food and learning materials while studying. It could easily be deduced that these pupils stand to reap the best of two worlds- they will receive a structured Islamic education and will also enjoy the benefits of modern western education in the form of practical skills needed to compete in today's world. In some ways, these new policies and the new education project will serve as a check on the security threat that these children constituted as it stands to arouse in them patriotic sentiments towards the country that is now caring for them.

Issues Arising from the Nomadic and Almajiri Education

The population of nomads in Nigeria, well over 9 million is far more than the population of some countries. They represent a substantial part of the nation's population that cannot and should not be wished away. They make a substantial contribution to economic development of the nation. Fabunmi, (2005) notes with nostalgia that Nomadic Education Policy is not given full implementation in Nigeria.

Pupils' enrollment in nomadic schools has been low and dropout rate high. National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE 2000) with only 26,452 pupils completing primary education out of a total number of 203,844, one would say that much still needs to be done. Tahir (1998), Aminu (2000), Muhammad (2002), Fabunmi (2005), as cited by Abraham (2006) agreed that official statistics show that literacy rate among nomads in Nigeria range between 0.2% and 2%. This does not justify the huge investment by government and other agencies in nomadic education since 1989/1990.

There is the problem of age-long cultural belief that the western education is contradictory to the whole essence of Islamic belief. This is ingrained in the belief that the western education called Boko is of Christian-European origin and therefore anti-Islamic. Some nurture the fear that a child with western belief will eventually lose his Islamic identity and embrace vices that negates the values and principles of Islam, such as alcoholism, fornication, semi unclad dressing, partying, abandoning the prayer, fasting, sakka and so on. This may make it difficult to reform and integrate the system in to the mainstream educational system.

The nomadic education in Nigeria is affected by defective policy, inadequate finance, faulty school placement, continual migration of pupils, unreliable and obsolete data and cultural and religious taboos (UBE 2006). While some of these problems can be solved by policy and infrastructure interventions, the fact remains that most of the problems are complex and difficult to solve. The persistence of these problems is causing the roaming Fulani to remain educationally deficient.

Since the inauguration of the almajiri model schools, divergent tunes have continued to trail the policy. While some have described the federal government idea as laudable, others see it as an elephant project that is bound to fail. While a chieftain of Arewa Consultative Forum, ACF, Ambassador Yahaya Kwande is among those who described the initiative as a welcomed development. But the executive director Coalition of Northern Rights Organization, Alhaji Ahmed Dantama-Malumfashi totally disagreed with Kwande, he referred a Vanguard newspaper reporter on the 26th April 2012 on the position of president Civil Rights Congress of Nigeria, CRCN, a civil society group, that:

How could any northerner who understands

the danger of having these kids still staying together, under the same teachers, support what the president did. What the government has done amounts to arming the almajiris and their teachers with more sophistication to further constitute a threat to the nation.

Still regretting that the new policy will further increase the problem, he explained thus:

Now, look at this scenario. We already have a situation whereby some are averse to western education, what is the guarantee that the teachers of Quaranic schools would not continue with some misguided teachings which lead almajiris into damaging patterns of behaviours.

Dantama went ahead to say without addressing the issue of poverty in northern states, it is virtually impossible to stop parents from sending their wards to almajiri schools simply by building blocks of classes. He insisted that what the president did would not achieve any meaningful result and that the only way out is to address the poverty question in the north which would in several ways dismantle the practice. Regardless of this antagonism against the new almajiri policy, Kwande is confident that the plight of the almajiris would be taken care of under the new arrangement.

Conclusion

Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. Education has a vital role in empowering everybody, street children, the nomads, the migrant fisher-folks and so on from exploitation, promoting human right and democracy, protecting the environment. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which people can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities.

Recommendation

The government should as a matter of urgency do the following:

- i. Create a special ministry for the almajiris so that they would be given proper attention and the ministry would bring them to the level of other children in Nigeria.
- ii. They should be given adequate welfare in order to prevent them from roaming about in search of food.
- iii. There is the need for persistent campaigns by the government to advertise the benefits of education, and this should be done in the rural communities.
- iv. There is the need to straighten the data base of the street children to enhance informed policy, and formulation of policy for the street children.
- v. There is an urgent need to train special teachers for the nomadic cattle rearers that speak their language and understand them better.
- vi. Special allowances should be paid to the teachers of the nomads, the migrant fisher-folks as well as the teachers of the almajiri schools.
- vii. There is the need to establish skill acquisition centers in some selected settlement areas for this group where they go to learn a trade in the evenings.

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