

An Analytical Study of Nomadic Education and Culture Among the Fulanis in West Africa

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ABSTRACT

It is estimated by researchers within and outside West Africa that there are about twelve million Fulani Nomads in West Africa. The Fulani nomads are the largest nomadic group in the world. Nomadism is defined as any group that does not have a static home—non-stationary or sedentary. There are three categories of Nomadic groups in West Africa: 1) Hunter/Food Gatherers, 2) Itinerant Fishermen, 3) and Pastoralists (cattle and/or sheep farmers). This analytic study is focused on the nomadic pastoralist, also called *Nomadic Fulanis*, the dominant group found in most West African countries. The Fulani—who originated in North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa—have a political and economic force in the region. The Fulani are primarily nomadic herders and traders that move from country to country within West Africa looking for pastureland for their cattle, deprived of formal education. Education, according to the United Nations, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is a human right and is essential to the development of the nomads and their integration into society.

To address these education problems, Nigeria, as the dominant country in the region, did some studies of the needs of the nomads and established a National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989, based on Western standards and Qur'anic Madrasas. Also, West African countries established different approaches, strategies, and models to solve the problems of these nomads to bring them into the fold of “a progressive society.” However, critical appraisal of the NCNE’s approaches concluded that very few of the schools were viable. The central question is why the state interventions in pastoral development have failed, especially in education? What were the issues with the curriculum that caused the failure? To this end, the main purposes of this study are to explore early and later developments within nomadic education focusing on the research in West Africa and Nigeria. We will then turn to analyse the suitability, relevance, and learnability of the curriculum content for nomadic children and adults. Finally, I will recommend strategies for a relevant and functional curriculum theory and research using nomadic folk tales and riddles that are rooted in nomadic culture.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers within and outside West Africa estimate that there are about twelve million Fulani Nomads in West Africa. The Fulani nomads are the largest nomadic group in the world.¹ J. A.

¹ Chimah Ezeomah, Kemo Salia-Bao, and Sunday Udoh, *The Problems of Educating Nomads in Nigeria: Proceedings* (Nigeria: Ishaku Press, 1982); Chimah Ezeomah, “Basic Issues on Nomadic Education for National Development in Africa” (Working document for UNESCO/BREDA Regional Seminar on Nomadic population, Kaduna: British Council, 1995); UNESCO, “Courier Report: Nomadic Education in Senegal,” 2000, <http://www.unesco.org/education/en/file/%20download.php/u44c98d69>; Abu Baker, “Training and Educational Issues in Nomadic Education” (National Workshop on Human Resources Development for Nomadic Population at the center at the center for Nomadic Education, University of

Akinpelu defined Nomadism as “any type of existence characterised by the absence of a fixed domicile.” He identified three categories of Nomadic groups in West Africa: 1) Hunter/Food Gatherers, 2) Itinerant Fishermen, 3) and Pastoralists (cattle and/or sheep farmers). This analytic study is focused on the nomadic pastoralist, also called *Nomadic Fulanis*, the dominant group found in most West African countries. The Fulani—who originated in North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa—are a political and economic force in the region. The Fulani are primarily nomadic herders and traders that move from country to country within West Africa looking for pastureland for their cattle, deprived of formal education. Education, according to the United Nations, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is a human right and is essential to the development of the nomads and their integration into society.

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To this end, the main goals of this study are to:

- 1) Explore the early and later development of nomadic education and research in West Africa and Nigeria in particular.
- 2) Analyse the suitability, relevance, and learnability of the curriculum content for nomadic children and adults.
- 3) Recommend strategies for a relevant and functional curriculum theory and research using nomadic folktale and riddles, rooted in nomadic culture and environment.

Jos, 1996); J. Aminu, “Evolution of Nomadic Education in Nigeria,” in *Education and Pastoralism in Nigeria*, ed. Gidado M. Tahir (Zaria : Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1991).

² By Western standards, I mean a style based on European standards and European culture. Qur’anic Madras is an Islamic education based on the Quran.

³ Ismail Iro, *From Nomadism to Sedentarism: An Analysis of Development Constraints and Public Policy Issues in the Socioeconomic Transformation of the Pastoral Fulani of Nigeria* (Howard University, 1994).

BACKGROUND – MIGRANT GROUPS

Migrant groups from Africa, USA, and Europe include nomads from Africa, English Roma (Gypsies), Irish and Scottish Tinkers, and migrant workers in the United States—a group that comprises immigrants from around the world. For the past four centuries, communities/countries used education and legislation to control migration, but these measures have failed. Others have used education, persecution, discriminatory laws, and deportations to eradicate the practice to no avail.⁴ What is missing, according to the studies from UNESCO, Africa, USA, and the UK, is relevant policy, curriculum research, and development evaluation based on a nomadic group’s cultural needs, attitudes, and values, including their indigenous languages. Preliminary trials of these findings at the University of Jos Nomadic Center, the USA, and the UK showed that it was not enough to provide the educational structure and strategies to produce quality teaching and learning for students that can lead to sedentary living in cities and towns. Due to its location, Jos, in Plateau State of northern Nigeria, was a fitting location for the study of nomadism in Nigeria.

Nomadism has been defined as “travelling populations,” “migratory groups,” “itinerant groups,” “wondering people,” and better still “as members of a tribe or nation that wander from place to place with no fixed abode.”⁵ Nomads and migrant populations do not respect political boundaries—this is with the cooperation of the West African governments, who allowed them free access to all the countries. Their occupation of a territory depended upon the cultural and community needs of the group. Several countries, like England, Jamaica, and the US, that have nomadic populations developed strategies that included appropriate educational programs to cope with problems that can arise from the nomadic lifestyle. In England, for example, the *Caravan Site Act* of 1968 made it possible for the wandering Gypsy children to benefit from formal education.⁶ Jamaica sought to provide education (remedial and continuing) for rural migrant youth. The USA, on the other hand, enacted government policy that ensured that migrant workers from educationally disadvantaged minority groups—Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans—received some formal education. Attempts have been made in Australia, primarily by the Northern Territory Division under the Department of Education, to provide education for educationally disadvantaged children—and this includes

⁴ Immigrants overstaying.

⁵ Defined by various newspapers.

⁶ “Caravan Sites Act 1968” (1968),

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/52/pdfs/ukpga_19680052_en.pdf.

children from migrant groups. From a philosophical perspective, one might question the rationale behind trying to persuade unwilling recipients of formal education to accept schooling of this nature. Do nomadic people not have a right to decide what their children should learn? The nomads' desires and needs are not respected. In a sense, they are at a disadvantage because they do not have a choice in the type of education their children receive. But what about the situation of the Fulanis of West Africa?

NOMADIC FULANIS OF WEST AFRICA

UNESCO states that there are twelve million Fulani Nomads in West Africa. The Fulani are the largest nomadic group in the world.⁷ Several historians have stated that “they are a vast array of diverse people who were conquered and became a part of the Fulani through the spread of Islam.”⁸ Their origin is disputed among them. Some believe that they are of North African or Arabic origin, characterised by their lighter skin and straighter hair. However, recent studies show that they descended from nomads from both North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.⁹

The Fulani are nomadic herders and traders that move within the West African countries with their cattle and families. As they move between the borders of different countries, they do so with no recognition or deference to the political institutions and entities within each region. Chimah Ezeomah believes that they were converted to Islam and established a powerful economic force in West Africa through the large amounts of cattle they owned, as well as other business enterprises they controlled in various regions.¹⁰ His report concluded that some have settled in large plain countries like Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Guinea.

The Fulani play an important role in the economy and nutrition of West Africa. Ismail Iro showed that Nigerians, in particular, are dependent upon the Fulani because the group(s) act as the custodians of the nation's herds for meat, milk, ghee, cheese, wool, honey, butter, manure, incense, animal bloodspot products, and hides and skins.¹¹ In the villages, according to Iro, the Fulani provided the bulls used for ploughing and hauling—thus aiding villages with

⁷ UNESCO, “Courier Report: Nomadic Education in Senegal.”

⁸ Baker, “Training and Educational Issues in Nomadic Education,” 2.

⁹ Aminu, “Evolution of Nomadic Education in Nigeria.”

¹⁰ Ezeomah, “Basic Issues on Nomadic Education for National Development in Africa,” 3-4.

¹¹ Iro, *From Nomadism to Sedentarism*, 1-2.

transport and agricultural endeavours. The cattle trade is important to the Nigerian economy.

Iro further stated that some historians identify that the Fulani groups' Use mobility as a strategy for production and consumption with leadership, scholarship, livestock wealth, and pastoral movement in West Africa's aberrant landscape. Movements in search of water, markets, pasturage, salt licks, and the highly-priced crop residues account for the spread of the Fulani in the sub-Sahara. Bearing at least thirteen names in West Africa alone, and found in more than twenty countries, the Fulani make up the continent's most diffuse ethnocultural group.¹²

The Fulani are important to the economy of the region of West Africa, and given their importance, they cannot and should not be ignored. That being said, despite their contributions to the economic well-being of the region, of all the regional ethnic groups, they are the most neglected.

This neglect comes in various forms. The Fulani are not exposed to modern life and institutions because they move on the outskirts of densely inhabited areas. Their movements on the outskirts expose them to go to dangerous environments and criminal hide-outs as they travel from country-to-country with their cattle and family. Governments were and are more interested in programs for the Fulani that brought direct benefits to them. Ezeomah found that majority of Fulani will continue to wander ceaselessly with all of their possessions even in treacherous weather conditions.¹³ In West Africa, there is six months of a tropical rainy season and the dangerous Sahara Desert with its very cold Harmattan (northeasterly wind from December to February). The Fulani, therefore, control very little of the wealth they generate, and their non-involvement in the politics of those countries they travel through, means they have little say in policies that may affect or aid them. The Fulani live a precarious existence that, according to Ismail (1995), is further stressed by droughts, disease, tribal enemies, and cattle thieves. Land-hungry farmers are also encroaching upon their travel routes and grazing lands. The plight of the nomads became an international problem when the United Nations (UN) including UNESCO, and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) published the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*,

¹² Ibid., 3–4.

¹³ Ezeomah, "Basic Issues on Nomadic Education for National Development in Africa."

which states:

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 exploitative and hazardous labor and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and controlling population growth.¹⁴

This international statement by the above agencies became the basis for non-governmental agencies, universities within and outside the West African region, and established research centres to study the Fulani and to determine what educational programs and strategies could be developed to suit their unique lifestyle and enable them to integrate into urban/modern society. Nigeria, with its 9.3 million nomads, according to the NPC, and the Fulani as the largest nomadic group in the region, became the forerunner for research and the development of nomadic education in the region. Three major levels were established in Nigeria, namely: 1) Research activities, 2) Federal and local government activities, and 3) International and non-governmental agencies activities.

The results of the research on the three activities motivated the West African governments, especially Nigeria, to take the plight of the Nomads very seriously. The governments were guided by the findings of the researchers, international, and local government bureaus. They developed and implemented policies and strategies for the development of the socio-economic and education of the Fulani's for a "progressive" or "modern" society—the policies and strategies were primarily in the realm of education.

This study, in an effort to provide an in-depth look at the pedagogical strategies for the Fulani, looks first at the research activities, government policies, and international activities to determine how they influenced the educational component which Iro observed as:

The authorities have become frustrated, the public disillusioned, and the Fulani disappointed by state interventions in pastoral production. The question not yet answered is why have all these efforts and resources not produced the desired

¹⁴ UNICEF, "Education and United Nations on the Rights of the Child: International Child Development, Child Rights," Series 4 (Florence, 2004).

results in pastoral areas? What is clear to all, however, is that something fundamental is amiss. Could it be the defective public policy or, in some cases, the lack of policy or the failure of the Fulani's to avail themselves to modernization? May be the problem is the abominable climate to which little can be done.¹⁵

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA FOR NOMADIC EDUCATION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON WEST AFRICA

Research about the educational needs and characteristics of nomadic pastoralists for their educational development was ignited in two stages with different outcomes. The first one started around the nineteenth-century which saw very little serious research, but some states in Nigeria and some West African countries (e.g., Mali, Guinea, Togo, Dahomey, Ivory Coast, and Northern Ghana) were motivated by research to establish Qur'anic or Madarasat schools where some passages of Arabic were taught. Historically, this migrant was from an Islamic missionary group called "The Mallams" who taught through memorization and travelled with them from location to location. This first level of research was aimed not only at generating knowledge and possible insight but also to influence the formulation of policy.¹⁶

An in-depth analysis of this first type of research shows a strict dual focus on developing relevant knowledge and insight and also to influence policy for nomadic education. This type of research, through its insight, was meant to persuade policymakers about the desirability, feasibility, and necessity of promoting equality of educational opportunities for the nomadic Fulani in Nigeria and West Africa. These early studies included strong empirical evidence that made them attractive to policymakers. According to

¹⁵ Iro, *From Nomadism to Sedentarism*.

¹⁶ Ezeomah, "Basic Issues on Nomadic Education for National Development in Africa"; Chimeh. Ezeomah, *Nomadic Education in Nigeria : The Fulani* (Drifffield : Studies in Education, Nafferton Books ;, 1983); Ezeomah, Salia-Bao, and Udoh, *The Problems of Educating Nomads in Nigeria*; Aminu, "Evolution of Nomadic Education in Nigeria"; Baker, "Training and Educational Issues in Nomadic Education"; Maryam Atiku Said, "Nomadic Education and the Girl Child: An Analysis of the Factors For and Against The Girl Child Education Among Nomadic Pastoralists," accessed February 25, 2017, http://www.chr.up.ac.za/chr_old/indigenous/documents/Nigeria/ILO/NOMADIC%20EDUCATION%20AND%20THE%20GIRL%20CHILD%20AN%20ANALYSIS%20OF%20THE%20FACTORS%20FOR%20AND%20AGAINST%20THE%20GIRL%20CHILD%20EDUCATION%20AMONG%20NOMADIC%20PAST__ .htm; N Moh'd, *Nomadic Education Today: A Reading in Education* (Katsina State: ASM Publishers, 2007).

Abdurrahman and Gidado, some of the issues these early studies investigated included:

- 1) Aspects of the demography, social organisation, production systems, and lifestyles of the Nomadic pastoralists and their implications for the design and implementation of Nomadic education.¹⁷
- 2) The planning and implementation of Nomadic education.¹⁸
- 3) The curriculum of nomadic education. That is its content, delivery, strategies, and relevance to the target group.¹⁹

Furthermore, the significance of this early research was that it led to a breakthrough in the development of Nomadic education in Nigeria and West Africa—especially Guinea, Senegal, Mali, and Upper Volta.²⁰ Ezeomah explains that a national workshop for nomadic education was held in Yola Adamawa state in 1986, during which decisions led to the adoption of a blueprint for nomadic education. In 1987, a National Advisory Committee on Nomadic Education was established. This group would become the National Commission for Nomadic Education. Abu Baker wrote that the National Policy for Nomadic Education was established to give nomadic groups access to high-quality basic education.²¹ High-quality basic education is defined as having the following:

- Development of relevant curricula, teaching methodology, and suitable facilities.
- Flexible academic calendars and timing for class schedules, based on the needs of the learners.
- Relevant and suitable physical plant development. Work in collaboration with four operational departments, six zonal offices, and four university-based Nomadic education centres to carry out integral parts of the program. Osmani Danfodiyo University in Sokoto was charged with working on curriculum and instruction. The University of Jos focused on research and evaluation. The University of Maiduguri offered teacher training and an outreach program. The University of Port Harcourt conducted research and evaluation of the needs of migrant fishing groups as well as curriculum and instruction while offering teacher training.

¹⁷ Ezeomah, “Basic Issues on Nomadic Education for National Development in Africa”; Ezeomah, Salia-Bao, and Udoh, *The Problems of Educating Nomads in Nigeria*.

¹⁸ Ezeomah, “Basic Issues on Nomadic Education for National Development in Africa”; Ezeomah, Salia-Bao, and Udoh, *The Problems of Educating Nomads in Nigeria*.

¹⁹ Ezeomah, Salia-Bao, and Udoh, *The Problems of Educating Nomads in Nigeria*; Aminu, “Evolution of Nomadic Education in Nigeria.”

²⁰ UNESCO, “Courier Report: Nomadic Education in Senegal”; Arie Lewy, *Handbook of Curriculum Evaluation* (Unesco, 1970).

²¹ Baker, “Training and Educational Issues in Nomadic Education.”

The second phase of research studies started in the 1990s but had no specific outcomes that could influence social policy or the development of relevant knowledge for nomadic education.²² This is not to say this stage did not make major contributions to the field of study on pedagogical issues with nomadic groups. For instance, the anthology *Ecology and Education in Nigeria*, which, according to Tahir, was a collection of studies on Nomadic fishermen.²³ The text offered research contributions in the three distinct areas. First, it illustrated the implementation as well as evaluation of pedagogy programs for nomadic groups and focused on the particular role played by local community leaders and government agencies. Second, the studies described the general organisation, implementation, and delivery of nomadic education programs. And, finally, the studies discussed the demography, lifestyle, and socio-economic characteristics of some of the nomadic groups and what this might mean for pedagogical strategies.

The publication and declaration of education as a fundamental human right provided a visible springboard used by many researchers in West African colleges and universities. This led scholars to study education as an issue of human resource development in a neglected segment of society. The researchers stated in their recommendations that nomadic education should equip nomads with relevant skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values for self-development—which includes their community and country. Research of nomadic pedagogical issues in Nigeria was given the top-most priority. Because pedagogical strategies for these groups is culture and group specific, and one size does not fit all, other West African governments were also looking for studies to better guide them in the development of relevant educational programs for their own people.

This prompted Ezeomah, Udo, and myself at the University of Jos, Plateau State, and other professors at Amado Bellow University to turn their attention to researching the needs of the nomads.²⁴ Ezeomah and a group of his colleagues established a research centre at the University of Jos in 1980 at the School of Education to comprehensively study the habits, characteristics, needs, attitudes, values, and culture of nomadic groups and to use the findings

²² Aminu, “Evolution of Nomadic Education in Nigeria.”

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ezeomah, Salia-Bao, and Udoh, *The Problems of Educating Nomads in Nigeria*.

as a guide for the development of a suitable pedagogy.²⁵ There were some institutions interested in helping better integrate nomadic groups through education and thus some of the studies were done at the University of Jos with financial support from not only the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education but also non-governmental and international agencies.

Unfortunately, the studies conducted at Jos and other intellectual centres were not heeded and had little lasting impact. Because, according to Abdurrahman Umar and Gidado Tahir, state support was limited as nomadic education was promoted and sustained partly by research – most notably from Ezeomah, Salia-Bao, and Udoh.²⁶ The paradox lies not only in the paucity of studies on nomadic education, but more importantly on the fact that the organic link between research and social policy which characterised this emerging field of study in the early 1980s, had by the mid-1990s been broken. Funds for the continuation of the research was stopped, and the states changed their policy on supporting nomadic education directly. It was now determined by the “political exigencies and the needs of the education bureaucracy in the Federal capital, Abuja, rather than by research or rational decision making.” “This was no surprise to Nomadic education because the link between research and education policy was never strong. It was not perceived as an important organ for policy making.”

There were other factors that also contributed to such a dismal state of affairs, and this was mainly due to the withdrawal of intellectual and financial backing to the research centres and interest in support of any new research in nomadic education. Thus, most of the researchers left for greener pastures in the United Nations and some as managers in the Nomadic Program. This brain-drain negatively affected the research programs use as an asset

²⁵ Ezeomah, “Basic Issues on Nomadic Education for National Development in Africa”; Ezeomah, *Nomadic Education in Nigeria*; Ezeomah, Salia-Bao, and Udoh, *The Problems of Educating Nomads in Nigeria*.

²⁶ Ezeomah, “Basic Issues on Nomadic Education for National Development in Africa”; Ezeomah, *Nomadic Education in Nigeria*; Ezeomah, Salia-Bao, and Udoh, *The Problems of Educating Nomads in Nigeria*; Sunday Udoh, G. O. Akpa, and K. P. Gang, *Educational Administration in Nigeria: Theory and Practice* (Redeemer House Publishers, 2004); Sunday Udoh and G. O. Akpa, *Management for Quality Education in Nigeria* (Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning, 1990); Sunday Udoh and G. O. Akpa, *Theory and Practice of Educational Administration in Nigeria* (Faculty of Education, University of Jos, 1987); Kemoh Salia-Bao, *African Social Studies Programme: A Handbook for Teachers* (Evans Brothers, 1990); Kemo Salia-Bao, *An Introduction to Curriculum Studies in Africa* (Macmillan, 1987); Kemo Salia-Bao, *The Namibian Education System Under the Colonialists* (Hodder & Stoughton Educational, 1991).

for policy development and program implementation.

Also, a wave of anti-intellectualism also significantly affected the relationship between the politicians and the researchers. According to Abdurrahman Umar and Gidado Tahir, it was caused by the campus unrest in the 1990s that led to dismissals, strikes, and closures. That made “the Federal Ministry of Education suspicious of academics and less receptive to their research findings that it believes to be of little utility for policymaking.”²⁷

EDUCATION PROVISIONS TARGETING WEST AFRICAN NOMADIC FULANIS

The establishment of nomadic education, as guided by the findings provided by scholars, was a great stride taken by the Nigerian government and other West African countries in the 1990s. The Nomadic Education policies were derived from the Nigerian National Policy on Education, which was first published in 1977. It outlined five main national goals: to create a free and democratic society, to create a just and egalitarian society, to enable a united strong, and self-reliant nation, to foster a great and dynamic economy, and, finally, a land that offered opportunities for all citizens. This latter goal of a land that offered opportunities to all citizens was based on the philosophy that it was important for an individual to develop into a sound and effective citizen who was well integrated into a community. Thus, this meant that a provision of equal access to educational opportunities was needed for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels—both inside and outside the formal school system.

At this juncture, the important question to ask at this stage is to what extent the development of the short and long-term objectives with the selection of content for teaching and learning affect the quality of the nomadic education? To answer this question, an in-depth analysis is required of three key areas. The first area is the broad aims and objectives set by the National Commission for Nomadic Education for national policy.²⁸ The second area is what are the specific aims and objectives of nomadic pedagogy. Third, and finally, what strategies and what curricula were adopted by most of the nomadic education programs, like the 1987 blueprint on nomadic education program that was first drawn up in 1986 This final area should include a summary of short and long-term objectives as well as syllabi that were

²⁷ Gidado M. Tahir, Abdurrahman Umar, and S. M. Gogura, *Regional Inequality in Nigerian Education* (Federal College of Education, 1994).

²⁸ Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Blue Print on Nomadic Education, Fair Deal for Nomads* (Lagos: NERC Publishers, 1987).

adopted.

SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES

For short-term objectives, students should be able to perform various skills that will aid them competently. A student should be able to read with comprehension those things that affect their occupational roles like useful directions tax (Jangle, Taraji) receive instructions on health and animal treatment and manufacturing instructions relating to animal husbandry and agriculture. The nomads could read and understand national policies and magazines to know what is happening around them. Further, functional illiteracy will enable them to read simple instructions. For example, voting instructions to make independent choices on those to govern their nation and to have a voice within their government. These skills also include being able to read letters from relatives, friends, and government officials. Do simple calculations and record keeping relating to their herds, investments, credits, rents, birth, and deaths. Develop scientific outlooks, attitudes, self-reliance, an outbreak of disease, *et cetera*. These skills will improve their relationship(s) with immediate neighbours, sedentary farmers, and government authorities/agencies.²⁹

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

Education initiatives for nomadic groups also have long-term objectives. The acquisition of knowledge and skills (like reading and writing) will enable them to improve their income earning capabilities. These skills will also improve the products gleaned from livestock and enable them to use modern technology in the manufacture of said products. The skills and knowledge will also allow students to appreciate the need to use modern savings and bank credit facilities. Education also enables students to understand the skills of professionals and administrators in the fields of medicine, education, and politics. Students will also acquire a functional knowledge and skills for raising healthy well-adjusted families.³⁰

The program adopted a multifaceted schooling that brought all stockholders—ministries of education, management boards, National Commission for Nomadic Education, mass literacy, and scholarship board—to work together to operate the mobile school system in conformity with the transient nature of the nomads. The multifaceted approaches used in

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

the mobile school system included:

- a) Regular schools that were using regular school syllabi, curricular content, and traditional teaching methods/pedagogy for the mobile, nomadic children.
- b) On-site schools that were/are used for semi-sedentary nomadic groups typically sited along movement routes.
- c) Mobile schools that are mainly portable classrooms used for mobile families and were according to the family size.
- d) Adult education programs for the education of nomadic adults (men & women) to promote literacy.
- e) Radio or distance education programs are providing support to the other education programs.
- f) Telecasts used mainly for settled Fulani who owned television sets.

As seen above, Nomadic Education in the 1980s and early 1990s focused on Educational Development and Implementation in different parts of Nigeria, which spread to other West African countries mainly Qur'anic schools. The evaluation, done by researchers, non-governmental and international agencies (e.g., UNESCO), was centred more on the role played by government agencies and communities in the implementation of the program. This included the educational implications of the demography, lifestyle, and socio-economic characteristics of some nomadic groups. Iro posited that “An assessment of [the] pastoral system in Nigeria reveals that the government lacks clear policies on pastoral Fulani. Policies are faulty and are based on incorrect premises. Not only have they failed, but these policies have also impoverished the Fulani. The failures of government’s policies in vital spheres of living have made the Fulani to lose faith in government programs.”³¹ R. A. Adernoye asserted that “[a] critical appraisal of these approaches by the commission, however, shows that very few of the schools were fable.”³² Also, the most remarkable feature of nomadic education was the dearth of serious curriculum theory, research, and development, which was ignored by most researchers and evaluators. However, the findings by Abdurrahman and Tahir showed that the early initiatives in Nomadic education were on a small scale modelled on the existing government schools.³³ The curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, and standards used were

³¹ Iro, *From Nomadism to Sedentarism*.

³² Rashid A. Aderinoye, *Literacy Education in Nigeria* (Ibadan University Press Pub. House, 1997).

³³ Tahir, Umar, and Gogura, *Regional Inequality in Nigerian Education*.

the same as those used in the schools across the country. The nomads were not involved in the curriculum design, development, and implementation. As a result, the schools had irregular attendance and a high dropout rate. This early initiative, therefore, failed mainly because they were not based on an adequate understanding of the nomad's educational needs, culture, and occupational roles. The curricula were irrelevant to their needs and existential realities. The state, according to Tahir, was not interested in curriculum research and development.

AN IN-DEPTH CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF NOMADIC EDUCATION/CURRICULUM

Nomadic education has undergone many revisions since the federal government of Nigeria made it a priority. The major change was the formulation of the National Policy on Education (NPE), which, for the first time, led to a radical revision of school curricula based on the country's new policy. The essential features of the 9-year Basic Curriculum developed by NERDC include the following:

- 1) Core subjects: English Studies, Mathematics, Basic Science and Technology, (Information Technology, Basic Science, Basic Technology, and Physical and Health Education), Religion and National Values (Social Studies, Civic Education. Christian Religious Studies/Islamic Studies, Security Education.); Cultural and Creative Arts. Nigerian Language, Frenchmen-Vocational Studies (Agriculture and Home Economics) and Business Studies.
- 2) Optional Subject: Arabic.
- 3) French, introduced from primary four as a core subject.
- 4) The inclusion of the study of security education in the primary school component.
- 5) The introduction of Information Technology (IT)
- 6) The infusion of emerging issues from needs, positive values, peace studies, and interdisciplinary skills, *et cetera*, and in the various contents.

It is prescribed that the curriculum format be adapted for special needs like Nomadic Education and non-formal education. Therefore, the curriculum for Nomadic people's education should be developed according to the following components.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS THUS FAR AND ANALYTICAL CONCLUSIONS

As illustrated above, nomadic education has gone through many phases that has led to curriculum reviews and implementation with no success. For example, there were some effective studies on nomadic education the early 1970s, followed by restructuring of their education system, which

included the development of a National Policy of Education, aimed at providing an adequate education for nomads, that they may fully contribute to the national development of the nation.

These studies led to following initiatives:

- 1) Design diversified and appropriate curriculum content, teaching, and learning processes for all the nomadic education programs.
- 2) Curricula centred on the nomadic child's needs, cultural physical, and social environment—including the uniqueness of each child in maturation, learning abilities, values, interests, attitudes, and means of communication.
- 3) The evaluation of current approaches to nomadic education and the multi-faceted approach for them to attain permanent literacy and numeracy.
- 4) Inclusion, which means, among others, the provision of collapsible classrooms, mobile teachers, e-learning, and on-site schools, *et cetera*.
- 5) Regular review and evaluation of nomadic education curriculum that provides relevant methods, techniques, and procedures for effective teaching and learning.

However, a critical appraisal of these approaches by the Commission (nomadic commission 1989), shows that very few of the schools were viable, the methods, the equipment and materials, and varied technologies could not enhance the literacy rates among the nomads.³⁴ UNESCO, UNICEF, and some Nigerian university research groups found the curriculum content and the teaching learning strategies to be completely irrelevant and inadequate—they were not helping nomadic children to learn. But why have most of the approaches, strategies, and curricula failed to achieve the outcome set for the program for the past years? Could these failures be due to the lack of relevant and functional curricula content, syllabi, pupils and teacher textbooks and materials in Nomadic schools based on Nomadic needs and culture? Or was this due to a lack of relevant research and curricula theory based on nomadic needs and culture? Finally, could this failure have occurred because schools were using foreign prescriptive curriculum models that were imported and implemented with little or no modification for the groups it was to serve? Let us turn to the evidence to determine an alternative curriculum paradigm.

NOMADIC INDIGENOUS EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND AN ALTERNATIVE CURRICULUM

³⁴ UNICEF, "Education and United Nations on the Rights of the Child: International Child Development, Child Rights."

PARADIGM

First, in pre-colonial Nigeria, there was no curriculum development, which left the nomads with a mixture of their indigenous and Islamic education. The nomadic indigenous system of education is rooted in the political, economic, social, and religious contradictions and problems African nations face. Nomadic societies, like all other societies, have always had the means of educating their young—before foreigners came to colonise them with their own educational systems. The descriptive analysis of their system will illustrate the need for more study of the subject and reveal why adapted Nigerian curriculum content and materials have not been successful in their schools. It will be of practical value to curriculum development experts, and educators in general, in two ways. First, the study should give educators, and importers of western or Nigerian curricula, an understanding of nomadic development from a simpler to a more complex social structure. Studying a nomadic indigenous system should also reveal to educators in Africa, and abroad, their characteristics, needs, interests, individual differences, and intelligence through their initiations ceremonies to help them understand the process of character formation in the routine of a nomadic life history with its numerous age-groupings. This understanding should give the educators an in-depth understanding in curriculum development how they learn through methods of instruction familiar to them. Second, just as a comparative study of other educational systems, like Japan and Germany, has brought about a fuller understanding of their minds by appreciating and valuing them. It will further show the scale of values taught to the children, including the virtues fostered and the ambitions fostered. This study of nomadic educational patterns and culture must precede any curriculum development.

Since there is no contemporary written record of the nature and evolution of nomadic indigenous education, I shall describe its major characteristics through the retrospective projection of recent anthropological descriptions of non-western educational setting, timing, audience content, agents, and methods. Any curriculum development, teaching, and learning for the nomads that do not have its basis in the following descriptive analysis will float with little or no positive effects.

The education of the nomadic child began at birth and ended with death. The child passes through various stages of age grouping with a system of education defined for each stage. Indigenous education was both informal and formal. Informally, parents had the responsibility of educating their children until they were old enough for formal education.

They aimed at instilling into their children nomadic ethics and discipline in the clan traditions.

The setting of nomadic education was the setting of life itself, gradually expanding as the child grew, from the family tents, or cluster of huts and fields, to the compounds of immediate neighbours, then to those of members of the same clan living further afield. There was no particular locale for education since education took place wherever the child happened to find him or herself. There was, therefore, no school building.

The same integration of learning and life appears to have characterised the timing of education. In the long-term perspective, according to Cameron and Dodd “[e]ducation was ...a life -long business whereby a person prepared for and progressed through predetermined stages of graduation from life to death.”³⁵ In the shorter term, education generally seems to have followed and grown from the life circle of family and clan, varying with nomadic movements with cattle from place to place, planting, and harvesting in some cases, rainy and dry seasons. Since nearly all human activity was viewed as having educational potential, education required, in N. B. Zanelli’s observation “no fixed timetables for each day.” Training and learning happened all the time.³⁶ In addition, the content, or curricula of nomadic indigenous education varied with age and sex but generally appeared to have been determined by the actual functions to be fulfilled in society.

First, nomadic children learned through the medium of songs, which taught the history and traditions of the family and clan. Hearing these songs daily from grandparents or mothers or other extended family member’s children assimilated this early teaching without any strain. In the songs, the correct manner of speech and important names in the family (past and present) were taught amusingly to arouse the child’s interest. The child could choose whether to listen, which forced the mother to vary the form of the songs while keeping the same content. Also, folk tales about animals, people, and the nomadic values, theories of learning through orchestrated teaching and learning was often used by their grandmothers, which helped them to learn how to learn.

While some criticisms have been levied against nomadic indigenous education

³⁵ J. Cameron and W. A. Dodd, *Society, Schools and Progress in Tanzania: The Commonwealth and International Library: Education and Educational Research* (Elsevier, 2014).

³⁶ N. B. Zanelli, *Education Towards Development in Tanzania* (Besle: Phenos-Verlag, 1971).

regarding its weaknesses and for it to be used as a foundation for curriculum development. For example, Cameron and Dodd term it, “personal conditioning, [and] education in conformity... in a society where behaviour is prescribed and transmitted, knowledge is not to be questioned. Where there is an approved formula for everything, the hypothesis has no place.”³⁷ Zanelli also stresses the conformist character traits produced as “[i]t is not considered proper to excel...to work hard and be obedient is accepted, but extra effort resulting in a larger phase or a greater crop yield than is necessary for the family subsistence is frowned upon. The neighbours become jealous and destroy one’s seed or steal one’s plants.”³⁸ Without challenging the factual basis of such judgements, one may question the applicability of the value system from which they proceed (western, industrial, and individualistic) to the situation which they criticise (African, pre-industrial, and communal). John Gillette looking at similar criticism asked the following question: “Is it appropriate or useful to castigate a society that had known continuity during several centuries for not being change-oriented?”³⁹

In spite of the criticisms above, the present nomadic curricula and materials have been found by the nomadic education program, UNESCO, UNICEF, and some universities, notably University of Jos to be ineffective and unrelated to the needs and aspirations of the nomads. It would seem wiser to adopt relativistic criteria, that is, to judge nomadic indigenous education and culture, not externally and retrospectively, but on its own terms and its own time. This perspective reveals several features that are necessary for curriculum development.

First, nomadic indigenous education was largely undifferentiated from other spheres of human activity. It was an integrated curriculum that looked at the world where people were important only as members of the community, not as individuals. Education overall was not limited to a prescribed locale but took place more or less anywhere or everywhere. Education did not take place at a particular time of day or of life, but almost all day or and virtually every day, throughout life. Education was not imported by professional personnel—virtually all members of the community, even the very young, had at least some educational function, with the result that many people were simultaneously educating and being educated. Second, nomadic indigenous education was very relevant. The skills, behaviour, and attitudes taught

³⁷ Cameron and Dodd, *Society, Schools and Progress in Tanzania*.

³⁸ Zanelli, *Education Towards Development in Tanzania*.

³⁹ John Morris Gillette, *Rural Sociology* (Macmillan, 1922).

were related to the vocational, personal, social, and civic needs of the learners and of society. Third, the nomadic indigenous education was functional. The integrated curriculum and pedagogy—what was taught and the way it was taught—were such that learning could be and was immediately and usefully applied. Finally, nomadic education was community-oriented. Informal (i.e., home) formal (i.e.-apprenticeship as a shepherd) education were concerned with unity, love, and peaceful coexistence in the community. A degree of hierarchy did exist but did not inhibit the availability—indeed the necessity—of at least minimal education for each as a means of ensuring the survival of all.

TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE PARADIGM FOR A FUNCTIONAL NOMADIC EDUCATION

My analysis of the adapted Nigerian and the nomadic indigenous curricula above has shown that the nature, scope, structure, and foundation of curriculum theory and development in Africa as a whole are rooted in Western educational theory and practice. As a result, the significant constraints created by such adaptation, as reported above by the Nomadic Commission, universities, and international agencies (apart from financial problems, insufficient space, inadequate materials, and lack of trained teachers *et cetera*) is structural: they are built on Western philosophical, psychological, and anthropological foundations. This problem has further aggravated some of the other constraints. For example, teachers and children find the materials difficult because they are unrelated to their culture and their philosophy as nomads.

Furthermore, the primary curricula projects in Nigeria implemented in nomadic schools have their roots, I have found, in progressivism and developmental psychology based on Western culture, which is entirely different from the culture of the nomads and other African countries. These Western influences are transmitted to nomadic children the teaching methodology and content of the curriculum; they thus affect the objectives, methods, and content of each subject. Even if the subject material is African, the Western cultural influences embedded in the foundations are still transmitted to the children.

For example, in the progressive view, the goal of education is the eventual attainment of a higher stage of development in adulthood. This, according to this view, requires an educational environment that stimulates development through the presentation of reasonable but genuine problems or conflicts. For progressives, the organising and developing force in the child's experience is the child's active thinking; thinking stimulated through inquiry and

discovery. Educative experience makes the child think in ways which organise both cognition and emotion. A look at the Nigerian and other African social studies textbooks for teachers' colleges shows that they are rooted in this type of thought. Concepts such as spiral curriculum, inquiry, cooperation, interdependence, discovery, and use of the environment as a resource for learning, and so on, are frequently used.

Progressivism is derived from a functional or pragmatic epistemology that equates knowledge with an enquiring human actor and a problematic situation. For the progressive, the child acquires knowledge through inquiry. Discovery, experience, skill development, and concept learning through which cultural transfers from any other culture takes place. Inquiry-based learning can create conflicts for nomadic children, and the preparation necessary for this method creates difficulties for many nomadic teachers. As a result, the temptation to go back to traditional methods of teaching is very strong indeed.

The analysis of curricula in nomadic schools in West Africa, focusing on Nigeria, has shown that the nature, scope, structure, and foundation of African theory and development are rooted in Western educational theory and practice. According to the evaluation reports, this has positively or negatively affected educational development in the nomadic schools in some West African countries. In some cases, according to my findings, teachers have refused to use modern methods of teaching, and nomadic children have reverted to old methods of learning. It was concluded that these negative factors were due to the assumption by some Western and African experts that Western curriculum theory and practice can function in a different culture.

I, therefore, firmly believe that the search for effective curricula for the nomads in West Africa, especially Nigeria, is necessary and must start immediately because:

- 1) The curriculum is the root of an effective educational system.
- 2) It (the curriculum) can contribute actively to the development or underdevelopment of a country or groups of people.
- 3) It (the curriculum) can colonise or decolonize a nation or group of people.
- 4) It (the curriculum) can strengthen a nation's government and civil service, contributing to national development.
- 5) It (the curriculum) can destroy the enjoyment in learning, which contributes to a high dropout rate and unemployment.
- 6) It (the curriculum) can destroy the cultural fabric of a nation, thus destroying nationalism and personal integrity—breeding racism and tribalism.

CONCLUSION: WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE CURRICULUM?

An effective curriculum, according to in-depth literature analysis means: (1) school subjects, syllabi, pupils', and teachers' textbooks found in all schools and colleges; (2) the learning experiences children have as a result of classroom interaction and activities; and, (3) activities (i.e. games, sports) and learning experiences outside and within the school *all fit* the needs, culture, and environment of a country, or a group of people, based on the philosophy, politics, economy, indigenous education and art of that country or group, thus contributing to national unity and development, ideology, and social cohesion. It, therefore, follows that the nomads must have an effective curriculum that is rooted in the traditional culture, needs, and environment of the people. This means instead of using western-based curriculum programs, the new curricula for the nomadic children and adults will be effective curricula rooted in what Julius Nyerere calls "African Socialism" which I call communalism.⁴⁰ Its main academic source is from the African "Theory of Man in Society" developed by W.E.B. Abraham of Ghana.⁴¹ In explaining this theory, he states that Africans are interdependent because of their belief in the extended family system, inherited by blood lineage. This is the main factor that makes Africans different from Europeans—and the main reason why curricula for the nomads in West Africa should be based on communalism instead of individualism as practised in Europe and America.

The psychological basis of communalism according to J.S. Mbiti, (1970) is found in African traditional religion and affects African attitudes, beliefs, and values.⁴² It is believed that every African is a religious being, and therefore children must be brought up in a religious atmosphere where there is love, unity, and community life. J.S. Mbiti, explaining this idea, said that African religion affects every aspect of the African way of life. Africans take their religion everywhere. It permeates into all the areas of life of Africans so fully that it is not easy, or always possible, to isolate it. Therefore, curricula for the nomads in West Africa should be based on traditional religion including Islam as well as the developmental stages of the children in the community.

The African indigenous method of inquiry—to gain knowledge through observation,

⁴⁰ Julius Kambarage Nyerere, *Education for Self-Reliance* (Government Printer, 1967); Julius Kambarage Nyerere, *Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism* (Jihad Productions, 1970).

⁴¹ Willie E. Abraham, *The Mind of Africa* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962).

⁴² John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy* (Heinemann, 1990).

imitation, and folk tales—should be adopted. These activities encourage the child's interaction with his other environment. Theory and practice are merged, and this makes it possible for an African child to apply theory to a practical situation during the teaching-learning process. This means that nomadic children will be introduced to the African critical activity and discovery methods found in traditional folk tales, which are based on practical day-to-day living. For Marcien Towa, the critical spirit found in traditional folk tales is of great philosophical significance for development. His thesis rests on the fundamental principle that philosophy is a critical activity and that “the philosophical enterprise must be conducted as a reasoned mode of discourse involving the rigorous application of logical categories, rather by reference to general beliefs or to systems of ethical precepts or symbolic constructs which whatever their poetic force or human interest, do not contain within them any principle of verification.”⁴³ This is, of course, nothing more than the Platonic distinction between *sophia* (wisdom derived from reasoned judgement) and *doxa* (popular opinion, untested by reason). This critical aspect of traditional education should be effectively used. The success of the curricula will depend on two key factors—the relationship between the school (institution) and society and the language of instruction used in the school. However, it should be noted that a curriculum with its roots in African culture and environment must be developed from a well-organized research. Only through such research can a coherent nomadic curriculum be developed. In addition, there should be international cooperation, sharing of ideas in forums—all related to the need of developing an alternative paradigm.

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⁴³ Marcien Towa, *L'idée d'une philosophie négro-africaine* (Éditions CLE, 1979).

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