

Implementing Nigeria's Nomadic Education Programme (NEP)

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Introduction

The nomadic population in Nigeria accounts for 9.4 million people, including 3.1 million school-age children. The majority of them are pastoralists (7 million), while the remainder are migrant fisher folk and farmers. The participation of the nomads in existing formal and non-formal education programmes used to be extremely low, with the population's literacy rate ranging from 0.2 per cent to 2.0 per cent in 1988 (Muhammad, 2006). As in other countries, national education systems have generally failed the nomadic communities in terms of enrolment, participation and outcomes.

It was as a result of such indicators that the federal government of Nigeria established the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989. The Commission was charged with the implementation of the Nomadic Education Programme (NEP), aimed at providing and widening access to quality basic education for nomads in Nigeria.

Since its inception, the NCNE has developed five distinct programmes aimed at meeting the basic educational needs of nomads. Two of the programmes revolve around partnerships, namely the provision of primary education to the children of nomadic pastoralists in collaboration with states and local governments, and the establishment of links with international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and donor agencies for programme implementation (Tahir and Umar, 2000).

Developing partnerships occupies a central role in the implementation of the NEP, as the potential for providing equitable access to schooling and raising education outcomes for marginalised groups are greatly expanded.

Background

The NEP in Nigeria grew out of the partnerships that had been established between the major stakeholders in the Borno and Katsina provincial governments and the nomadic communities, in the 1920s and 1950s respectively. Interestingly, between 1976 and 1986, fresh initiatives were embarked upon by some state governments in the north of the country, namely Bauchi, Plateau, Kano and Borno states. At the federal level, the provision of basic education to nomads was aided through the solid partnerships fostered between the federal government and two international development agencies – the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). These partnerships led to a series of studies into nomadic communities and lifestyles, which were

carried out at the University of Jos, Nigeria, between 1976 and 1988. The decade of research findings indicated clearly that there were grounds for treating the nomads differently in education provision (Ezeomah, 1998), and were used to develop national policy guidelines.

A closer look at the NCNE partnerships

Local level

At the local level, the NCNE has established links and fostered partnerships with nomadic communities, which by 2010 numbered 2,889. It has also collaborated with all the 774 local government education authorities. In addition, the NCNE has partnered with a number of community-based organisations (CBOs) to help with the mobilisation and sensitisation of pastoralists in making them aware of the importance of education. CBO partners include: the Fulbe Development Association of Nigeria (FULDAN), the Mobgal Fulbe Development Association (MOFDA), the AL-Hayah Development Association, and the Reube Fulbe Development Association.

State level

In the implementation of the NEP at the state level, the NCNE has fostered partnerships with Nigeria's 36 states, as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja, through its ministries of education and various agencies, such as State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs).

National level

At the national level, the NCNE has established institutional partnerships with federal agencies in the implementation of the NEP. The NCNE's partners on a national level include: the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC); the Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) in areas of curriculum adaptation; the Nigerian Teachers' Institute (NTI) in the area of teacher training and development; and the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC) in the area of adult literacy for nomads. Other partners include Millennium Development Goal (MDG) offices that focus on special interventions aimed at the attainment of MDGs for nomads; the Education Trust Fund (ETF); and the National Livestock Development Project (NLDP), which focuses on the development of stock routes and grazing reserves.

In addition, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) has become involved, and has focused on the mobilisation and sensitisation of pastoralists since 1985. The NGO

Pastoral Resolve (PARE) has also collaborated on the mobilisation and sensitisation of pastoralists, as well as on educational empowerment, livestock development, capacity-building, HIV and AIDS awareness, and the establishment of new schools, clinics and improved sanitation and water. Since 2010, the Muslim organisation Al-hidayah has also been in partnership with the NCNE on the sensitisation of nomads.

Continental level

At the continental level, since 2009, the NCNE has partnered with the following: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the sharing of experiences and best practices in the region; the African Development Bank (AfDB), which has set up a Skills Training and Vocational Education Project (STVEP) as well as two nomadic education model centres; the Association for the Promotion of Livestock Development in the Sahel and Savannah (APESS), which has focused on capacity-building and fodder bank innovation since 2002; the Confederation of Traditional Stockbreeders Organizations in Africa (CORET), which has collaborated on advocacy, as well as on the mobilisation and sensitisation of pastoralists since 2007.

International level

At the international level, between 1995 and 2001, the NCNE partnered with UNESCO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on research development, community education projects, literacy provision, capacity development and pre-service teacher training for nomadic communities. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) was involved in capacity-building and training, radio education, and the development of a model centre at Kaduna from 2004 to 2005. The World Bank partnered with the NCNE on programmes related to radio education and capacity development from 2001 to 2004. UNICEF focused on maternal and child health in 1997 and 2000, and in 2003 on nomadic girl-child education; it also funded research on out-of-school nomadic children in 2010. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) partnered with the NCNE on capacity-building in information and communications technology (ICT), and in open and distance learning (ODL). The Pastoral Sector Intervention Project (PASEL) – established by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – carried out exchange visits and study tours.

Since 2006, the NCNE's partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat has focused on the sharing of experiences, best practices, capacity development, provision of quality and standard guidelines on nomadic education in Africa, assessing the levels of implementation of agreed recommendations at various fora and workshops, the creation of links and collaborations on NEP, quality assurance and field visits. This has helped to bring together researchers, educational practitioners working with nomadic groups, and the nomadic people themselves in order to synthesise the research, determine successful practices and share lessons learned (Malinga, 2009).

Conclusion: the benefits of partnership

The NCNE partnerships have yielded modest outputs as well as positive outcomes and developments. These include:

- Leveraging of additional human and material resources.
- Development of technical support.
- Reduction in the duplication of activities.
- Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.
- Sharing experiences and best practices.
- Reducing the bureaucracy surrounding the NEP and increasing its profile and support.

Between 1990 and 2010, the quality of teachers, school infrastructure and learning outcomes improved (Muhammad and Yamta 2010). In addition, there was an increase in:

- The number of nomadic schools – from 329 to 3060.
- Teacher numbers – from 873 to 13849, of which 5,954 were female.
- Pupil enrolment – from 19,769 to 484,694.
- Nomadic girl-child enrolment – from 4,982 to 215,752.
- Pupil attendance, progression, graduation and transition rates.

There are evidently good practices in such partnerships – good design and plans, and effective and efficient implementation on a sustainable basis. However, these gains should be incorporated into policies and regulatory frameworks; there should be the creation of an enabling environment with strict observances of specific responsibilities among partners, such as identifying objectives and outputs; there should be a gathering of information on the performance and progress of the collaborations; and an increase in funding. All of these actions will help to expand access and equitable provision of basic education, particularly for the marginalised nomads wherever they are found.

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