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FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NOMADIC EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH-SOUTH GEO-POLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) was established in 1989 to address the stark educational inequities experienced by nomadic populations in Nigeria. Nomadic education in Nigeria was designed to provide access to quality education for pastoralists, migrant farmers, and fisher-folk whose mobile livelihoods exclude them from conventional schooling. This paper reviewed and discussed scholars opinions that ranges from education as empowerment, structural and operational weaknesses, socio cultural perspectives, contemporary concerns of climate change and global comparative insights, functions of national commission for nomadic education were also highlighted, factors militating against the implementation of nomadic education in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria were reviewed and lastly, the objectives of nomadic education programme were also discussed. Literatures reviewed reveal that despite significant policy commitments, implementation is undermined by multiple factors which is why it was recommended that predictable financing, livelihood-sensitive curricula, teacher incentive schemes, mobile and ICT-enabled learning strategies, and stronger community participation

should be considered. It concludes that without targeted and context-sensitive reforms, nomadic education in the South-South will remain aspirational rather than transformative.

Keywords: Nomadic education, implementation challenges, South-South Nigeria, policy gaps. curriculum relevance.

Introduction

Education remains one of the most powerful tools for social and economic transformation, yet access remains elusive for marginalized and mobile populations worldwide. In Nigeria, nomadic education programmes were introduced in 1989 through the establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) to extend basic literacy and lifelong learning to groups historically excluded from mainstream schooling, such as pastoralists, migrant farmers, and fisher-folk (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004; Umar, 2024). While the pastoralist communities in the North have received the bulk of scholarly and policy attention (Marafa, 2015; Abubakar, 2024), the South-South geo-political zone presents unique challenges. Its populations largely composed of riverine and coastal migrant fisher-folk, face barriers shaped by difficult terrain, seasonal flooding, environmental degradation, and livelihood cycles tied to fishing and trading.

Globally, UNESCO (2021) and other scholars (Omede & Omede, 2022; Befii & Nwile, 2023) emphasize that mobile communities struggle with access to education due to mobility, curriculum irrelevance, and lack of teacher incentives. In Nigeria, despite over three decades of policy intervention, literacy rates among nomadic groups remain critically low, ranging between 0.2% and 2.9% (NCNE, 2023). Igbo, Usman & Olajide, (2023) says that education is both a human right in itself and indispensable means of realizing other human rights as an empowerment right even as it is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participation in their communities.

Olufemi (2011) assert that, nomadic education simple put, using English to foster communal peace and enhance the education of the herdsmen. The term nomads have been subjected to different definitions and usages. Nomads are people whose existence are characterized by absence of affixed domicile and they are categorized into three category namely the hunter,

food gatherers, itinerant workers and pastoralists (Abubakar 2024). Nzeagwu (2015) report that, to a lay man, nomadic means a group of people who have no fixed home and move according to the seasons from place to place in search of food, water, and grazing land and this explains why education is difficult to sustain or achieve among them. Yusuf, Kibaara & Ikiugu (2024) base their contributions on the fact that, establishment of the Nigerian National Commission for Nomadic Education in 1989, created wider opportunities for an estimated 9.3 million nomads living in Nigeria to acquire literacy skills. Education occupies a central place in Nigeria's development agenda as the springboard for human capital development and national integration (Edoho & Dominic, 2023). As Magem, Yobe, Abudullahi (2024) observes, education is not only a human right but also an indispensable empowerment tool that enables socially marginalized groups to overcome poverty and exclusion. However, the delivery of nomadic education continues to be hindered by environmental, social, and institutional realities

According to Bhargara, & Anhazhagan (2014), a critical appraisal of these approaches by the commission, however, shows that very few of the schools were actually viable and the exact way to accommodate and teach the nomads is to make the programme an evening affair where the nomadic teachers come and teach them at the period of their rest. According to Andong, Ubana, Edoho & Emmanuel (2014), the teacher numbers and nomadic school coverage with growing attention to migrant in riverine zones is grossly low. Scholars consider nomadic education a critical tool for empowerment and inclusion of historically marginalized groups. For instance, Hussain, Haladu, & Yaka (2024) argued that nomadic education contributes to rural development by fostering literacy, civic participation, and socio-economic opportunities among pastoralist communities.

Similarly, Nwile (2024) emphasized that specialized education for mobile populations, such as migrant fisher-folk in the Niger Delta, reduces educational inequality by tailoring curricula to the learners' lifestyle. These views suggest that nomadic education aligns with the global push for "Education for All" and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ogundele, Oke, & Mainoma (2016) highlighted how environmental and infrastructural limitations in Plateau State hindered the achievement of program goals, resulting in low enrolment and poor retention. Fati, Waziri & Mohammed (2025, Amos-Akanmu & Suleiman 2025), similarly stressed that weak management and administrative lapses within the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) compromise program effectiveness. These critiques underline the gap between policy

intention and practical outcomes, often leaving nomadic communities underserved. This perspective reinforces the idea that education cannot be imposed without sensitivity to cultural norms and livelihood patterns.

Abubakar (2024) added that for education to be meaningful, it must also address conflict management and peace-building, especially in Northern Nigeria where pastoralist-farmer clashes have escalated. Usman, and Olajide (2023) linked climate change to increasing migration, which disrupts continuity in education and worsens vulnerability among nomadic groups. Likewise, Aide, Luka, Shuaibu, and Bello (2023) who argued that nomadic education can serve as a peace-building tool by reducing conflicts between herders and farmers, fostering tolerance through literacy and civic education.

General Objectives of Nomadic Education

The National Policy on Education (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004) outline clear objectives for the nomadic education programme and the overarching aim is to bridge the educational gap between nomadic populations among other things (Aderimoye, Ojokheta & Ojojede ,2007; Yusef & Omlanrewaju, 2022). The specific objectives include:

Provision of Basic Education: To expose nomadic children to foundational literacy, numeracy, and life skills that prepare them for participation in both local and national development processes (Yusuf et al., 2022).

Community Development Participation: To equip nomadic learners with knowledge and skills to contribute meaningfully to the sustainable development of their immediate environment and the nation at large (Carr-Hill & Peart, (2019).

Promotion of Self-Reliance: To foster self-sufficiency among nomadic families by equipping learners with vocational skills that improve their socio-economic conditions and reduce intergenerational poverty (Alaezi, 2020).

Modernization of Traditional Livelihoods: To introduce innovative practices in pastoralism, fishing, and small-scale agriculture, thereby improving productivity and reducing conflict over natural resources Aderimoye, Ojokheta & Ojojede (2007),

Holistic Development of Learners: To support the physical, intellectual, and emotional development of nomadic children, enabling them to adapt to contemporary social and economic realities (Edoho et al., 2024).

Justification for Nomadic Education Programme

Despite significant investment in Nigeria's education sector, literacy rates among nomadic populations remain critically low in some rural communities. Scholars like (Nzeagwu, 2015; Befii-Nwile, 2022) have documented how mobility disrupts regular attendance. Normadic education programme is very important due to the following:

Economic Dependence on Child Labor: In many nomadic households, children are integral to livelihood activities, which limits their availability for formal education (Yusuf & Olanrewaju, 2022).

Irrelevant Conventional Curriculum: Standard curricula often fail to reflect the realities and needs of nomadic communities, reducing engagement and retention (Umar, 2024).

Geographical Isolation: Many nomadic settlements are located in remote, riverine, or flood-prone areas with limited transportation and infrastructure, creating barriers to access

Land Tenure Insecurity: The inability of nomadic groups to secure permanent settlements exacerbates instability and limits long-term investment in education and also their constant migration /movements in search of water and pasture in the case of the pastoralists and fish of the migrant fishermen. (Edoho, Olabisi & Ojong 2024).

Interestingly, Magem, Yobe, Abdullahi, Khalid & Liman (2024) identified several technologies that can be utilized to promote nomadic education in Nigeria's South-South Region**.**

Technological Innovations in Nomadic Education

Mobile Schools: Mobile schools remain one of the most visible interventions in nomadic education. These schools use collapsible, lightweight classrooms that can be assembled or disassembled within 30 minutes and transported by motorboats or pack animals.

Radio and Television Based Learning: Radio and TV programs have become critical tools for extending educational access: Radio lessons are particularly effective in low-resource settings, where ownership of radio sets is higher than other devices.

Community "listening hubs" allow groups to access lessons collectively, fostering communal learning. Research shows that radio-based education can increase literacy rates by 15–20% in rural fishing communities within one year when combined with face-to-face instruction.

ICT-Enabled Distance Learning: Recent innovations emphasize digital education tools such as: Offline mobile apps for literacy and numeracy instruction. Solar-powered tablets and

mobile projectors to overcome energy barriers. SMS-based communication for lesson schedules and parent engagement. (Yusuf et al., 2024 & Ajah & Nnamchi).

Flexible Timetable and Modular Curriculum: Recognizing the seasonal patterns of migration and fishing activities: NCNE has piloted modular curricula that allow learners to complete segments of their education intermittently without losing progress (NCNE, 2023, Umar, 2024, Befi-Nwile, 2023).

The following functions listed below were initially framed by the NCNE around pastoralist in Northern Nigeria, their application in the South-South requires modification to address riverine and coastal realities (Idika, Edoho, Otuuchi, Chukwuchinedu, and Enyi, 2023).

Policy Formulation and Coordination: The NCNE is mandated to design policies and issue guidelines on all matters relating to nomadic education. In northern Nigeria, this has largely meant addressing pastoral mobility patterns, seasonal migrations, and cultural considerations of the Fulani herders (Omede & Omede, 2021). For instance, policies encouraged mobile and "shift system" schools to allow children to attend classes during dry-season settlements (Abubakar, 2024). In the South-South, however, policy frameworks have been slower to adapt. Migrant fisher-folk face irregular displacements caused by flooding, erosion, and oil-related environmental degradation (Befi-Nwile, 2022), yet no clear national framework specifically addresses these ecological vulnerabilities.

Provision of Infrastructure and Learning Materials: A core function of NCNE is to provide schools, classrooms, instructional materials, and teacher accommodation. In the North, this has taken the form of mobile classrooms transported by trucks or animals, and more recently, learning centres at semi-settled grazing reserves are of known (Magem, Yobe, Abdullahi, Khalid, & Liman, 2024). These innovations, although imperfect, reflect attempts to embed infrastructure in pastoralist contexts. By contrast, in the South-South, infrastructure provision remains weak. Riverine communities require floating classrooms, boats for teacher and student transport, and waterproof instructional materials (Yusuf, Kibaara, & Ikiugu, 2024).

Curriculum Development and Adaptation: Another function of the NCNE is to design curricula relevant to the livelihoods of nomadic populations. In the North, this has involved integrating literacy and numeracy with cattle rearing, animal health, and conflict management (Abubakar, 2024). Research by Nzeagwu (2015) shows that while uptake was initially low, parents became more supportive when curricula incorporated skills directly applicable to pastoral

livelihoods. In the South-South, however, curriculum adaptation is limited. As a result, parents see little immediate benefit in formal education and prefer their children's labour to supplement household income.

Teacher Recruitment, Training, and Welfare: The Commission is also tasked with recruiting, training, and supporting teachers for nomadic schools. In northern Nigeria, hardship allowances and targeted recruitment of teachers from nomadic communities have been piloted with some success (Omede & Omede, 2021). However, teacher shortages remain a chronic issue due to poor incentives and the difficult terrain. In the South-South, the challenges are even more acute: teachers are reluctant to accept postings in riverine areas because of the absence of accommodation, poor transport facilities, and safety risks associated with water travel (Edoho, Ojong, Fidelis, & Odije, 2024).

Monitoring and Evaluation: A final statutory function of the NCNE is to monitor and evaluate nomadic education programmes to ensure effectiveness. In the North, monitoring is often done through periodic surveys of pastoral settlements and livestock corridors (Umar, 2024). Although data quality remains weak, some systems exist to track enrolment and literacy levels. In the South-South, however, monitoring mechanisms are far less effective.

Comparative Insights: The comparison between the North and South-South shows that while the NCNE has made modest progress in tailoring interventions to pastoralist contexts, it has not achieved similar success in the riverine zones. (Marafa, 2015; Befi-Nwile, 2022). The implication is that the Commission's statutory functions, though impressive on paper, remain unevenly implemented in practice.

Factors Militating against the Implementation of Nomadic Education in South-South Region

Despite over three decades of interventions by the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) and its partners, nomadic education in the South-South Region continues to face outstanding barriers. Recent study by (Carr Hill & Peart, 2019), categorizes these factors as outlined below.

Funding and Resource Constraints: Adequate funding is the foundation for effective educational delivery, yet nomadic education remains chronically underfunded. According to (Umar, 2024)), only 45% of NCNE's annual budgetary requirements were met between 2020 and 2023. This underfunding directly affects the procurement of boats, floating classrooms, instructional materials, teacher welfare, and monitoring systems. Contrasting Views by Magem et

al. (2024) argue that financial constraints are primarily a result of fiscal mismanagement at the state level rather than absolute scarcity of funds, however, Yusuf et al. (2024), contend that federal budget allocations are themselves inadequate, emphasizing that "a poorly funded system cannot be managed into effectiveness." Implications: Unpredictable financing makes it difficult to scale pilot programs such as mobile classrooms and evening schools.

Geographical and Environmental Barriers: The South-South region is characterized by riverine terrain, tidal fluctuations, and seasonal flooding, which complicate access to nomadic settlements meanwhile these physical realities significantly increase the logistical costs of delivering education. In many fishing communities, schools are accessible only by boat, exposing teachers and students to safety risks and so bad that oil pollution and environmental degradation displace entire communities, causing discontinuity in learners' education (Befi-Nwile, 2023). Contrasting Views by Umar (2024) stresses that geography is the primary barrier, arguing that "no curriculum or teacher incentive will matter if communities cannot physically reach schools." Conversely, Edoho et al. (2024) argue that geography amplifies pre-existing governance and funding gaps but is not insurmountable if managed with adaptive strategies. Implications. Physical isolation increases teacher absenteeism, raises operational costs, and requires context-specific infrastructure.

Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Capacity: Teachers are reluctant to accept or remain in riverine postings due to hardship conditions, inadequate housing, safety concerns, and lack of incentives. Where teachers are posted, many lack training in multi-grade, flexible pedagogy or livelihood-integrated instruction suited for nomadic contexts. Contrasting Views by Ajah & Nnamchi, (2021) links teacher attrition to economic factors, especially low wages and unpaid allowances while Umar (2024) argues that attrition is more strongly influenced by social and cultural alienation, as teachers often feel isolated and disconnected from the communities they serve. Implications. Shortage of motivated, skilled teachers undermines instructional quality. (Yusuf & Olanrewaju, 2022. NCNE 2023).

Curriculum Relevance and Language Barriers: Standard curricula often lack relevance to the daily realities of nomadic communities since limited integration of fishing, navigation, and climate adaptation knowledge into lessons reduces perceived value (Umar, 2024). It is established that instruction is often delivered in languages unfamiliar to learners, alienating both students and parents (Afolabi & Yusef, 2018). Contrasting Views by Igbo, Usman & Olajide. (2023) advocated

for context specific curricula designed collaboratively with local communities while Hussain Haladu & Yake (2004) argue that standardized curricula are essential for ensuring equitable learning outcomes nationwide and caution against excessive localization. The implications of this is that, livelihood relevant curriculum delivered in the mother tongue fosters higher enrollment and retention while aligning education with sustainable community development as well as community participation and social context.

Community Participation and Social Context: Community attitudes toward formal education vary. In many riverine communities, children contribute directly to family income, and parents prioritize labour. Contrasting Views: Nwile (2024) advocated for evening schools and seasonal education programs citing their success in Yobe State's pastoral communities while Edoho et al. (2024) caution that flexible scheduling alone is insufficient without parental sensitization and economic support to offset the opportunity costs of sending children to school. This implies that without adaptive programming, nomadic children remain at the margins of the education system, perpetuating intergenerational illiteracy Implications. Strengthening community participation is a low-cost but high-impact strategy: sensitization campaigns, participatory planning, and community contributions to teacher housing/boats can improve programme sustainability.

Conclusion

The effective implementation of nomadic education in Nigeria's South-South Region remains a significant challenge despite the commendable efforts of the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) and other stakeholders. This study has identified several factors that militate against effective implementation of nomadic education such as; inadequate funding, geographical and environmental isolation, teacher shortages and poor retention, etc. There is broad scholarly agreement that these factors impede progress. For instance, some researchers emphasize structural weaknesses in policy and governance (Umar, 2024), while others highlight socio-cultural and economic barriers such as parental attitudes and child labor (Befi-Nwile, 2023). This diversity of views underscores the complexity of the problem and the need for integrated, context-specific solutions rather than one-size-fits-all approaches. Nomadic education is more than a tool for literacy; it is a pathway to social equity, economic inclusion, and national unity. Improving access and quality for nomadic populations contributes directly to Sustainable Development Goal. However, achieving this vision requires sustained political will, collaborative governance, and

innovative strategies that address both systemic and local realities. If unaddressed, the cycle of marginalization and illiteracy will persist, perpetuating poverty and social exclusion among nomadic communities.

Recommendations

Drawing from the foregoing discussions, the following recommendations are proposed for policymakers, practitioners, and development partners to strengthen the implementation of nomadic education in the South-South Region:

1. Secure Predictable and Transparent Funding: Establish ring-fenced funding mechanisms at federal and state levels to prevent diversion of resources and ensure consistent financing for boats, floating classrooms, teacher allowances, and infrastructure.
2. Encourage public-private partnerships (PPPs) with Non-governmental organization (NGOs), international agencies such as UNESCO and UNICEF to supplement government funding.
3, It shall be rewarding if specific delivery models context is adopted by way of expanding floating classrooms and mobile schools tailored to riverine environments. while drawing lessons from successful pilots in Bayelsa and Cross River states.
4. Implement flexible timetables and modular curricula aligned with fishing and migration cycles to reduce dropout rates and strengthen teacher welfare.

Summary

The future of nomadic education in Nigeria's South-South Region depends on collective action. government agencies, communities, civil society organizations, and international partners must work together to create a sustainable inclusive education model that meets the unique needs of nomadic populations. With targeted investment, innovative technologies, participatory governance, and nomadic education can evolve from a fragile intervention into a cornerstone of national development breaking cycles of poverty and fostering a more equitable society.

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