

MIGRANT EDUCATION IN SOUTH-EAST GEO-POLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

The National Policy on Education (2014) provides for the education of nomadic pastorals, migrant farmers and migrant fisher folks who due to their life styles and means of livelihood, are unable to have access to conventional education provision and therefore require special education to cater for their peculiar needs and circumstance. They are to benefit from mass literacy, adult and non – formal education which encompasses functional literacy, remedial and vocational education. In line with this Policy, the Federal Government established migrant schools in South – East geo – political zone of Nigeria. The establishment of these schools is also an avenue towards the realization of equal educational opportunity for all. Granted that good number of migrants have benefited from this gesture especially in improving the quality of life of the people, its problems abound. It is important that we note the problems and prospects of migrant education in south – East geo – political zone of Nigeria, appreciate its benefits and proffer solution to numerous problems inhibiting its progress.

Keyword: Migrant, Education, migration, problems, prospect

INTRODUCTION

Migration is a common phenomena in most countries. People migrate in search of decent work elsewhere, violation of human rights, bad governance, political intolerance, and wars. In Nigeria, many people suffer poverty in rural areas and the effects of climate change, including desertification and floods which leads to environmental refugees. Some regions are affected by extremist groups and other fall under the control of armed groups.

Most farmers abandon their means of livelihood out of fear of been lynched by Fulani herdsmen. Consequently, people experience scarcity of some agricultural products and price hike on those available. The children of these migrants are also affected in terms of education since provision is not made to that regard.

The Federal Government fully aware of the importance of education for all, including the children and wards of these migrants like herdsmen, fishermen and farmers and internally displaced persons, introduce educational and literacy enhancements programme for the migrant in their settlement and camps. It is quite disappointing and disturbing that the efforts made by the government by establishing migrant schools and literacy programme in their various locations seem not to be yielding the desired results. There are a lot of problems manifesting in the management of some migrant schools in south-east geo-political zones of Nigeria.

Nomadic education in south-east zone of Nigeria is affected by defective policy, inadequate finance, and faulty school placement, incessant migration of student, unreliable and obsolete data, and cultural and religious taboos. The persistence of these problems is causing the nomads to remain educationally backward. However, a lot of prospect have been recorded through the establishment of the migrant education programme in south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria.

Migrant Education

Education according to Fafunwa, (1974) is the aggregate of all the process through which a child develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society. Burtch, (2006) viewed education as a major force in economic, intellectual, social and cultural development. Its value in bringing about character and attitudinal change ranks as important as its

ability to reshape human potentials for desired development. Jimoh, (2004) in his own understanding defined education as the totality of the experiences made available to the individuals in order to make them develop rounded personality (ies) and be useful to themselves and their communities. For Nduanya, (1986) education is a process by which the individual is enabled to develop his capabilities through acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes both for his own benefit and for the benefit of his society. And for Ogbebor, (1992) education is a means of preserving the way of life in which the person believes. This shows that education is an investment by the society to make it a better place in which to live and a better place in which to make a living. Looking at the above definition of education by different authors, it implies that education is for all and indispensable in the lives of everyone, migrants inclusive. In Nigeria, education occupies a center stage on 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 or leadership have been convinced that the fate of the nation depends on the education of the youths (Wennergreen et al, 1984). 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 primary means of upgrading the socio-economic condition of the rural population. To address the chronic illiteracy among the migrants within Nigeria, the government introduced the nomadic education program. The program has three main goals, to raise the living standard of the rural community, to harness the potentials of the Fulani, and to judge the literacy gap between the Fulani and the rest of the society.

Migrant education is a national program that provides supplementary education and support services to eligible migrant children each year. These services help children of migrant workers overcome the disadvantages they face, one of which is disruption of their education due to mobility. According to Coomans (2018), the right to education is often taken for granted until it is taken away. He also emphasized that education is an indispensable tool to protect the freedom and dignity of all migrants. Education allows them to fully integrate into their new societies.

In article 26 of the universal declaration of human rights, education is an essential tool for the protection of human dignity. Human right became even more meaningful when their realization is at risk. For instance, when people are forced to flee from armed conflict or persecution or simply because they want to improve their socio-economic condition, when they arrive in their new place of abode, their educational situation could be uncertain. According to Guterves (2017) Secretary General of the United Nations, Education is a human right and a transformational force for poverty education, sustainability and peace. People on the move, whether voluntarily or forced, do not leave their right to education behind. Education system needs to be inclusive and fulfill the commitment to equity, which cuts across 2030 agenda for SDGs.

Education is both a human right in itself and an 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, safeguarding children from exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and controlling population growth. Increasing education is recognized as one of the best financial investment available to state, but the importance of education is not just practical and instrumental, a well-stocked, enlightened, and active mind, able to range freely and widely, is one of the joys and rewards of human existence.

Migrants education in Nigeria draws its strength from section 10 subsection 94(11) of the National policy on education (2004). This section states "that the children of nomadic pastorals, migrants' fishermen, migrant farmers' hunters etc who, due to their lifestyle and means of livelihood are unable to have access to the conventional education provision and therefore require special education to cater for their peculiar needs and circumstances".

According to Gana (1991), migrant education programme is basically a primary and adult education programme in conformity with the universal primary education scheme designed to wipe out illiteracy, but also destined to improve the productivity of nomads, promote social justice and equity and sensitize them to their basic human and constitutional rights as bonafide Nigerians. The main aim of establishing migrant education in south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria as stated by Amadioha ,(2016) is to educate the teaming number of nomads, fishermen and farmers towards improving their quality of living, understanding of national goals which will therefore, go a long way to making them contribute maximally to national development. It is also a way of integrating the children of these migrants into the formal education system.

PROBLEMS OF MIGRANT EDUCATION IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

The federal government of Nigeria believes that learning is the primary means of upgrading the socio-economic condition of migrants. This led to the establishment of migrant schools - to address the chronic illiteracy among the migrant, to raise their living standard, to harness the potentials of these group of people and to bridge the literacy gap between them and the rest of the society.

Granted that the government has spent millions of naira in migrant education programme, the level of academic achievement among the migrants remain stunted. Migrant education in south-east zone of Nigeria is affected by defective policy, inadequate finance, and faulty school placement, incessant migration of student, unreliable and obsolete data and cultural and religious taboos. The persistence of these problem is causing the migrants pastoralist, fishermen and farmers to remain educationally backward.

Wennergreen, (1984) noted that the state governments are finding it difficult to pay the teachers, supply furniture or repair the furniture. Insufficiency in funds has also lead to inadequacy in education among the rural dwellers. The success of any educational programme depends largely on the amount of money channeled into it. Migrant education program is an expensive venture, which requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of government for effective implementation. The finance burden has forced some schools to operate in the open while learning in unroofed or partially-roofed space maybe possible during dry season, teaching under such conditions is impossible during rainy season. Flood, muddy terrain, leaking roofs, and uncooperative weather have resulted in the loss of school days.

Lack of funds led the government to depend on volunteers or inexperienced staff. It is also very difficult to provide the necessary things like instructional materials, chalks, books, pencils aid blackboards which are adversely affecting teaching and learning. Other instructional materials like charts, models, graph boards, wall globes, modules illustrating display, audio – visuals material (T.V lectures, video tapes , film, radio etc)The basic instructional materials for teaching are not in existence in most of our migrant schools. This is a problem and serious setback to teaching – learning process of migrant schools in South – East geo –political zone of Nigeria.

The movement of migrants away from their location owing to the friction between farmers and pastoralists obstruct school functions and classroom formation. This also affect the teachers as they are faced with extra task of adjusting their teaching to fit the dynamics of the transient population. Some teachers cannot endure the unsteady and rigorous movement of the nomads. Other major hindrances to school attendances as stated by Ridby, (1980) are the daily grazing movement and lack of labor substitutes. The Fulani nomads rely on their children to labour for them, the child needs to learn the herding skills and that explains the poor participation of the pastoralist in formal education.

The nomadic education program is inhibited by dissident and societal issues. Fafunwa (1974), opined that the predominantly Muslim Fulani reject the nomadic schools, fearing that their children will become Christianized. During the missionary era, they combined education with Christian evangelization. They were some accusation against the teachers who preach Christianity in some nomadic schools.

Constantino (2010), in his findings enumerated a number of barriers that stand against the success of migrant education as follows;

1. Cultural differences: Cultural differences that cause difficulties in assimilations and also lead to prejudice and xenophobia against migrant families are common determinant from restrictive regulation, or they can be informal but negatively affect the learning atmosphere of a school. Students who don't feel welcome or wanted because of their migrant status are less likely to remain in school. Additionally, students who struggle with cultural adjustment fail to form connections and make friends in school, which affects their academic achievement.
2. Language differences: Language differences are another common barrier to educational success. Migrant students that speak a language other than the regions dominant language struggle with basic comprehension and literacy, which affects success in school students may have a high level of language acquisition, cultural differences that include short answer responses, unexpected expressions, and mannerisms, can be misunderstood as language deficit. School that have contemplated a separate program for second language learning face challenges with limited resources and an insufficient amount of participating students. Language challenges amongst migrant students create a significant barrier given that language deficiency is often tied to alienation and ridicule from peers and in some cases, academic punishment.
3. Lack of information: Migrant parents are often unaware of their children's right to education or are unfamiliar with the structure of the local public education system. Most migrant parents speak a different language, which also affect their ability to receive information.
4. Psychological difficulties: Trauma and other psychological difficulties are common among migrant populations, especially refugees who are forced into migratory states due to political, social, or religious turmoil at home. Adjustment to a new culture, language, and home is also difficult and can lead to psychological strain on migrant families.
5. Residential dislocation: Many difficulties arise due to the movement of migrant students from one school to another. When migrant students move during the middle of a school year, they are often discouraged from enrolling mid-way through a semester, which disrupts education and has lasting psychological effects.
6. Living conditions: Migrants farm workers live with a large number of extended family members in migrant camps or temporary housing. This density of people in a small poorly lit and sparsely finished space is not necessarily within walking distance of the local schools, which poses a problem. Reliable transportation is also an issue for some families. Some migrant workers accommodation lacks the necessary cooking appliances which delays cooking.
7. Cost: The cost of schooling can also prevent equal access to education. Migrant families, especially migrant farm-working families, have low socio-economic status and cannot afford to pay extra fees on schooling.

The National Commission for Nomadic Education on their part is still struggling to come with the necessary things needed in these special schools. For example, they are yet to make available appropriate syllabus, schemes of work, textbooks and instructional materials based on the culture, tradition, social norms and the lifestyle of the nomads, availability of native teachers and administrators who can't communicate effectively with the nomads, provision of incentives for teachers, adequate welfare facilities for the teachers and environment and necessary infrastructures (classroom). These are major problems affecting the growth and development of migrant education in the zone. If the policies for the growth of migrant education in south-east geo-political zone are implemented, a lot will be achieved towards the realization of migrant education in this area.

PROSPECTS OF MIGRANT EDUCATION IN SOUTH-EAST GEO-POLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA.

People migrate to take advantage of spatial opportunities in the social, economic and political conditions that have far reaching consequences on their livelihood. Migrants are people who left their homes to a new place, either temporary or permanently in order to gain social and economic

privileges. According to Crocker, (2007) migration is a deliberate attempt by the migrant to reap benefits associated with location expect in forced migration. Friedberg, (2001) posited that internal migration is the most significant process that drives changes in the developed countries. Education plays a significant role in the lives of the migrants.

Migrant education helps in improving the quality of life of people for example, if unemployment is reduced and people get jobs, they will fend for themselves and their standards of living will improve. It also helps to improve social life of people as they learn about new culture, customs and languages which help to improve brotherhood among people. Migration of skilled workers leads to a greater economic growth of the region. Migrant children get better opportunities for higher education and the population density is reduced while birth rate decreases. In the study by Tawari (2002), migrant children are giving positive response on gains they derived from education. Most of the people explained that education will enable them become good people, gain white-collar jobs, improve their living condition and fishing methods.

Wright (1988) stated that, the Fulani's have understood that part of their problem is lack of education. The non-existence of educated men and women in governance and formulation of policy has made the Fulani's vulnerable to their counterparts who are more informed. There is awakening of the consciousness of the Fulani's on the importance of Western education as it will afford their children alternative source of livelihood apart from cattle rearing. Also, they believe in the certainty of the future as education will produce leaders who will represent them in government.

Education produces the relevant manpower for economic development and subsequent sustenance of the economy. According to Kosemain (1995) "the economy influences education character. He further stated that many countries especially in the developing world, the character of their school systems is determined by the perceived economic need and orientation of the society" The educational system is bound to adapt to the demands of the nature of economic development because it is expected to produce the agents to development who are imbued with relevant skills, knowledge, beliefs and values (Kosemain in Kosemain, 1995). Migrant education in south-east Nigeria has and is playing its part in producing relevant manpower for economic development and nation building.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

The focus of this paper is to reiterate the impact of migrant education in the realization of the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights that "everyone has the right to education ". Education guarantees the inalienable right of each individual including migrants scattered all over the world. As stated by Cooman (2018), education is an indispensable tool to protect the freedom and dignity of all migrants. Education allows them to fully integrate into their new societies". The Federal Government effort in providing education programme in south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria is a welcome idea. It has to a large extent achieved its object of impacting knowledge on these special groups of people in south-east Nigeria. It has given them ample opportunity to acquire skills on how to manage themselves and their products especially in term of preservation of the products. For example, the fishermen, farmers and herdsman now have better knowledge on how to improve on their profession.

However, there are numerous problems related to the management of migrant education programme in south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria. Lack of fund to improve on the infrastructure, better remuneration for staff, purchase of instructional materials among others are some major problems affecting the growth and progress of migrant education programme in south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria.

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