

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROVISION FOR NOMADS IN NIGERIA

Jonas U. Ezema

Adizetu A. Ai

Abstract

This paper examines strategies for enhancing access to information for Nomads in Nigeria. It describes Nomads as special group of people that have been marginalized for long; though they contribute immensely to national development. The paper notes that 9.3 million people makeup Nigeria's nomadic group with literacy rate of 0.28%. It presents strategies such as mobile learning, mobile schools, information repackaging, translation services, book mobile, use of audio visuals, drama and picture books in order to enhance access to information provision for Nomads in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nomads, Library, Access to information, Pastoralist, Literacy,

Introduction

Nomadic people commonly known as itinerant in modern day contexts, are communities of people who move from one place to another, rather than settling permanently in one location. Sometimes they do stay in one place during the winter and only travel in the summer or the other way around. Akinpelu (1994) used the term nomads to refer to "ethnic or socio-professional groups, which travel and migrate on large or small groups, in search of means of livelihood within a community, a nation or across international boundaries. He emphasized that their existence is usually characterized by the absence of fixed domicile. Generally, it has been pointed out that nomadic increases in relation to the increasing wants, uncertainty and serious threat to existence.(Awotona&Daromola, 1989). They stressed that nomads is propelled at the slightest threat to the basic ingredient of human sustenance. It is seen as human ecological reaction to its endangered environment.

Nomads can be classified into three categories, namely; nomadic pastoralists, the itinerant fishermen and the migrant farmers. The prominent pastoralists in Nigeria include: the Fulani, Shuwa, Kwayam, Buduman and Buduwa. The itinerant fishermen are mainly concentrated on the Atlantic coastline, the riverine and the river basin areas in states such as Ondo, Cross River, Delta, Rivers, Kogi, Lagos, AkwaIbom, Ogun States. These people live along the rivers and seas hunting for fish. Migrant farmers are almost found in all the states of the federation. These people move away from their home and travel to other localities where there are enough and more fertile land for their farming activities. For instance, in Enugu

state, migrant farmers from Nsukka Local Government Area travel to Opanda/Adani in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area for farming activities.

Nomadic groups have been marginalized for long though they contribute immensely to national development. Ugwu (2004) opines that this group needs special attention. He contends that the mobile and migratory nature of their work activities, coupled with the fact that they live in remote and inaccessible areas have placed them in disadvantaged position in the area of accessing information. The pastoral nomads are more highly disadvantaged than the migrant fishermen, in terms of access to education, primarily because they are more itinerants. As a result, the literacy rate of pastoral nomads is only 0.28 percent, while that of the other nomads is about 20 percent (FME, 2000).

Access to Information

IFLA(2008) has come up with a manifesto, which sees unrestricted access to information as in dispensable and fundamental to freedom, equality, global understanding and peace. IFLAs position is premised on the following:

- Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual both to hold and express opinion and to seek and receive information, it is the basis of democracy; and it is a central responsibility of the library and information profession.
- Freedom of access to information regardless of medium and frontiers, is a central responsibility of the library and information profession.
- The provision of unhindered access to the internet by libraries and information services supports communities and individuals to attain freedom, prosperity and development.
- Barriers to the flow of information should be removed, especially those that promote inequality, poverty and despair.

These above mentioned set of principles emphasized that: right of access to information is essential for a civilized society; and that if citizens are to exercise their democratic rights and to make informed choices, they must have access to political, social, scientific and economic information. If our culture is to thrive and to grow people need access to the widest range of ideas, information and images.

Strategies for Enhancing Information Provision for Nomads

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 (UNESCO, 2003) Education is the greatest force that can bring change. It is also the greatest investment that a nation can make for the quick development of its natural and human resources. Education has vital role in empowering women, street working children from exploitative and hazardous labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and controlling population growth. In order to achieve the five main National goals which include; a free and democratic society, a just and equalitarian society a united and dynamic economy and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens, Nigeria's nomadic people need access to basic educational provision to acquire literacy skills. This can be achieved through the following ways.

Mobile Learning

Lehner and Nosekabel (2002) defined mobile learning as any service that supplies a learner with general electronic information and educational contents that aids in acquisition of knowledge regardless of location and time. Mobile learning through the use of wireless mobile technology allows anyone to access information and learning materials from anywhere at any time. According to Ajigboye (2010), learners have control of when they want to learn and from which location they want to learn. All humans have the right to access information and learning material to improve their quality of life regardless of where they live, their status and culture. Such mobile technologies include among others, mobile phones and note books or PCs. Mobile technologies fulfill the basic requirements needed to support learning and the learners evolving skills and knowledge (Sharples, 2000)

Radio can provide instructions and relay messages to Nigeria's pastoral nomads who are always on the move grazing their cattles. Aderinoye, Ojokheta and Olojede (2007) described the pastoral Fulani as a captive audience of radio programmes; They have radios which they carry along during herding. The literate world can reach itinerant nomads without disrupting their nomadic life or livelihood. Government should therefore introduce many educational programmes using the mobile learning technique to enhance the literacy skills of the marginalized group of Nigerians by supplying radios, TV, electronic generators and building of tele-centres.

Mobile Schools

Mobile schools use collapsible classrooms that can be assembled or disassembled within 30 minutes and carried conveniently. While a whole classroom and its furniture can be handled by only four pack animal. Motor craven are presently replacing pack animals to relocate the classrooms (Aderionye; Ojokheta and Olojede, 2007). Atypical mobile unit consists of three classrooms each with spaces to serve 15 to 20 children. Some of the classrooms are also equipped with audiovisual teaching aids. There is no doubt that this is one of the most ideal school for the itinerant children of school age.

Information Repackaging for the Nomads

Udensi (2010) defined information repackaging as organizing or processing of information in a form that can be understood by the different categories of uses that the various information are meant for. It involves interpreting and converting information into a form that the different target groups can easily understand. Ezema (2010) argues that information repackaging is concerned with efforts in transforming the existing information in the form and medium that would suit a targeted group of people. Information can be repackaged through the translation of relevant documents into various local languages of the target groups (nomads), Fulani, Hausa, Yoruba, Ijaw etc. Information can also be translated in pigin English that can be easily understood by a very large population of the nomad groups. Another approach to translation is the use of information sheets such as posters, handbills, pamphlets etc. Udensi (2010) observed that important information on different dialects can be taken to the grassroots in different communities. Oral information delivery will be more effective method of reaching out to the less literate groups.

Book Mobile

Another approach to information repacking is bookmobile. Brown (1967 cited by Ogbonna 2006) sees book mobile literally as book in motion. This is a process where the library transports books out of the four walls of the library building to the areas where the intended users are located. The target groups that most need this type of information are mainly the disadvantaged group such as the nomads, prisoners, delinquents, patients in the hospitals. The nomads require this type of library services more than any other group because they are always on the “move” or they are itinerants.

Audio-Visual Resources

Audio-visual resources, commonly referred to as instructional materials form a special collection of library. They are sources of information not readily available or communicated in print media and are recommended as good aids in educational instruction and information repackaging for the intended target groups like nomads and others. Udensi (2010) stated that audio- visual materials include objects, models, photographs, paintings, drawings, diagram, films, charts, posters, audio recording, video-recording, motion pictures etc. repackaging of information through the use of these materials is actually one of the most effective technique information can be transferred from group or another especially to disadvantaged groups like the nomadic people who are less literate.

Drama and Picture Books

Drama is a practical display of some practices or actions that capture the five senses. During story-telling, the audience, especially the children could act the story. Information needs of the nomads and the rural dwellers could be transmitted through this type of medium. In addition, drama gives entertainment and sharpens talents. Ogbonna (2006) observed that picture books are usually recommended to be the first to be introduced to learners at their early school age. The ABC picture book introduce learners to the letters of the alphabet accompanied by words and phrases and build up their language skills which eventually lead to an interest; that will endure or last long into one's life. Again, the Number or Counting picture books introduce learners to numeracy, counting, addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. Picture books generally develop learners' visual and verbal abilities because they encourage them to observe, talk, discuss, and learn, thereby establishing and enhancing their reading and communicative abilities and literary appreciation of the nomads.

Conclusion

Nigeria's nomadic group represents sizeable population that requires access to basic information in order to attain fundamental human rights in line with the goals of vision 20-20-20. Increase in the literacy skills of the nomadic through mobile learning, introduction of mobile schools and other information repackaging techniques can enhance access to the information needs of the nomadic groups of Nigeria who have contributed immensely to the socio-economic development of the nation.

References

- Aderiouye, R.A., Ojokheta, K.O and Olojede, A.A (2007) Integrating mobile learning into nomadic education programmes in Nigeria: Issues and perspectives. *The international Review of research in open and Distance learning* 5(3) 74-87
- Ajigboye, S. (2010) Mobile E-learning: exploring partnership between education and telecommunication platform. Paper presented at the 2nd professional summit on information science and Technology' (PSIST,) held at the NnamdiAzikiwe Library, UNN from 3rd-7th May.
- Akinpelu, J.A. (1994). Education for special groups. In O.O.Akinkugbe (ed) Nigeria and education: *the challenges ahead*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.
- Awotona, A. and Daramola, S.A (1996) Housing the nomads in Nigeria: the cultural perspectives. http://www.enhr_2007rottevadam.n/documents/w13paper_Daramola.pdf
- Ezema, I.J. (2010) Information repackaging for the prevention and control of human trafficking in Nigeria. Paper presented at the 2nd Professional summit on Information Science and Technology (PSIST) held at the NnamdiAzikiwe Library, UNN from 3rd-7th May,
- Federal Ministry of Education (2000) *Comprehensive education: analysis project (secondary data report)* Lagos: FGNI/NICEF/UNDP.
- IFLA (2008) Intellectual freedom Statements. <http://www.IFLA>.
- Lehner, F. and Nosekabel H. (2002) The role of Mobile device in E- learning: first experience with a e- learning environment. In M. Mirad, H.U. Hoppe (eds) *IEEE International workshop on wireless and mobile Technologies in education* (pp1 03-106) Los Alamitos, CA: IEEE Computer Society.
- Ogbonna, I.M. (2006) The contribution of the library towards children's appreciation of reading communication and literate. *Journal of communication and literate* 2(1)48-56.

Udensi, J (2010) Information repackaging- a necessity in Nigerian Libraries. In E.G. Madu and C.N. Ezeani (eds.) *Modern Library and information science for information professionals in Africa*. Ibadan: Textlinks Publishers pp.22-232

Ugwu, A.B.C. (2004) *Education for Special target groups*. Enugu: Ogah Publishers

UNESCO (2003) Right to education: Scope and implementation. Geneva comment on the right to education. <http://partia.IUnesco.Ng/education/en/filedownload.Pup/ci44 c 1 98dba 759e8dc5 Sf58102 e right.educ.pdf% 20>.

Jonas U. Ezema and Adizetu Ali are Librarians, NnamdiAzikiwe Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.