

## INTRODUCTION

# **EDUCATION FOR NOMADIC PEOPLES: AN URGENT CHALLENGE**

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**E**ducational provision for nomadic peoples is a highly complex, as well as controversial and emotive, issue. For centuries, nomadic peoples educated their children without recourse to non-indigenous sources, passing on from generation to generation the socio-cultural and economic knowledge required to pursue their traditional occupations. But over the last few decades, they have had to contend with rapid changes to their ways of life, often as a consequence of global patterns of development that are highly unsympathetic to spatially mobile groups. To make their way in the contemporary world, nomadic groups are finding that their indigenous modes of education are no longer adequate. All over the world, this has stimulated a search for external educational inputs to support the process of adaptation, both within and beyond pastoralism or hunter-gathering. Yet much of the history of nomads and formal education reflects an incompatibility between the aspirations of service users and the services that are provided, and underlines the often doubtful relevance of formal education to their lives. Success stories are few and far between, yet the need is often strongly felt.

At the same time, from a policy and service provider point of view, the question of educating nomadic peoples has become more pertinent than ever before. Governments around the world have signed up to the international pledge of Education For All (EFA), first mooted in 1990 and reaffirmed in 2000. They are bound by this imperative to consider how to reach out to community groups who have traditionally been excluded from educational provision. The setting of a Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015 adds further urgency and emphasis.

Nomads have always been one of the hardest groups to reach, not only in practical terms, but also because courses of action on how to educate

nomads are closely linked with states' stances on the nature of citizenship. Decisions about whether to draw nomads into education provided by the state or other bodies may be conditioned by perceptions of the contribution nomads make to local and national economies; ecological and infrastructural conditions; dairy, agricultural, forest and cultural policies; the flexibility or rigidity of educational systems; the integrity and sustainability of the nation state; the vision of inclusive development; and so on. The need to take action is evident, urgent and increasingly acknowledged by governments, international development agencies, non-government organisations, and others who are concerned about equity and inclusiveness in education.

Bringing education to nomadic peoples entails immense challenges which go well beyond the immediate and obvious problems of logistics – how to reach out to groups who are always, or often, on the move, and live in sparsely populated and climatically extreme areas. This can be an exciting challenge in which vision and sensitivity are exercised in assisting nomadic groups to re-orientate successfully to often rapidly changing contexts. Educational provision does not have to demand sedentarisation; for it too can be mobile. It does not have to adhere to a rigid model of content and delivery, for it can draw on indigenous knowledge and ways of learning, incorporating both in culturally sensitive interventions that are in tune with nomadic peoples' own visions of their future. Such education might well be provided in a non-formal context, where the groups' cultural values are retained at the centre of educational provision; the best of more formal government programmes would have the same aims in view.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, nomadic peoples' need for externally provided education is driven to a large extent by government policies that, either deliberately or by negligence, are exerting pressures to sedentarise. Sedentary living opens up the possibility of making use of 'mainstream' schools which cater to settled populations. However, the existing model of mass educational provision is rarely sympathetic to nomadic cultures, and children who attend these schools are less likely to value their own cultural heritage, particularly if their traditional learning patterns, or knowledge, find no place in what they do at school. While formal education may open the way to jobs within the wider economy, for which qualifications are a prerequisite, it may be part of a de-stabilising process that exerts pressures to bring the values of the ethnic group into line with the values of the homogenising modern state. In this scenario, 'education' is synonymous with sedentarisation and a delegitimisation of nomadism as an acceptable way of human life.

The chapters in this collection inform, contribute to and extend current debates about the education of nomads. Their critical engagement with the policy and local practices of education (most commonly in the form of formal schooling) are from perspectives that are all informed by extensive periods of time spent with nomadic groups across a wide range of country

contexts. Bringing together the contributions of authors who themselves spend frequent and often extended periods of time working with nomadic groups has been an exercise in perseverance and patience over several years. There have, however, always been four important reasons for seeing it through. The first is the need for a book that brings together from around the world accounts of experiences of educating nomadic peoples, and makes them accessible to a wide audience. This volume was originally conceived, ten years ago, because writings about the education of nomads are sparse, and scattered across a range of diverse and not particularly accessible sources. The second is the need to critique the role of education in the context of the wider concerns and issues in nomads' development, and to highlight the role of formal education in shaping, and reflecting, the growth and character of the modern state. This collection thus directs attention towards the relationships between education and power in contemporary society, and how they contribute to marginalisation. A third reason is to draw out from international experience lessons that inform education policy communities and service providers in both formal and non-formal contexts, and help them with complex decision-making. The final, and perhaps most compelling, reason is to use this review of nomadic groups' perceptions and experiences of education to provide critical insights into the nature of education as a concept, and as a practice. Nomadic peoples' experiences can both explicitly and implicitly comment on, critique, and enlarge, our vision of what education both is, and could be. The pages of this book underline an urgent need to do this if we are to understand, and work towards fulfilling, our global commitments to making good quality education accessible to all people, and achieving meaningful Education For All.

The chapters in this volume are loosely thematically grouped, allowing the specifics of particular case studies to be explored, while contributing to a cumulative view of key issues of nomadic education around the world. The ten case study chapters are preceded by two overview chapters. The first of these, Saverio Krätli and Caroline Dyer's 'Education and Development for Nomads: the Issues and the Evidence' is a critical analysis of the literature on education for nomadic groups, drawing on an earlier review Saverio Krätli carried out for the World Bank. This chapter presents and develops the main issues and arguments found in the academic, agency and practitioner literatures, and sets the scene for the chapters exploring specific community and country contexts that follow. It is complemented by Roy Carr-Hill's discussion in the following chapter of 'Educational Services and Nomadic Groups in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda', which presents findings from a major African Development Bank funded research project assessing educational provision and challenges for nomadic peoples in these six African countries.

The first three case study chapters explore various aspects of childhood, socialisation of children, and how formal schooling responds to particular

groups' cultural traditions. Chapter 3, 'The Acquisition of Manners, Morals and Knowledge: Growing into and out of Bakkarwal Society' by Aparna Rao, opens with a discussion of informal education and the traditional concepts and practices of socialisation of children among the nomadic pastoral Bakkarwal of Jammu and Kashmir in the western Himalayas. It goes on to examine the formal education of Bakkarwal children and the institutions responsible for it over the last roughly twenty years, pointing out how the Indian state's notions of a good and productive citizen are linked to its educational policies towards pastoral nomads. Rao argues that primary curricula must be adjusted to local needs and special capacities, and be more creative and practice oriented. Her conclusion raises a stimulating set of questions about the relevance of schooling systems for not only nomadic, but all children.

Michael de Jongh and Riana Steyn take us to South Africa in chapter 4, with their paper 'Learning to Wander, Wandering Learners: Education and the Peripatetic Karretjie People of the South African Karoo'. The childhoods of Karretjie children entail times of great flux and fragmentation, a ceaseless process of shifting localities and changing relationships with others and where factors such as poverty, domestic disruption and personal uncertainty are the reality of their lives. Their case study demonstrates how the Karretjie people lack the necessary mechanisms and resources to secure their educational rights, while the practices of the South African state fail to reflect its enabling policy discourse. De Jongh and Steyn also report on an intervention they developed for improving Karretjie people's access to education, and draw out its implications for both practice and policy, in education and in development more widely.

The final chapter in this group, chapter 5, 'Changes in Education as Hunters and Gatherers Settle: Pitjantjatjara Education in South Australia' by Bill Edwards and Bruce Underwood, is a case study of an Aboriginal nomadic group of hunters and gatherers in South Australia. The enculturation of Pitjantjatjara children provides learning about both local resources and the relationships which determine their rights and obligations in daily life. Edwards and Underwood trace out tensions for this group of sustaining traditional values while at the same time engaging in modern economic and political structures. Their concluding discussion focuses on the significance of appropriate language policy in formal education, and the participation of the Pitjantjatjara in directing the development of their schools, so that their cultural values are honoured, as is their ambition to involve themselves more fully in mainstream Australian society.

Chapter 6 looks at the relationship between culture and poverty. In his 'Cultural Roots of Poverty? Education and Pastoral Livelihood in Turkana and Karamoja', Saverio Krätli proposes that the increasing insecurity of pastoral livelihood has cultural roots, as well as political and economic ones, that can be fruitfully studied by focusing on mainstream culture rather than

only on pastoral people. Krätli argues that the link between pastoral poverty and education concerns the nature of the education undergone by pastoralists' fellow citizens at least as much as it concerns the knowledge gap about the 'outside world' amongst the pastoralists themselves; and so poverty eradication among pastoral groups seems conditional upon a radical review of the way pastoralism and pastoralists are represented in mainstream culture. He identifies the arguments used to assert pastoralism's 'inadequacies', and makes a series of suggestions as to how this inaccurate public image can be turned around, and the role formal education can play in doing so.

Reflecting the discussion of development ideology laid out in Krätli's preceding chapter, the following group of four chapters focuses specifically on a theme that underpins the whole collection: nomads' relationships with the state, and in particular, the state as reflected in its key institution of formal schooling. Ismael Abu-Saad's chapter 'Bedouin Arabs in Israel: Education, Political Control and Social Change' takes up the thread from the perspective of the Negev Bedouin Arabs, a traditionally semi-nomadic people living in southern Israel. As a part of the non-Jewish, Palestinian Arab minority in what came to be defined as a Jewish state, the 'outsider' status they share with many other nomadic groups has been exacerbated by state formation, and the nation-state desire to control them. Abu-Saad's chapter explores the important role of conflicting ideologies about land use and service provision, revealing not so much the 'unshared ideology' referred to earlier in this introduction, but a government development ideology that *explicitly excludes* pastoral people. He joins Krätli's call for the radical re-visioning of development ideology, played out through educational institutions, that must take place if nomadic groups are to be able to enjoy the same rights as other citizens of the state.

Chapter 8, by Caroline Dyer and Archana Choksi, reaches a similar conclusion via a very different route, from a case study in India. 'With God's Grace and with Education, We Will Find a Way: Literacy, Education and the Rabaris of Kutch' shows that state failure to engage with the education of nomadic groups is a powerful way of conveying its unspoken, yet clear, development agenda of sedentarisation. Unprecedented pressures on pastoralist livelihoods are provoking among Rabaris a quest for occupational diversification, facilitated by formal educational qualifications. Sedentarisation appears the 'logical' choice for pastoral nomads who seek schooling, since this facilitates accessing a system of formal education that makes no provision for movement. Action research with migrating groups, focusing on provision of adult literacy, confirmed the logistical feasibility of peripatetic teaching, but established that this model lacks legitimacy in the eyes of Rabaris themselves. Reflecting a wider social discourse, Rabaris have come to associate their own traditional occupation with being 'backward' and as having no place in the modernising economy. Rather than adult

literacy, their priority is schooling for their children. Dyer and Choksi identify, along with other contributors to this volume, the challenge for the future as being changing government perception that nomads do not fit into the modernising project of a developing country.

The following two chapters in this group describe cases where state actions in providing formal education have had positive outcomes for nomadic groups. In both Iran and Mongolia, state educational provision has had marked ideological inclinations that are potentially unfriendly to nomadic values. But in both cases, nomadic groups have been able to challenge those assumptions and shape the education they receive from state institutions to fit their own cultural values and aspirations. Mohammed Shahbazi's account in chapter 9, 'The Qashqa'i, Formal Education, and the Indigenous Educators', demonstrates how, if state officials in Iran had hoped politically to pacify Qashqa'i youth by altering their culture, the tent school unintentionally *facilitated* enculturation of Qashqa'i youths into the culture and values of their own tribal and nomadic societies. This outcome was diametrically opposed to the ideological agenda for education set by government officials. Shahbazi adds his voice to the call for providers to stop displaying 'expert' attitudes with a 'mission' to recast communities – nomadic pastoralists in this case – into 'better' ones, and instead to work with them to identify what their actual needs are, and how formal education can facilitate meeting those needs. In chapter 10, 'Education and Pastoralism in Mongolia', Demberel and Helen Penn argue that pastoralism has a unique place in the conceptualisation of the state in Mongolia. The chapter draws on the extensive personal experience of Demberel, himself a pastoralist, who occupied very senior positions in the government education sector. In this admittedly unusual context, Demberel and Penn suggest that formal education can be practically organised for pastoralists, and can become valued among pastoralist communities without necessarily conflicting with their cultural and collective identity. However, in Mongolia's current transition economy, the question is whether the kinds of success they describe for Demberel and other pastoralists will continue to be possible in a market economy, where other values strongly prevail.

The final grouping of two chapters focuses on collaborative work with governments to explore ways of addressing challenges of education for nomadic peoples. Dawn Chatty's chapter, 'Boarding Schools for Mobile People: the Harasiis in the Sultanate of Oman' explores why a boarding school in the middle of an extensive tribal area succeeded in the face of the kinds of problems which so often spell defeat. The political underpinning of the thirty-year-old state education system was evident in state messages about Omani citizenship; as was a lack of relevance of the urban and agrarian-based state curriculum for the desert-based communities of Oman. However, the local community wished to take advantage of all that was on offer; and the government was determined to make the desert school a

'flagship'. Harasiis families did not perceive formal schooling as a cultural threat; rather, they regard the institution as providing a special economic opportunity for a select few. This is perfectly acceptable since, as Chatty points out, there was never any idea of universal education among the Harasiis. Chapter 12, 'Adult Literacy and Teacher Education in the Nomadic Education Component of the Nigeria Community Education Programme' by Juliet McCaffery, Kayode Sanni, Chimah Ezeomah and Jason Pennells, reflects on successes and tensions in an education project with the Fulani pastoralist nomads in Adamawa and Taraba States in Nigeria. Their chapter focuses on the two major project components of adult literacy and teacher education. It describes the participatory and pragmatic methodology which draws on the experience, knowledge and skills of the participating communities to enable men and women to develop the literacy and numeracy skills they require for everyday life. The teacher education programme developed a model of building teacher capacity in marginalised communities which addressed, without necessarily resolving, some of the issues inherent in providing education to pastoralist nomadic communities. The conclusion of the chapter reflects on the expectations the project raised, and the sustainability of its inputs, raising issues that have pertinence well beyond the immediate project context.

The volume closes with a brief editor's afterword, highlighting key issues raised by the authors and drawing out from the chapters agendas for future action.

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