

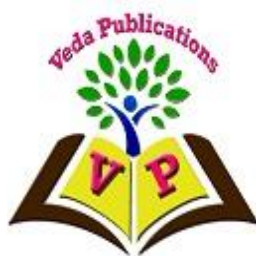
A PROPOSAL FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION OF MULTIGRADE TEACHING TECHNIQUE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LITERACY LEVEL OF THE NOMADS IN NIGERIA AND LESSONS FOR AFRICA

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Abstract



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Nomads are found almost in every rural settlement all over the world, their presence is a product of their cultural and historical background which allows them not to have a definite or fixed domicile to move from one place to another for pastoral and economic reasons. However, the principles of universalization of education, accessibility, equalization, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the most recent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have called for the need to ensure that all categories of citizenry including the nomads who are the minority group acquire and are exposed to basic education just like their counterparts in the urban settings. This is to ensure that their literacy and numeracy skills are developed, enhanced and sustained. Multigrade teaching technique (MTT) has been regarded as the best option available to the government to educate the nomads who are mostly domicile in the rural setting and difficult terrains in the country. In other words, multigrade teaching technique is a product of necessity. The need to develop the literacy skills of the nomads is imperative as this would lead to a positive and multiplier effect on the economic development of themselves and the nation at large. In this paper, issues relating to multigrade teaching technique and the various intervention efforts of the international bodies vi-a-vis nomadic education are discussed. The needs and the type of education needed to raise the literacy level of the the nomads are also highlighted. The paper discussed the relevance and suitability of multigrade teaching technique to enhance the literacy level of the nomads. The paper also highlights some problems militating against effective practice of multigrade teaching technique in small rural schools in Nigeria. Appropriate models are used to explain the links between literacy level and economic development of the country. Finally, a proposal to enhance the literacy level of the nomads through multigrade teaching technique is developed.

Keywords: *Proposal, Management, Organization, Multigrade Teaching Technique, Literacy, Development, Nomads, Nigeria, Africa.*

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Introduction

The question on why education for the nomads? is to ask why should all categories of a country's population should be educated and have their literacy and numeracy skills developed? Nomads formed a section of the Nigerian population just like any other sections who required to have their knowledge and skills increased through education. The nomads need education that would be useful to them and help them have their literacy and numeracy levels increased and their livelihood transformed positively. This, in no small way, would have a positive and multiplier effect on economic development in the country. Adepoju (2018) citing Unicef (2015) refers to the nomads as ethnic or socio-professional groups who travel and migrate in large or small clan groups in search of means of livelihood within a community. Similarly, "nomadism" refers to any type of existence characterized by absence of a fixed domicile. According to Adepoju (2018), education sector is increasingly becoming more and more complex because there is a gradual increase in the awareness of people which make it difficult for yesterday's approaches to effectively solve contemporary problems of our society any longer. This implies that change and innovations are needed in the sector to make it more responsive to the societal needs, to be more competitive and simultaneously, to meet the global challenges and best practices.

It must be stated here that education is a fundamental human right which has a powerful impact on the possibilities that children have to determine and enhance their futures. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirms the right of all children to relevant and high-quality education. The CRC re-affirms the Education for All (EFA) imperative of an 'expanded vision' of education: that all children have the right to learn at all stages of their development, and to do so in ways that are appropriate and easily accessible (Unicef, 2015).

There is no doubt that two of the EFA goals (Goal 2 and Goal 6) have their implications in creating situations for multigrade teaching in Nigeria.

- i. **Goal 2:** Ensuring that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and are able to complete primary education that is free, compulsory and of high quality.
- ii. **Goal 6:** Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensure excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcome are achievable by all, especially, in literacy, numeracy and life skills (Unicef, 2015).

These goals are no doubt, relevant to the context of this discourse. Apart from the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) that expired in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also emphasised the important roles of education particularly, at the lower levels to overall development of a child. In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that includes; 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Building on the principle of "leaving no one behind", the new Agenda emphasizes a holistic approach to achieving sustainable development for all. Some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) paticularly, Goal 4, Goal 5 and Goal 10 also address and are relevant to multigrade teaching in Nigeria because they address inclusive, equality and access to education. Specifically,

- iii. **Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equatable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; has 10 Targets which bother on inclusive and quality education.
- iv. **Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; has 9 Targets that address empowerment of women and girl child.
- v. **Goal 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries; also has 10 Targets that address reducing inequalities among all sections.

Taken together, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a 'recipe' for countries to be productive and prosperous, resulting in populations that are well-educated and well-equipped for employment in the 21st century. The adoption of multigrade teaching technique in small rural schools and particularly for the nomads is a welcome development and it is a means of developing their literacy

and numeracy skills. Apart from this, the technique is an instrument towards realising the world goals particularly, the SDGs.

What Type of Education Needed to Raise the Literacy Level of the Nomads?

The type of education needed to raise the literacy level of the nomads is the education that would address the following;

- i. Education that would enhance their movement from one place to the other in search of greener pasture;
- ii. Education that would increase the literacy, numeracy and life skills of the nomads and their households;
- iii. Education that would transform their living conditions and standards;
- iv. Education that would suit their lifestyle in terms of their unstable movement;
- v. Education that would be organised for them at their locations and terrains;
- vi. Education that would not be forced on them;
- vii. Education that would be organised at no extra cost for them;
- viii. Education that would consider the language they speak (eg. Hausa, Ffulde, etc.);
- ix. Education that would improve their economic status rather than affecting them adversely; and
- x. Education that would respect their cultural heritage.

Multigrade Teaching: Its Conceptualization, Objectives and Characteristics

The Concept of Multigrade Teaching

Multigrade teaching refers to the teaching of pupils /students of different ages, grades and abilities in the same environment or under the same roof. It is being referred to variously in the literature as "multilevel", "multiclass", "composite class", "vertical group", "family class", and in the case of one-teacher schools, "unitary school". It is to be distinguished from mono-grade teaching in which students within the same grade are assumed to be more similar in terms of age and ability (Little, 1995; Adepoju, 2016; 2018).

A multigrade class according to Wolff and Gacia (2000) is therefore a class where two or more different grade levels learn in one classroom with one teacher. This often happens when pupils' enrolments are low, but can also be done to improve children's learning. As in every class, each child in a multigrade class is different and will learn and develop at different levels. A multigrade teacher needs to establish a co-operative learning environment with children of different ages working together, and helping each other, just like in a family. Like all teachers, the multigrade teacher needs to be well prepared, equipped and well organized. He has to plan a variety of learning activities to meet the needs of a wide range of abilities, interests and ages of the children in their class (Adepoju, 2018).

Since multigrade classes are smaller and can be established more cheaply than complete schools, they can be more numerous; therefore, more dispersed and thus located closer to the settlements where the children live. This means that younger children can attend and that the time children spend traveling between schools and home can be reduced to an acceptable level and radius.

Objectives of Multigrade Teaching Technique

The following are the objectives of Multigrade teaching technique.

- i. Multigrade teaching technique creates access to education for all children,
- ii. Multigrade teaching technique brings schools closer to communities,
- iii. Multigrade teaching technique overcomes shortage of teachers,

- iv. Multigrade teaching technique modernizes teaching methods,
- v. Multigrade teaching technique reduces incidents of drop-out and repeater rate, and
- vi. Multigrade teaching technique increases the participation and literacy rates among learners in the small rural communities (Adepoju, 2004; 2005; 2016).

Characteristics of Multigrade Schools

According to Adepoju (2004; 2016), multigrade schools have the following characteristics;

1. Multigrade schools are commonly found in remote rural communities with low population density.
2. Multigrade schools have low enrolments. The total numbers of pupils are between 10 and 20. In some schools, the total number of pupils is between 3 and 5. In spite of the low enrolments, some of them run full basic schools' cycle i.e., from basic 1-6.
3. Such schools have very few teachers-a minimum of one and a maximum of four teachers. In most cases, one teacher is assigned to more than one class, including those classes without teachers.
4. Multigrade schools are not easily accessible by both pupils and teachers because of their difficult terrains, with no good roads. This makes teachers transferred to such schools to reject such transfers.
5. Multigrade schools lack basic facilities – inadequate classrooms and classroom blocks; no staff offices, classroom blocks are not built to specification, most classrooms are of small sizes often without chalkboards, classrooms furniture are usually grossly inadequate or completely absent; no basic instructional materials.
6. Pupil's drop-out rates are very high in multigrade school because of the constraints mentioned above. The schools are characterized by poor attendance which can be worst in certain seasons of the year. Poor school attendance and high drop-out rates could also be as a result of poor teaching (or none at all), because most, if not all the teachers, have not been trained to handle multigrade situation in schools.
7. Multigrade schools are product of necessity and the best option to make the pupils in remote communities and difficult terrains educated

The Literacy Development of the Nomads and Multigrade Teaching Technique in Nigeria.

Essentially, schools are established to raise the literacy and numeracy levels of the recipients (pupils/students and adult learners) and provide knowledge that would help them to be useful in the society. Pupils that are not exposed to learning may lack some rudiments that are essentials to life sustenance. Therefore, nomads need to have their literacy level to be increased and the best way to do this is to organise for them where they could learn and the best way for them to learn. Multigrade teaching technique is a product of necessity and specifically meant to increase the literacy level of the nomads because, they are mostly found in rural communities.

Researches and observations (Adeboyeje. R.A; Adepoju, T. L, Omoyeni, M S, Emoruwa, F.O, Iseyemi. A.A, 2004.a; b;c;d; Adepoju, 2004; 2005; 2009;2016) have shown that most of the recipients of this type of education organised for the nomads in small rural schools are later found in higher education institutions in Nigeria as students and sometimes as academic members of staff. Those that decide to remain in their parents' businesses are doing well and having their transactions improved with the use of modern technology (internet, mobile phones, etc.).

Is Multigrade Teaching Technique Suitable and Appropriate to Enhance the Literacy Level of The Nomads?

Having studied the type of teaching technique that is most suitable for the nomads because of their nature and characteristics, the MTT has been found to be the type of arrangement suitable for them in terms of literacy enhancement, economic buoyancy, transformation of life style, to mention just a few of the benefits. As earlier pointed out, multigrade teaching technique does not require many teachers to be put in place or employed hence, it addresses teacher shortage which characterises small rural schools unlike the monograde teaching technique that is most fashionable in urban settings.

Multigrade teaching also addresses the use of local languages or language of the immediate environment and more particularly, the language of the nomads. By implications, it allows the use of teachers that are from the community where the schools are located. It has also been found that the life styles of the nomads are taken care of by this teaching technique. This is possible as the schools are normally opened in the session when the nomads want.

During the research conducted by the author in nomads' settlements in the North-Eastern Nigeria in 2017, it was found that some of the nomadic schools where multigrade teaching technique operates, classrooms are made of makeshift sheds and are found mostly in small rural communities that are far from the urban settings. In this situation, a specific uniform could not be forced on the pupils to wear as this could discourage them from attending classroom hence, efforts are being put in place to increase the participation and enrolment of pupils in schools. Parents are not also charge any fee as this could prevent participation from parents.

The UNICEF also organised several intervention programmes and projects to help the schools by providing school feeding for the pupils. In the process, the parents are involved through the parents body while enough money were disbursed for the assignment with strong monitoring process. As earlier indicated, most of the schools where multigrade teaching technique operates have shortage of teachers which is one of the most reasons that the teaching technique intends to address. Therefore, this is not seen as a problem for this development.

In other words, multigrade teaching technique is believed to be the most suitable teaching technique for the nomads all over the world. It is interesting to note that nomads are found all over the World and this form of teaching technique helps them to have access to formal education and have their literacy level improved and life styles transformed positively.

The Link between Effective Management of Multigrade Teaching Technique and Literacy Development of the Nomads

Before the literacy level of the nomads could be developed, there is the need to ensure that the education to be given to them through multigrade teaching technique is well managed and organized. The implication of this argument is that, management and organization of multigrade teaching technique should be effectively done. This would ensure that nomads' literacy level is developed and sustained for a long time.

From the above argument, it can be expressed that effective management of multigrade teaching is a key variable towards realizing effective literacy development of the nomads. Using the functional notation, the assumed relationship between management of MTT and Literacy development could be expressed thus;

$$L_d = f(\text{EMTT}) \dots \dots \dots 1$$

Where:

L_d = Literacy development

EMTT = Effective Management of Multigrade Teaching Technique

f = functional notation

From equation 1, while 'Ld' is a dependent variable, 'EMMTT' is an independent variable. It could also be presented in a linear curve thus;

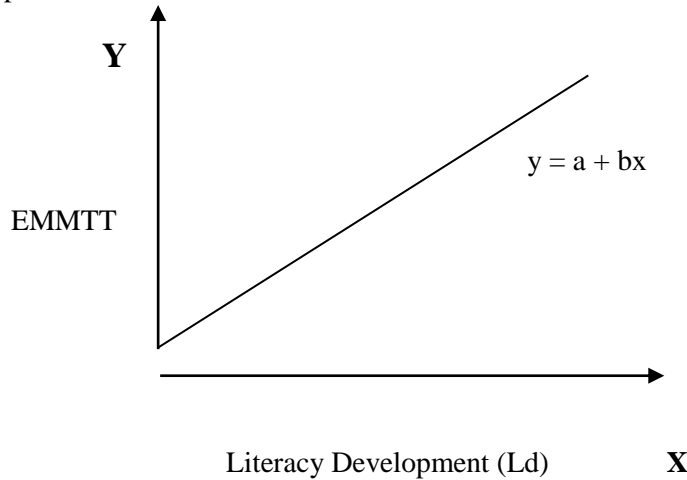


Figure 1: Effective Management of Multigrade Teaching Technique and Literacy Development Curve

Figure 1 shows that a linear correlation exists between Literacy development (Ld) and Effective Management of Multigrade Teaching Technique (EMMTT). In other words, the simple linear equation ($y = a + bx$) and curvilinear regression have shown that the higher the level of effectiveness in the Management of MTT is, the higher the rate of literacy development of the nomads. This would ultimately result in the relevance of the nomadic education to economic development of the country as presented in another assumed correlation being expressed in equation 2 and figure 2.

$$Ecd = f(Nedu).....2$$

Where:

- Ecd = Economic development
- Nedu = Nomadic Education
- f = functional notation

From equation 1, while 'Ecd' is a dependent variable, 'Nedu' is an independent variable. This could also be presented in a linear curve thus;

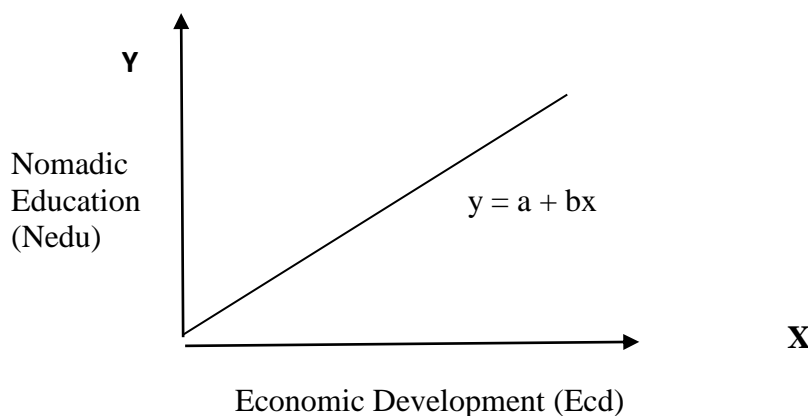


Figure 2: Nomadic Education and Economic Development Curve

Figure 2 shows that a linear correlation exists between Economic development (Ecd) and Nomadic education (Nedu). In other words, the simple linear equation ($y = a + bx$) and curvilinear regression have shown that the more effective the education given to the nomads is, the higher the level of economic development accruable to the nomads and the country at large.

Problems Facing Multigrade Teaching Technique in Nomadic Schools in Nigeria

Adepoju (2018) citing Adepoju (2009; 2016) listed the following as the problems militating against effective practice of multigrade teaching technique in small rural schools in Nigeria.

- Remote location of communities that need multigrade teaching in Nigeria.
- Refusal of teachers to work in rural areas where there are multigrade schools for lack of basic amenities and difficult terrain and confidence arising from lack of training in multigrade teaching.
- Sometimes, teachers prefer to live outside the communities and come to school late or irregularly.
- Negative attitudes of people to multigrade teaching in the country
- Lack of flexibility in curriculum and time tabling because most multigrade teachers do raise questions on curriculum and time-tabling.
- Inadequate infrastructure and lack of instructional materials to support the teaching in multigrade schools
- Lack of policy on multigrade teaching in Nigeria particularly for the small rural schools
- General lack of knowledge about multigrade teaching even in teacher training institutions.
- Lack of support systems for multigrade teachers by government whether pre-service or in-service.

Intervention Efforts of The World Bank, UNICEF, NCCE and NCNE on Literacy Development of Pupils in Small Rural Schools in Nigeria

According to Adepoju (2009) as cited in Adepoju (2016), countries all over the world should strive at meeting the different global goals set in which all countries are signatory to. These goals are the Education for All (EFA), Dakar Framework of Action (FFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and lately, the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are 17 with 169 Targets. The objectives of those goals among other things are to create access to basic education and provide educational opportunities for children as well as enhancing the literacy and numeracy levels of pupils across the globe. Following this development, multigrade teaching technique has received new attention all over the world. It has emerged as an alternative instructional strategy to provide access to basic education educational opportunities for the children in rural communities all over the world. As highlighted by Adepoju (2016) citing Unicef (2015), this teaching technique has been regarded not only as a proper means of saving cost by combining the grades but also as a choice for better achievement in learner's intellectual and social performance.

Towards achieving the objective of developing the literacy skills of pupils in small rural schools in Nigeria, some International Organizations (World Bank and UNICEF) have been working in collaboration with the government of Nigeria through Federal Ministry of Education Parastatals - the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE). Of course, successes have been recorded on this project over the years.

For instance, from 2001/2002 through 2004/2005 academic sessions, The World Bank in conjunction with the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) instituted Multigrade Action Research Project on multigrade teaching technique. Specifically, two local government areas - Ondo East in Ondo State and Bokkos in Plateau State respectively were involved in the pilot project in 2001/2002 school year. The main phase of the activities commenced in September 2003 and ended in July 2004, spanning through the whole of the 2003/2004 school year. The activities continued in

Bokkos LGA of Plateau State in this phase, but Okitipupa LGA replaced Ondo East in Ondo State. A total of 15 schools in three clusters were involved in the main phase in each of the two LGAs/states. Following the enthusiasm shown by teachers, head teachers, school supervisors and other stakeholders in the activities, the multigrade action research was extended to another cluster of five schools in each of the two LGAs to the first term of the 2004/2005 school year, September to December 2005.

Based on demand, the multigrade action research was also extended to two other states, Taraba and Rivers, where a cluster of five schools in each of Ardo Kola and Andoni LGAs respectively participated in the third term of the 2003/2004 school year. Another cluster of five schools were involved in the activities in each of the LGAs. In all, 60 schools and 400 multi-grade teachers and supervisors participated in the activities (World Bank/UBEC, 2004). Also in March, 2013, the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in collaboration with the UNICEF conducted a mapping study of selected nomadic schools in five GEP 3 states of Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, Bauchi and Niger. The outcome of the study revealed the existence of multigrade arrangement in the majority of the nomadic schools with teachers lacking the capacity to function effectively in the multigrade classrooms.

This circumstance called for the need to develop a clear-cut concept, strategy and approaches of multigrade or multiclass teaching technique as an option to make a multigrade nomadic school a model instructional organization (UNICEF, 2013).

The process of developing this methodology begins with the development of training manuals for the training of teachers who are presently teaching children of Nomads in Nomadic Education Schools in GEP 3 states. The output is to create an enabling environment where children in rural areas have an opportunity to succeed in basic schools, promote enrolment of more girls in schools, and enhancing the economic development of rural areas to become contributing assets to national economy (UNICEF, 2015).

From 2015 through 2018, the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE), Kaduna worked in collaboration with the UNICEF to train multigrade teachers and administrators in nomadic schools across the North Eastern and North Western zones in Nigeria. The objectives of this training is to improve the literacy and numeracy as well as management skills of multigrade teachers and administrators respectively.

A Proposal for the Enhancement and Development of the Literacy of the Nomads Through Multigrade Teaching Technique

Following the problems inhibiting the operation of multigrade teaching technique as enumerated above and the intervention efforts of the World Bank, UNICEF, NCCE and the NCNE in Nigeria, it is therefore necessary to make the following proposal for effective management of multigrade teaching technique as a way of raising the literacy level of the nomads in Nigeria.

1. Multigrade teaching technique should be introduced as a subject into the curriculum and as a course of study in higher education institutions in Nigeria particularly, in universities and colleges of education.
2. Multigrade teaching technique centres should be established by all three levels of government in Nigeria where the rudiments of the technique could be learned. The centre could also organise workshops, seminars and conferences for managers, academics and other stakeholders. Example of the one in South Africa should be emulated. In South Africa, there is Centre for Multigrade Teaching which is domicile in one of the South African Universities.
3. Multigrade teachers assigned to teach in multigrade schools should be provided adequate training, re-training and in-service training periodically on the global best practices.
4. Multigrade teachers should be sponsored to further their education in higher education institutions both within and outside the country.
5. Schools where multigrade teaching operates should be given facelift and re-modeled for effective operation.

6. An institution to manage and effectively organised multigrade teaching technique should be set up in Nigeria to help those schools in small rural areas operate effectively.
7. In some of the visits made to the Local Education Authorities in the North-Eastern States in Nigeria, it was observed that most of the Education Secretaries (ES) could not provide the accurate and exact numbers of multigrade schools in their LGEAs and even identify their locations as well as the number of multigrade teachers. This is not good enough hence, measures should be taken to address the lapses by setting up effective monitoring, supervision and evaluation mechanisms in each local government area as a condition for reimbursement/allocation to be given to the local government area by government.
8. Effective Financial regulatory system should be put in place to prevent wasteful spending of the funds made available by international agencies/donors or organizations such as the UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, etc. for the intervention and operation of multigrade teaching technique in Nigerian rural schools.
9. Studies or researches should be instituted to measure the level of literacy acquired by nomads who have completed basic education programme. This would help to determine the level of achievement recorded for the programme.
10. Governments at various levels should conduct census for multigrade schools in Nigeria to find out more about their operations and problems militating against them so as to solve such problems accordingly.
11. Only teachers that have received trainings and are well equipped with multigrade teaching technique principles should be allowed to teach in nomadic schools.
12. The issues relating to appropriate remuneration and motivation should also be addressed by respective governments. This would go a long way in making multigrade teachers and administrators in small rural schools happy to work in rural settings.
13. Effective Planning, Research and Statistic (PRS) Unit or Department should be made functional in each of the LEGAs to effectively coordinate the activities of the multigrade schools.

Summary and Conclusion

Attempts have been made in this discourse to enumerate on the need for effective management and organization of multigrade teaching technique as a panacea for the enhancement of the literacy level of the nomads in Nigeria and in other parts of the world where the existence of the nomads is felt. The needs and types of education beneficial to the nomads are discussed while the objectives and characteristics of the MTT are specifically highlighted. Also, in the paper, the literacy level of the nomads and MTT and the suitability and appropriateness of MTT for the nomads are discussed. The paper highlights the problems facing multigrade teaching technique for the nomads in Nigeria. The models that show the links between the management and organization of multigrade teaching technique and literacy development of the nomads and the implication on the economic development of the country are developed in the paper. The paper presents a proposal for effective management and organization of MTT for the enhancement of the literacy level of the nomads in African countries. Finally, the paper concludes that MTT is a product of necessity to help those nomads in small rural settings have access to formal education and have their literacy and numeracy levels developed and ultimately sustained.

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