

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE INDIGENOUS KAMBARI CHILDREN IN KEBBI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to examine the educational needs of the indigenous Kambari children in Kebbi state. The study was carried out using ethnographic methodology, which lends itself to the use of participant observation, ethnographic interviewing and focus group discussions. The ethnographic data collected were analysed using the various methods of analyzing ethnographic data such as detailed description of events and interpretation of major themes and events. One of the major findings of the study includes the provision of basic education for the indigenous Kambari. It was recommended that concrete policies should be put in place, especially those that are peculiar to the socio-cultural existence of the Kambari, to provide them basic formal education, for personal development and social integration in society.

Introduction

Governments and other bodies working towards equality and national integration and reconciliation are struggling to absorb the minorities into the mainstream of society, by way of ensuring equality of educational life chances. Such minorities are suffering from social and cultural isolation and inferior status. The sources of the isolation and inferiority of these groups include educational inequality, ethnic discrimination, political subordination, geographical disadvantages and migrant status.

However, in Nigeria as in Britain, Canada, Australia, Tanzania, Sudan, Iran and many other countries having minority groups and marginalised populations is making various attempts to integrate them into the mainstream society. For example, the educationally disadvantaged groups in Nigeria, like the nomadic Fulani and migrant fisherfolk, handicapped people and women or girls. There are a lot of efforts that are being made with a view to providing them education and making them integrated into the mainstream Nigerian society (Mahuta, 2004). Educational interventions aimed at strengthening the capacities of citizens and their groups to participate actively in the development of the country is no doubt a major challenge to educators. In the light of this therefore, a cogent framework to explore alternative perspective, strategies and methods of knowledge production and utilisation from the perspectives of the minorities and indigenous peoples (marginalised and powerless) should thus, be addressed with some degree of seriousness. This is to enable the minority groups to play their role in the developmental process of their societies. Attempts by various societies to educate and integrate the marginalised populations are full of frustrations and obstacles. This

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may not be far from the reason given by Tandom (1997), who argued that the reason contributing to the obstacles is the traditional and dominant bureaucratic rules, institutions and programmes of learning and education that are started and resourced by the government. This trend is popularly known as the up-bottom approach.

The World conference on "Education For All" convened at Jomtien, Thailand was followed by several key world conferences – on environment and development in 1992, on social development in 1995, on women in 1995, all of which reinforced the view that access to basic education was not simply a question of individual right, but a key input to the attainment of development goals including the elimination of poverty (Charles, 2002:1-2).

More recently, this commitment to the provision of basic education for all groups was renewed at the 1990 Jomtien, World Conference on Education for All, which included children, adolescents, adult men and women. However, the WCEFA quoted in Ibrahim (2002), maintains that:

Every person – child youth and adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitude) required by human beings to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions and continue learning (p.45).

Considerable success has been achieved in the provision of formal education among social groups in Nigeria. For example, among the nomadic and migrant fisherfolk, as well as the area of special education have received an appreciable attention from the Federal Government (Mahuta, 2004).

The provision of education is a giant attempt at providing equality and integration of all. The indigenous Kambari children are educationally disadvantaged as no schools are provided for them and the basic infrastructures are not found in the Kambari areas. It is argued that one of the fundamental reasons for the failure of various government to educate the indigenous Kambari children is basically the non-involvement of the Kambari themselves in the educational programmes meant for them.

The indigenous Kambari adhere strictly to their unique culture. They seem to be opposed to innovation and change in society. Hence, they tend to pose serious problems to the government's educational policies that are meant to integrate and provide education for all, irrespective of their ethnic group or socio-economic and cultural peculiarities. The indigenous Kambari seem to be cut-off from the sedentary group, they live a natural life, and seem to stick to conservatism and traditionalism.

Mahuta (2002), maintains that, the indigenous Kambari are not participating in the development taking place around them, and more especially in the area of formal schooling. Their occupation is farming and hunting. The Kambari through their occupation of farming contribute towards the economic growth of Kebbi state in particular and the country at large. The Kambari as a social group, have peculiar way of life that differentiates them from the sedentary groups.

Rationale for the Study

Education is central to globalisation, development and sustenance of democracy in the modern world. There has been reasonable investment on education in Nigeria since independence. Yet many parts of the country lag behind in educational attainments. The indigenous Kambari group appears to be one of those indigenous peoples affected in education and are marginalised in terms of education and other benefits in the society. These trends have many negative effects, which include exclusion of the group, inadequate and unskilled manpower. Hence the chances that the group will contribute its quota to developmental process in the globalise world will be grossly insignificant.

It is necessary that there is need for the provision of basic formal education for the indigenous Kambari children. This is no doubt relevant in their life in the modern world of globalisation, and thus, the need for the study.

Purposes of the Study

1. To examine the perceptions of the indigenous Kambari on the educational needs of their children.
2. To propose some alternative educational programmes for the indigenous Kambari children.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the educational needs of the indigenous Kambari children?
2. What alternative educational programmes can make education more accessible to the indigenous Kambari children?

Data Collection Procedure

The method employed for the conduct of this study was ethnography. This approach is otherwise known as participant observation. The various methods adopted for the purpose of collecting data included, participant observation, ethnographic interviewing and focus group discussions.

Two indigenous Kambari villages were used for the study, namely: **Kayiwo** and **Masamale**. The population of school age children as at the time of collecting the ethnographic data were 140 for Kayiwo and 173 for Masamale. The two indigenous Kambari villages (Kayiwo and Masamale), that were used for this ethnographic study had a total of Ninety Seven (97) households, Fifty seven (57) in Kayiwo and forty (40) at Masamale. It is relevant to indicate that the 97 households in the two Kambari villages are all illiterates, who have no formal education.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The data analysis and discussion are based on the principles of ethnographic studies which are based on qualitative method of analysing data, which involves describing the major themes and events. This is quite different from the quantitative data analysis of using statistics and tables.

The Provision of Basic Formal Education for the Indigenous Kambari Children

The education of the indigenous Kambari children is an important aspect of this paper. The ethnographic data collected has shown that the educational need of the indigenous Kambari children is the basic formal education. This form of education is needed by them just like it is provided for their counterparts in other parts of Kebbi state and the country at large. This is with a view to enabling or allowing them like their counterparts in the sedentary towns and villages to occupy their rightful places in future by taking various occupational roles in the society. By this therefore, it has been observed that the type of education needed by these sets of children is the basic education. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), has defined primary education as the education given in an institution for children normally 6 to 11 years plus. This is with a view that after the primary level of education, they can proceed to the secondary level of education. The current Universal Basic Education (UBE) is quite capable of meeting the challenges of providing basic education for the indigenous Kambari children.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), maintains that, government will ensure that all schools are properly equipped to promote sound and effective teaching and learning and that government will bear in mind the teacher – pupil ratio of 1:35 (pp. 15 – 16).

In addition, the objectives of the educational policy are those of providing Universal Primary Education and also the integration of all social groups into the mainstream Nigerian society. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), has identified the National Educational aims and objectives as follows:

- i. the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- ii. the inculcation of the right type of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- iii. the training of the mind in the understanding of the world; and
- iv. the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of society.

The Universalisation of access to education is one of the objectives of the Nigerian educational policy. In view of this, Yoloye (1994), maintains that, it implies:

Making it possible for every one to receive education; it means that enough places, personnel, physical, facilities and instructional facilities must be provided and any obstacles that prevent anyone from taking advantage of the opportunities should be removed. These requirements form the basis of the advocacy of Universal Primary Education and free education (p. 57).

Universalising access to education has been a national goal in various development plans. This consideration might not be unconnected with the realisation that education is an instrument of social change and development. It is also an objective

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of the National Policy on Education to provide opportunity for the integration of the various social groups in the society. This might explain why Yoloye (1994), opined that, all segments of society should get their fair share of access to education. In this regard the indigenous Kambari children should not be an exception.

It can be deduced that ethnicity, socio-cultural and socio-economic variables should not be barriers to an individual's development or life chances in the society. However, in order to meet the objectives of the educational policy, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004:15), recommend nine (9) subjects for the primary schools.

No doubt, the national objectives of education cannot be achieved without the provision of good and relevant education for the people. According to Yoloye (1994), this implies relevance and appropriateness in curriculum provision and delivery. In the light of this therefore, the cultural circumstances of the indigenous Kambari children should determine the content of the curriculum and its development. In addition, in order to make it relevant and appropriate to them, various factors have to be considered with some degree of seriousness, such as, their needs and aspirations, parental occupation and their location.

Since the educational needs of the indigenous Kambari children as revealed by the ethnographic data is the provision of basic formal education. The paper therefore, treats more extensively on the ways of meeting these educational needs in the subsequent section. In this regard, a number of options have been proposed and discussed with emphasis on the strategies for making the options succeed.

Meeting the Educational Needs of the Indigenous Kambari Children

The indigenous Kambari children require an educational programme which would be the same with that which is provided in the conventional primary schools for the children of the sedentary people. The principles and concepts to be taught should be the same, but the programme should be made in such a way that it reflects their peculiar circumstance in terms of socio-cultural environment. It is also important to indicate here, that educational programmes for the indigenous Kambari children should not be sub-standard when compared with that of the conventional schools, since they are **expected** to take occupational roles in the society like their non-Kambari counterparts in **villages** and towns. However, the ethnographic data collected during the field work has, revealed the following, as ways for meeting the educational needs of the indigenous Kambari children:

1. Establishment of schools in the indigenous Kambari encampments and the provision of infrastructural facilities for teachers and pupils.
2. The need for different school calendar and timing (i.e. opening and closing hours) from the conventional calendar.
3. The provision of relevant School Curriculum
4. Integration of indigenous Kambari education into the programme of the National Commission for Nomadic Education.
5. The provision of welfare facilities for the indigenous Kambari
6. The provision of incentives for teachers posted to remote or rural areas of the indigenous Kambari

7. Pedagogical Considerations

The above ways of meeting the educational needs of the indigenous Kambari children are discussed one after the other.

Establishment of Schools in the Indigenous Kambari Encampments and the Provision of Infrastructural Facilities for Teachers and Pupils

The distance from the indigenous Kambari encampments to the schools in the towns and villages around them have been observed to be one of the major factors that prevent the Kambari from sending their children to school. In addition, they have the misconception that the schools in the town are meant for the sedentary people. The lack of participation of the indigenous Kambari in educational programmes in the area is as a result of ignorance and strict adherence to their cultural values. This has generally been expressed by key informants in the two villages (Kayiwo and Masamale) that constituted the study group. Key informants in the area have alluded to the fear of cultural adulteration and interference. The indigenous Kambari tend to reject or show negative attitude towards formal education. This attitude of the Kambari might not be unconnected with the way they consider schools as capable of introducing new values contrary to their own.

In view of this therefore, the indigenous Kambari are strongly agitating for schools to be established in their bush encampments. They maintain that if this is done they will send their children to attend school.

The Need for Different School Calendar and Timing (i.e. Opening and Closing Hours) From the Conventional Calendar

The findings of the study have shown that the indigenous Kambari parents use their children for farming. However, bearing in mind the cultural and occupational circumstances of the indigenous Kambari parents, children can be taught in the evening during the rainy season. While during the dry seasons the children can go to school in the morning, the same way as it operates in the conventional schools. It is important to emphasize that the Kambari's choice of a different school calendar as well as the opening and closing hours, is simply to enable the indigenous Kambari children to help their parents during the rainy season on the farms and do other activities as may be required by their parents.

The ethnographic data show that parents go to farm around 7.00am to 4.00pm. In this case, the study proposes that the opening and closing of the schools for the indigenous Kambari children should be between 11.00am and 4.00pm making a total of five hours a day. While school days should be Mondays to Fridays. By this arrangement, it will enable the children to help their parents during the morning hours. This will motivate the parents as well as encourage them to send their children to school.

The Provision of Relevant School Curriculum

There is need for the provision of relevant school curriculum aimed at meeting the needs of the indigenous Kambari and their children. There is also the need to incorporate Kambari culture so as to attract them. Consequently, new educational provisions and programmes suitable to the needs and aspirations of the indigenous Kambari should be

designed to meet their peculiar circumstances. This is very clear when we look at the case of the Nomadic Fulani and the migrant fisherfolk in Nigeria. This is put in clearer perspective in the subsequent proposal of this paper.

Integration of Indigenous Kambari Education into the Programmes of the National Commission for Nomadic Education

It has been observed that the indigenous Kambari have not been participating in formal schooling because there is no educational programme that is presently designed to take care of them. Presently, the National Commission for Nomadic Education is only in charge of the Pastoral Fulani and the migrant fisherfolk in the riverine areas of Nigeria. Thus, there is the need to incorporate the indigenous Kambari into the programmes of the commission as they tend to have similar characteristics and problems. The commission is fundamentally responsible for the provision of basic education to nomadic groups in Nigeria. Since the characteristics of the indigenous Kambari are quite similar to those of the nomadic Fulani, the commission should incorporate the indigenous Kambari into its policies and programmes. It has been established by the findings of this study, that the indigenous Kambari and their children have similar characteristics, in terms of culture, occupation and living in bush encampments (isolated from the sedentary people) with the pastoral Fulani. Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917), quoted in Brookover and Erickson (1975), maintains that there is no single or ideal type of education for all men. Thus, the types of educational programmes which are established in various societies are determined by the socio-cultural needs of the society. This means that the socio-cultural variables of a people determine to a large extent its educational process.

The Provision of Welfare Facilities for the Indigenous Kambari

The problem of welfare facilities for the indigenous Kambari has been identified as one of the findings of this study. For example, portable drinking water and health care facilities. Parents show little or no interest to send their children to the town and villages for schooling. The key informants in this study have always lamented on their poor condition of living in terms of welfare facilities. According to many of the indigenous Kambari opinion leaders, "we have no medical facilities, fertiliser and school. Basically, we enjoy nothing in terms of welfare facilities, and we always pay the tax".

In the light of the above, it can be stated that, the non-participation of the indigenous Kambari in various programmes in the town, might be attributed to the neglect of the Kambari in the provision of social amenities like, water and medical facilities. It is pertinent to observe that the absence of welfare facilities for the indigenous Kambari is a serious set back in attempt to motivate them to participate in both formal education, economic and political transformation of Kebbi state and the country at large.

The Provision of Incentives for Teachers Posted to Remote or Rural Areas of the Indigenous Kambari

Traditionally, most of the indigenous Kambari are living in remote places, which seem to be inaccessible especially during the wet seasons. Accessibility is therefore, restricted and hampered to a great extent. Therefore, teachers who are not of Kambari origin and

are posted to the indigenous Kambari areas, requires some special allowances as incentives as ways of motivating them to stay in the rural areas.

Pedagogical Considerations

With regard to the methods of teaching the indigenous Kambari children, it is important to take cognisance of their peculiar circumstances especially that of living in isolated bush encampments and thereby not attending school, the illiteracy of their parents, family background as well as socio-cultural backgrounds of parents. In view of the crucial conditions and circumstances of the children, the instructional or teaching procedures to be adopted need to put into consideration their conditions, which could be described as factors likely to inhibit their learning. However, the instructional procedures proposed for the children of the fisherfolk in Ezewu and Tahir (1997:190), could be used for the indigenous Kambari children. They proposed that the instructional procedures should be those,

- a. that avoid mere regurgitation of facts;
- b. that emphasis practical exploratory and experimental activities;
- c. that encourages children to be willing to learn and enjoy their learning activities;
- d. that reduce the effects of individual differences in learning; and
- e. that encourages high level mastery.

Furthermore, the teachers should try to motivate the children to learn. This means that they should evolve various ways geared towards motivating their children. The children should be encouraged to participate in learning both at individual and group levels. The experience of local environment of the children should be used in translating the learning content. Relevant and practical demonstrations are other ways of encouraging the learner.

However, it is relevant to mention that, the ethnographic data gathered has practically shown that the indigenous Kambari children are among the educationally disadvantaged groups in Kebbi state and Nigeria at large. They have not been participating in education. The reason for this is because of their exclusion, socio-cultural, occupation as well as isolationist tendencies because they live in isolated rural or bush encampments. The existing conventional formal education school curricula do not take cognisance of their peculiarities and problems, needs and aspirations. Thus, the educational alternatives and/or options for the indigenous Kambari children as proposed in this paper are justified.

Summary of the Major Findings

The following are the major findings:

1. The basic educational need of the indigenous Kambari children is the provision of basic formal education.
2. Considering the peculiarities of the indigenous Kambari, there is no peculiar educational policy for their children.
3. There is high level of illiteracy among the indigenous Kambari adults, hence resulting to negative attitude to formal education for their children.

4. Total lack of social services in the Kambari villages and more especially there are no schools in the indigenous Kambari villages at all.
5. There are no infrastructural facilities in the indigenous Kambari areas.
6. Indigenous Kambari parents want formal education to be organised in such a way that, it will not make their children to abandon farming which is the pride of all indigenous Kambari.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that there should be mass mobilisation, orientation and sensitisation of the indigenous Kambari population to make them see the need and relevance of formal education for all irrespective of socio-cultural and geographical inclinations.
2. Schools should be established in the indigenous Kambari encampments, as to encourage them participate in formal schooling.
3. Government should provide policies that are likely to facilitate the integration of the indigenous Kambari such as, mobile schools, enact laws and ordinances, provision of special financial grants, provision of educational facilities, school feeding programmes, development of teaching and learning materials in indigenous Kambari language, training of special teachers for both adults and children, and funding of researches on the education of minority indigenous Kambari, and other disadvantaged groups.
4. Government should provide employment opportunities for the indigenous Kambari youths regardless of their socio-cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds. This will help the school leavers to take various roles in society thereby, contributing to national economic development, as well as serve as role models for their people.
5. Concerted efforts should be made by the various arms of government to bring the indigenous Kambari children within the fold of formal education.

Conclusion

In view of the presentations and discussion of the ethnographic data, it can be concluded from this study that:

1. There is need for an educational policy for the indigenous Kambari children which is capable of making them integrated into the mainstream Nigerian society.
2. The indigenous Kambari requires a developmental policy that will improve the quality of life of the Kambari generally and their children in particular.
3. The indigenous Kambari requires a special form of mobilisation to stamp out the feelings of inferiority among the Kambari and negative attitude towards formal education.
4. The sedentary people's perception of their indigenous Kambari counterparts is negative which is characterised by exploitation, domination and marginalisation.
5. There is need to devise a particular educational policy that would put the Kambari migratory tendencies into account, more especially with the universal basic education programme in Nigeria.

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