

**TEACHING AND LEARNING IN RURAL SOCIETIES: PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Teaching and learning are socially related concepts, whose fundamental aims are for behavioural changes, acquisition of skills as well as the improvement of socio-economic and political activities. The aims of teaching and learning are the same, whether in the rural or urban societies. This paper examines the nature of teaching and learning in the context of rural societies, the problems associated with teaching and learning in rural societies as well as the strategies that could be taken to improve the situation. The concepts of teaching, learning and rural societies were delineated, which was followed by a theoretical framework, with a view to given the paper a sociological focus. The problems and strategies for improvement were examined while taking into cognizance the situation or characteristics of teaching and learning in rural societies, which are known to be lack of or inadequate socio-economic facilities, teaching and learning materials and poor school climate and absence of role models. One of the major recommendations of this paper is that, the provision of education facilities to both rural and urban people should be on equal footing, because the both communities are using one curriculum under one National Policy on Education. This is to ensure equal quality of educational standard.*

**Introduction**

The aim of every society is to live up to the standard of sustaining the wellbeing of its citizens. In addition, the promotion and presentation of the society norms and values from one generation to another remains obvious in all societies. No doubt this can be achieved through the process of teaching and learning either in the formal school setting, informal instructional pedagogies and non-formal manners of social interaction. The school

institutions are in the modern times the structured institutions for teaching and learning, and the institutions are regarded as the custodian of values for every society. Societies through the schools preserve and stores their norms, values and cultural heritage. As mentioned by Mahuta (2007) the school is an integral part of the society and societies places their hopes of socializing the youth for the continuous homogeneity of the society. While, Daramola (2002) maintains that, the school is a direct part of the society and have direct influences of the elders in society to the young, and thus, education took colony from the elders' society. The complexity of societal demand makes social interaction to move far beyond the classroom interaction. With this, the acquisition of information, skills, and values is understood to be a process of learning. In every society both rural and urban, the activities of the teachers and elders are to make the boys and girls to understand the world they live in, to embrace social modernization, technological innovations and political awareness. Teaching and learning invariably implies improvement and change in personal behaviour and structural changes, modification. and the acquisition of skills and learning, attitude and new mode of life.

The rural societies embrace all teaching and learning styles so as to meet the present demand of societal changes and evolving development by means of technological advancement. Teaching and learning involves two parties and the communication process is in an objective one which it is designed deliberately for the purpose of human development and acquisition of skills and knowledge. Teaching in this context is a professional activity, as Ukeje (1986), maintains that:

In regard to specialized knowledge which sets an occupation out as a profession, it is necessary to realize that learning situation is not a simple line of communication between the teacher and the pupil. Rather it is very complex process and pattern into which many other factors enter (p. 71).

Teachers are expected to lead a good instructional procedure to help the pupils excel, both in insight and activities. The common factor is that teaching and learning in rural communities has its own interplay. This is what the professional teacher in the rural areas has to take care of. Rural societies are unique in the provision of specific goals of teaching.

Meighan (2004) states that, the rural and urban schools are not different in content and construct of teaching pedagogies, but the differences lies in the execution and practical displays of the content and construct of the schooling activities. These activities in rural

societies need a renewal, in terms of execution of the purpose of teaching, provision of facilities to encourage learning and to make teaching, and learning, more technical for the general well-being of the individual and the society at large. Teaching and learning all over the globe has common aims, such as transformation, innovation, improvement, and reorientation of values for the purpose of societal development and continuity.

**Theoretical Framework**

Sociologists and sociologists of education are on the search for adequate uniformity of social system in terms of working hypotheses in the day-to-day research. In the view of Jary and Jary (2000) sociological perspectives are structured to give meaning to every social situation and interpret the characteristics of social system. These perspectives explain the social behaviour, rural and urban features, social organisations and changes.

Tischler (2002) is of the view that, behaviour exist in every sector of the social system, thus, every action is related to one theory or the other. This implies collective behaviour such as riot, demonstration, strike and religious is a social unrest with it own sociological interpretation. Social reforms comes about when the system is pressured by large groups, this action in turn remain a social change. Theoretical approach examines the placement of a particular social phenomenon, in respect to the classes of theories in sociology. The approaches used for this paper with regard to teaching and learning in rural societies are derived from the conventional theories of sociology and sociology of education. These conventional sociological theories are the functionalist, Marxian/conflict, symbolic Interactionism, Ethnomethodology, phenomenology and postmodernism. The functionalist theory argues that societal integration is based largely on value consensus; this is an agreement about values by members of society. Conflict theory offers a radical approach contrary to that of the functionalist. Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) in Haralambos and Holborn (2008) states that, in the society there are fundamental differences of interest between social groups. This results to conflicts, among members of society; it is common, frequent and has a persistent features. While the above stated theorists are macro in nature, the “Interactionist Theory”, is micro in its operation. The interactionist rejects the notion of social system, and argues that society can improve systematically based on piecemeal. Ethnomethodology, tries to explain social competence, it explains the method of the members of society. Method used to construct meaning to social reality. In the view of Jary and Jary (2000) for ethnomethodologists, like, Harold Garfinkel, social reality is viewed as the rational accomplishment of the individual. In the analysis of the phenomenologist, human behaviour cannot be objectively explained with precision, it thus remains subjective. According to Haralambus and Holborn (2008) human make sense of the world by categorising it, the process of categorisation is subjective; it

depends on interest and opinions of the observer. Different observers have different views and subsequently different conclusion and meaning to social factors.

In the view of conflict sociological theory of teaching, learning and rural societies, the status of these variables in rural setting is more of differentiation, why teaching and learning in rural setting is not advancing. Functionally, the intention of teaching and learning in rural societies and indeed the world over is to inculcate values and norms of society to the younger generation. However, Mahuta (2007) observes that, the school is the proper place where values of society are preserved and transmitted formally to the younger generation. The status of the schools in rural society is at the lower ebb and cannot meet its expected obligations. This paper examines the problems of rural educational system as being facing social inequality in the distribution of educational facilities and instructional materials. These factors make the rural education system to be facing inequalities in the provision of teachers and teaching materials. This shows that conflict/Marxian sociological perspective is the appropriate sociological perspective of viewing teaching and learning in rural societies. Karl Marx in Haralambos and Holborn (2008) argues that, there is a great difference that exists between individuals, within a particular society and this difference resulted to differentiation in social setting and other social characteristics. For example, distribution of life amenities is not based on equal footing. This theory is directly applicable to teaching and learning in rural societies, which are likely to be facing a lot of low status positions and recognition in societies, where instructional materials of every kind is not equally or adequately given to the rural societies.

**Conceptualization of Teaching and Learning**

**Teaching**

The act of teaching is described as a process and means of transmitting knowledge, information, skills, values and other sociable, political aspect of human culture from a generation to the other. This is a process of initiation, a way of life of a community equipping younger members with knowledge and skills to perform certain roles in society.

Meighan and Siraj – Blatchford (2004) are of the view that:

Teaching may imply coercion, negotiation or control by democratic principles, with pupils'

responses tending to compliance, bargaining and participant decision making (p. 201).

Teaching is an interactive forum, channel of communication and a means of strengthening relationship between the teacher and learner. The major aim is to inculcate values, knowledge and skills that are ideally and logically designed to be channeled to learner by means of structured pedagogies of learning.

Teaching is the ability for a 'teacher' to make a child to be literate, it deals with helping the child to develop his body, character, to be sociable, self sufficient, responsible, healthy and to help a child to be a cooperative members of the society. According to Admiden and Hunter (1967) in Aggarwal (2006):

Teaching is an interactive process, primarily involving classroom talk, which takes place between teacher and pupils and occurs during certain definable activities (p. 16).

The activities of teaching comprises of guiding, encouraging and designing a possible simple way of changing the behaviour of the learner to a more suitable one. Teaching involve exerting some influence over a person, this is to help the individual to have change positively in belief, attitude and behaviour. The central aim of all teaching exercise is for the positive development of the learners.

**Learning**

The concept of learning takes various dimensions. Formally, learning eventually occurs in the classroom, by means of teacher instruction. On the other hand, learning begins even before the formal schooling system. However, Aggarwal (2006) is of the view that, it is a progressively change in behaviour, which is a result of situational instructions, teaching and a purposive designed instruction of teaching and learning in schools. Learning deals with the individual ability to adjust to a new situation. It deals with the appreciation of worth, acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and newly accepted habits. Learning helps the individual to gain additional knowledge and acquire skills. Logically, the learning that helps students most is the formal designed learning style which is more defined and is purposeful; this type of learning is more of the developmental spheres of the individual and his society.

### **Concept and Characteristics of Rural Societies**

Rural societies are strongly conservative in ideology, and they strongly adhere to their primitive pattern of life. The ideology of the rural societies governs their interpretation of the wider world and determines for them the selection and arrangement of a life style which is entirely different from the urban societies. The introduction of new pattern of life and assimilation as a result of social interaction creates awareness for the rural people. Among which are the introduction of schools to the rural areas for the purpose of preserving, promoting teaching and learning. Rural societies, according to Haralambos and Holborn (2008) are an association in which there is social interaction of the people and their institutions in the local area. This relationship of the rural societies is termed primarily as intimate nature. A classical rural society consists of people living on wide area of farmsteads and in a hamlet or village which form the sensible centre of common social activities. These factors make them an integral part of the development of the larger cities as they provide the catalysts for urban development.

Tischler (2002) elucidate that, the general expression of the rural community is low standard of living, poor social amenities and shortage of social and economic facilities. Agricultural sector of the rural societies are usually characterized by small production units. Techniques of development are not advanced, there is backwardness in infrastructural development, and the schools are characterized by inefficiency and ineffective teaching and learning styles. Giddens (2006) argues that, social exclusion is primarily affecting the rural people, and the rural areas are faced with and suffers the disadvantages of social exclusion. UNESCO (2002) suggests that, every human society should have access to good services and facilities, like good roads, markets, water, access to professional doctors and teachers; this is to promote full and healthy life. However, rural societies often have limited access to such social services and are dependent on the facilities available within their local community. Though, with the present campaigns by the world Non governmental organizations (NGOs) and other government agents' schools are being provided for the rural societies, but the standard and efficiency of instructional pedagogies remain an issue of serious concern.

### **School and Schooling in Rural Societies**

The schools are designed to educate and open the minds of individual and promote effective responsibility of the citizens. There are various means and way of communication and the transmission of social values in the society. However, the present day schools and schooling processes have dominated the aspect of value inculcation, moral training, skills acquisition, and the development of sound minds. However, Mahuta

(2007), Giddens (2006) and Haralambos and Holborn (2008) stresses the role of the school as a learning institution primarily for the purpose of education. The institution of the school functions and exist all year round couple with other-valued institutions for human development in society. The present social order of the world is complex in nature; the complexity makes societies to establish a channel for transmitting immediate and far culture to the younger generation. The school, both in content, construct and structure is a fundamental channel with the integrated knowledge of the present complexity of the global and technological advancement. Therefore, the school remain, one of the social institutions with the virtue of transmitting societal heritage by means of teaching and learning as contained in the designed curriculum of a particular society.

The primary aim of educational institutions, both in simple and complex societies, rural or urban societies, is to educate and socialise the youths. According to Stark (2004) schooling deals with the aspects and amount of time spent in the learning institution. The amount of period dedicated by the participants or students, attracts, certificates such as diploma, degree and so on. The school, the schooling process and the students all over the globe carries the same aims, such as education, socialization, modernization of thoughts and improving the worth of the individual well being in the society in which he/she happens to find him/herself.

The schools and schooling process in the rural societies are characterized by low standard of instruction, instructional facilities and strategies. These make schooling unattractive to the inhabitants of rural societies. Schools in the rural societies are faced with poor infrastructures, low commitment of educators and educational administration. These factors are equally influenced by the conservative attitude of the rural dwellers (Aggarwal 2007).

The style of teaching in the rural societies is a clear indication of social stratification. Social isolation and stratification do not stop in schooling style alone but in the provision of essential life amenities and general social security in the rural societies, which may be very poor or absent completely (Stark 2004). One most important implication of this manner of stratification is the prevention of free flow of development and social orientation and re-orientation in the rural societies. Thus, lack of proper and sound teaching and learning styles and procedures affects the rural societies to a large extent.

### **Teaching and learning for Rural Transformation**

The purpose of Teaching and learning is to effect changes on the individual, which will in turn affect the structures of the society positively. The knowledge and skills acquired are

expected to be functional to the individual and community. The prominent role of all educational institutions is to ensure societal stability, continuity and consistency in the teaching and preservation of the heritage of the "place" and to transform the community by means of gradual improvement, graduation from one stage to another and the perfection of both human and structural development. However, teaching and learning transforms the community in various ways. According to Ukeje (1986) the attitudes of scholarship in a community are at the heart of social, economic and political development. These are strongly the inbuilt message of all schools to the youth; the school is to improve the lots of the individual by providing functional and interactive skills needed for the transformation of individual and community at large.

In the view of Ogunbameru and Rotimi (2006), with the present speed in technological evolution in societies, no community will be left out of the global social integration, in terms of economic benefits and growth technologically. Different societies of the world are globally aware of the political assimilation, educational uniformity, economic integration and social association of the global factors of developments. According to Aggarwal (2006), with sophisticated technology in every community and sound knowledge for the people, there will be fast development and reduction in the rural-urban migration in terms of individual life management. Singh (2006) maintains that, teaching and learning is not restricted to the structured schooling system alone. Others include the informal and non formal instruction system that predates the formal structure of schooling in societies. In the bottom line of instruction in various communities is the acquisition of proper values, preservation of cultural heritage, assimilation and accommodation of foreign culture and effecting changes in the existing status of the community. In the view of Haralambos and Holborn (2008) among the pedagogies of rural transformation through instructional interaction are as follows:

- Continuous processes of change and the initiation of new characteristics of societal values, norms and cultural content.
- The change is from simple to complex, from homogeneity to heterogeneity and from primitive to civilized one. These are changes expected out of content interaction of schooling.
- European culture has evolved drastically and presently is at the top of civilization, and so Asia and Africa are using the European stage and age of developments as reference civilization
- Forming Associations and organizations for target focus in community. This is a community development strategy, which calls for unionism, integration and social conformity.



- The theories of transformation, involves individuality and the general public. Transformation here is both simple and complex. Simple when it is an individual basis and complex when it involves the community at large.

In various societies, the learning institutions performs various functions such as, they accelerates socialization, strengthen cultural values, preserves cultural heritage, inform and transform society, and the learning institutions, above all orient the youth and promote rapid development. Teaching and learning is a major social avenue for social empowerment, constructive transformation in communities, and the promotion of integration and homogeneity.

### **Problems of Teaching and learning in Rural Societies**

- The social institutions such as, family, school, law enforcement agents and systems appears to have collapsed in the rural societies. This affects the teaching and learning style and the social institutions. There is little or no commitment at all (Ornstein and Levine 2003).
- The existing relationship of the rural societies and the central government shows clearly the effect of macro stratification and social isolation. This in turn affects the entire learning institutions; this is because there are no adequate resources and enough governmental care to facilitate instructional styles (Giddens, 2006).
- The programme of the curriculum is designed with the philosophy of a larger and complex society. The programme should be flexible, with the consideration of rural society's interest and attitude.
- Meighan (2004) states that, the welfare provided to the teachers and students of the rural societies are not encouraging. This result to poor teaching and learning atmosphere. Where teachers receive poor care, the implication will be negative on the students, by having low standard of instruction.
- On the part of some rural societies, the zeal to learn is not encouraging and therefore makes all government effort toward provision of schools and school infrastructure fruitless. The implication is on the social development of the society and the youth; as such development will be very slow or hindered.
- There is no equality in the allocation, distribution and the provision of development chances, even between rural and urban and also within rural societies. These affect the educational life chances of the rural people as social stratification is strongly affecting the rural people (Meighan 2004).

**Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning in Rural Societies**

The agencies that are to monitor the quality and effectiveness of Teaching and learning in rural societies should regularly visit the schools for suggestions, observations and proffer means for improvement. It is in line with that, Aggarwal (2006) outlined the following for the schools in the rural societies.

- i. Provision of adequate classroom that are usable in all weather, with a deep veranda and toilet facilities for boys and girls respectively.
- ii. Provision of adequate teachers with separate allowances for being in the rural societies. These teachers should include female and male.
- iii. The building of rural schools should include sport facilities and other recreational items, to attract students and teachers as well.

Local Community members should work hand in hand with government so that there will be no overlapping, with regard to government policies and community interests. This integration will eventually promote good teaching and learning situations. The application of these is practicable in Nigerian rural school, due to the fact that Nigeria is equally a developing nation, in which rural communities are left backward in terms of social amenities. The interdependence of nations, societies and communities on each other through schools or education system as the only centres to acquire the present socialization and global cultural integration will improve more on education relationship and reliance (Giddens 2006). However, both the schools in the rural and urban society's should be provided with adequate teaching and learning facilities and be given equal recognition in all policies of education for equal social development. However, this might improve the condition of schooling in the rural setup. According to UNESCO (2002) with the use of the universal Basic Education philosophy, there will be equal access to school and schooling will be facilitated by means of democratizing its chances. The provision of schooling activities will be on equal basis so as to reduce the problem of social isolation, exclusion and stratification.

**Conclusion**

Every society adopts one pattern of instructing the young, adult, children or others. In respect to teaching and learning, societies have evolved from one stage to another, due to its dynamic nature. However, with the present global challenges on societies' instructional strategies are taking dramatic changes. Today school is the dominant Teaching and learning institution all over the globe. Instruction, might be formal, informal or non formal, but yet it's aimed at providing knowledge, technical and moral

training, skills and effect changes in an individual. Teaching and learning in rural societies have being identified to be at disarray with the values and contents of teaching and learning in other complex societies like the urban. This is due to social exclusion, isolation and the inclination of stratification in social organizations. Where teaching and learning chances focus and loses the value it is expected to have, then the society concern will suffer the problem of backwardness underdevelopment, morality will decline, while its cultural values and heritage will be misplaced (Singh 2007). This interaction is social that is geared towards societal development and the elimination of poverty, reduction of diseases and illiteracy.

**Recommendations**

- Considering the fact that the aim of teaching and learning both in rural and urban society are the same, the provision of all education facilities should be equally distributed. This is because the both societies are using one National Policy on Education and uniform curriculum in terms of contents.
- Education provision is a collective enterprise, so the individual and other law enforcement agencies should help in providing conducive atmosphere that will facilitate learning.
- As education is for social development, human empowerment and the building of sound individual, the provision should not be restricted to some sect, class, location of people. Education is a means to achieve social justice, so it should be provided to all and for all purpose.

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