

9. STRATEGIES FOR TRAINING NOMADIC TEACHERS IN NIGERIA*

Introduction

The topic of this case is policy concerning teacher training and is of particular interest in that the starting point is community need. We talk at length about serving the community and its needs; we seldom attempt any practical application. The case addresses particularly the two questions, how does one determine community need in education; how can colleges and universities respond by providing appropriate training? The case also raises important issues for research into teacher training, for policy concerning university/college interaction with their clients, and for staff selection and training. The concepts explored range far wider than those of education for nomadic people.

The Case Study

One of the important strategies for developing "ruga" (on-site) schools is the training of nomadic teachers. It has become necessary to train special teachers to work in on-site schools because the type of education thrust on nomadic children, whether in regular schools organised for sedentary people in Dukku, Toro, Miango and elsewhere, or in the separate schools exclusively run for them in Gardo, Tashar Mangoro and Hardo Chindo in Ningi, is not acceptable to nomadic people. The assimilation policy adopted in the organisation of these schools is entirely inappropriate for nomadic people because such educational provision is not relevant to their mode of life in terms of the content taught and the means of teaching it. Table 1 below throws some light on the problems of the educational provision made for the nomads in the Ningi Local Government Area of Bauchi State, Nigeria.

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TABLE 1

Schools and Teachers Provided for Nomads in Ningi Local Government Area of Bauchi State

| | Schools | | Teacher's Qualification | | | | | | | Ethnic Origin | |
|----------------|----------------|---------|-------------------------|-----------|-------|----|-----------|-----------|----|---------------|------------|
| | 'Ruga' On-site | Regular | Trained | | | | Untrained | | | | |
| | | | Grade II | Grade III | Total | % | Sch. Cert | Pry. Cert | % | Fulani | Non-Fulani |
| Gardo | - | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | | - | 3 | | - | 4 |
| Tashar Mangoro | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | - | 4 | | - | 6 |
| Hardo Chindo | 1 | - | - | - | - | | - | 1 | | - | 1 |
| Total | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 27 | - | 8 | 73 | - | 11 |

The Schools

Table 1 shows that two of the three schools - Gardo and Tashar Mangoro - provided for nomadic children in the Ningi Local Government Area are regular schools, both in their structure and organisation of the classes. They were regular schools established for sedentary children in which a few nomadic children enrolled during the 1976/77 school year. But when a greater number of nomadic children enrolled in these schools during the 1977/78 school year, as a result of the campaign mounted for higher enrolment of nomadic children into the schools, these two schools were left exclusively for nomadic children. Hardo is an on-site school in one sense - it is located within Hardo Chindo "ruga" - but a regular school in curricular content and organisation. Gardo and Tashar Mangoro have permanent brick buildings while Hardo Chindo school is a temporary zinc building. The three schools enrol nomadic children from camps which are about seven or eight kilometres away. Apart from the problem of the distances of these schools from the children's camps, the schools are operated on a regular school basis where children leave home around 7.00 a.m. and return home around 1.30 p.m.

Because no cognisance is taken of the work roles of the nomadic people in organising these schools, school attendance is irregular and enrolment has declined over the years. Parents are unwilling to allow their children to attend distant schools for long hours and leave the parents with herding tasks.

Teachers

Table 1 also shows that 27 per cent (three) of the teachers who teach in the three schools had received some kind of training - Grade III and Grade II (a three and five-year course respectively in primary school teaching). While a greater percentage of them - 73 per cent (eight) - are only primary school leavers. They are all non-Fulani teachers. As people who belong to the sedentary group, and have not received any training orientation to meet the different learning style of nomadic children, their teaching is oriented to meet the needs of sedentary children. Worse still, they communicate with the nomadic children in every lesson in Hausa instead of Fulfulde.

Both government educational officials and the nomadic parents are agreed that young children of primary school age relate better with teachers who speak to them in their first language. While commenting on some of the problems encountered in the nomadic school experiment in Ningi, the Education Secretary said that one of the problems was the inability to recruit teachers who could speak Fulfulde. In an interview with some of the nomadic parents in Ningi they were asked about some of the problems their children encountered in their learning at school. The parents indicated that their children did not understand what their "malam" (teachers) was teaching because the teacher spoke to them in Hausa.(1)

From the description of the schools and the teaching staff, it is clear that the schools are organised on the pattern of conventional schools meant for sedentary children. They do not, therefore, meet the needs of the nomadic people in terms of their structure, organisation and teaching staff. This has resulted in the unwillingness of the nomadic parents to allow their children to attend regular schools in Dukku and Toro Local Government Areas and the rapid decline of school enrolment and erratic attendance in the separate schools established for young nomads in Tashar Mangoro, Gardo and Hardo Chindo in Ningi Local Government Area. It is also indicative that Cattle Fulani parents regard formal education as a frightening and alienating process.

To meet the educational needs of the nomads, the first aim of nomadic education should be to provide what the parents and their children want rather than what an educational authority thinks they should have. Let educational provisions for the pastoralists be relevant in terms of the aims, the procedures and the means of attaining them.

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Schools and Teachers Preferred by Nomadic People

Recent studies have revealed that nomadic parents prefer schools built on their "ruga" (camps) and schools that move with herders.(2) They also prefer residential and visiting teachers to teach in the "ruga" schools. They have insisted on these types of schools and teachers because they are suited to the nomadic way of life. Nomadic parents prefer the use of visiting and residential teachers for a number of reasons. In the first place, the parents are accustomed to the Koranic teachers who visit their camps to teach them how to say the Muslim prayers. Secondly, and perhaps of more importance to the parents, they want the teaching of their children to take place in their "ruga" to take advantage of the shift system in their herding assignments.

Shifts in herding work are regular features in most nomadic Fulani families. Families having more than one child encourage shifts in herding. Most nomadic families allow two children to herd in the morning and they are relieved in the afternoon by two other children. Families with fewer children send out one child to herd in the morning and he is relieved by another child in the afternoon. Larger families send out three children in shifts in the morning and in the afternoon. In the light of these observations, teachers working with nomadic children in the "ruga" (camps) can time-table instruction to meet the herding shifts of the families they are working with.(3)

"Ruga", or on-site schools, may not operate with an enrolment of large numbers of children like the regular schools. About 10 to 15 children may be enrolled at a time. The advantages of on-site schools will be many: firstly, teachers will be working with few children and dealing effectively with individual differences in children. Secondly, on-site schools will minimise irregular attendance and encourage more constant enrolment because children will be taught at times that will not interfere with their herding periods. Thirdly, parents will see the teachers every day so that in a short time trust is built up between them. Finally, on-site schools will encourage nomadic children and schools to adapt to each other.

The main thrust here is that of taking education to the nomads through the "ruga" school system. The pertinent questions to ask at this point are: what are the objectives of such education? What strategies will be adopted in training the teachers in order to achieve the set objectives?

The Aim of Nomadic Education

With the gradual realisation of the nomadic parents that education will improve their life-style by bringing about desirable changes in their work roles and their social and political lives, any education planned for them should be relevant to their life-style in a changing environment. Therefore the short-term aim of nomadic education should be that all Cattle Fulani children acquire basic functional literacy and numeracy. In practical terms,

the acquisition of functional literacy and numeracy for the nomadic children should mean the ability:

1. to read with comprehension those things that affect their occupational roles, like useful directions and instructions on health, animal treatments and other manufacturers' instruction sheets relating to animal husbandry and agriculture, and their tax receipts;
2. to write legible letters to friends and veterinary or other agricultural establishments asking for information on how to improve their herds, poultry and crops;
3. to handle important common computations such as the number of their herd, the cost of and return from their investment on improved herds, distances to be covered on their seasonal movements, interest charges on credits and rental rates on lands, measurements of land and buildings to hold their herd and family;
4. to avoid hearsay and rumours. Such functional literacy should enable the nomadic children to read with understanding national newspapers. Thereby they become aware of things happening around them. It should enable them to perform such civic duties as reading simple instructions on ballot boxes in order to enable them to vote. Primary education, which is the main concern of this study, should be counted on to answer the nomadic children's needs for literacy and numeracy and the growth in a scientific outlook.

The long-term aim of their education should be to move from functional literacy and numeracy to the discussion and development of other aspects of education that touch on their social, economic and political life. In this regard the time spent educating the nomadic children will be valuable if it can make them more adaptable to the changing needs of their society.

On the social aspect, such education should enable them to acquire functional knowledge and skills for raising a family and operating a household. These should include the protection of family health, good child care, nutrition and sanitation, cultural activities and recreation.

The economic aspect should include functional knowledge and skill for earning a living. This includes how to provide water and grass for their animals and the cure for animal diseases using modern scientific methods. Such education should help them to incorporate certain ideas about commerce and industry into their occupational roles.

The commercial training for nomadic children should be geared towards helping them to use modern methods of storage and refrigeration and to get better prices for their meat products. They must learn the economics of export, marketing of surpluses and how to acquire more sophisticated tools for their trade.

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The political aspect of their education should enable them to gain functional knowledge and skills for civic participation. They should first know their own history and the contribution of their people to the development of the Nigerian nation. They should know the present form and function of Nigerian Government, their responsibilities, privileges and rights regarding available social services, and citizenship. They should also know the aims and functions of co-operatives and their local voluntary associations.

Because of the peculiar nature of their mode of life as people constantly on the move, they have developed ways in which the education of their young is managed. This experience should be the starting point, thereby getting the nomadic children and the school system to adapt to each other.(4)

Teacher Training Strategies

To achieve the above aims, trained, competent and dedicated teachers are needed. To be a competent nomadic teacher means that such a teacher must possess a thorough knowledge of both the subject matter he is going to teach as well as a sound knowledge of the nomadic way of life. To be dedicated means the willingness of the teacher to perform his duty diligently and patiently to produce the type of nomadic children who will function according to the aims specified above. The teacher's patience will involve his ability to adapt to the living conditions of the nomads.

For any teacher training strategy for "ruga" schools to be successful the type of teachers preferred by nomadic parents must be considered. Therefore the three types of teachers to be trained are:

1. assistant teachers,
2. residential teachers,
3. visiting teachers.

Assistant Teachers

One of the problems encountered in Ningi Local Government Areas, and other countries where nomadic/migrant educational experiments have been tried, is the maladjustment of non-nomadic teachers to nomadic living conditions. In Iran, when the Ministry of Education sent out forty non-nomadic teachers to work with nomads, it became apparent that the problem of adjustment and interaction between the teachers and the nomads required a new approach. Through experience over the years, it was decided to recruit and train nomads as teachers for the tribes. In 1956 a school specially designed for this purpose was opened in Shiraz.(5)

In Australia the maladjustment of teachers to the nomadic life-style was also recognised. When it became extremely difficult to find professional

staff to cope with the real hardships, shortages and isolation of such a life style, Aboriginal teachers were used to teach Aboriginal children.(6) In Ningi, the maladjustment of sedentary teachers in the exclusive nomadic schools was noticed. The Education Secretary indicated that most non-Fulani teachers were unwilling to teach in nomadic schools. He remarked: "It's very difficult getting teachers to teach in nomadic schools in Tashar Mangoro, Gardo and Hardo Chindo, let alone getting teachers to teach in the 'Ruga'"(7) Because of this difficulty, it has become necessary to recruit and train nomadic people to work in "ruga" schools.

The first stage for the use of nomadic people as teachers should be in the assistant teacher cadre. Some of the nomadic children who have learnt to read and write should be selected and given further training to gain competence in literacy and numeracy for effective teaching. Such training should be provided in teacher resource centres for those of them who have either dropped out of primary school or completed primary school training. Those of the nomadic children still in school and who showed greater achievement than others may be given further training by residential teachers and used in peer group teaching cadres.

Residential Teachers

Ideally residential teachers should be drawn from the nomadic groups, but because such groups are not available in large numbers, resident teachers may not be members of the nomadic group. One of the conditions for selecting non-nomadic teachers to teach in "ruga" schools should be their willingness to reside in Fulani camps and their interest in working with nomadic families.

Visiting Teachers

Visiting teachers may not necessarily be members of the nomadic group. They too must be interested in working with nomadic families. Their role will be, among other things, to prepare teaching materials and make them available to residential and assistant teachers, and to supervise the work done by the teachers and their pupils.

For these two groups of teachers to perform their roles adequately, there is need for careful selection and training.

The Need for Careful Selection of Nomadic Teachers

Working with nomadic families is not an easy task, especially for non-nomadic workers. Table 1 shows that a few experienced, trained teachers are willing to teach in the separate schools established for the nomads in Tashar Mangoro, Gardo and Hardo Chindo. The reason for most teachers' unwillingness to work in rural areas is not hard to find. Rural communities lack basic amenities and the nomadic camps are even worse. Many rural foot-paths are virtually impassable, both to motorists and pedestrians. During the rainy season people trudge through large pools of muddy water, in the dry season the roads are horribly dusty. In some cases access from one nomadic settlement to another may involve crossing flooded streams or

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deep dry valleys.

In their bid to provide grass and water for their herd, it is very common to find clusters of Fulani camps on marshy ground known as "fadama". Moreover, the "fadama ruga" are mostly far away from the native sedentary settlements which provide some basic amenities. The constant movement of nomadic families from one location to another at very short notice is an added problem. This too may discourage non-nomadic people from working with them. Therefore, working with nomadic people demands interest, dedication and commitment. To be selected for "ruga" schools, the teacher candidates must be interviewed to ascertain the extent of their capability and willingness to serve as nomadic teachers. The problems of working with nomadic people should be explicitly made known to them and their feelings about the problems should be sought.

The Training of Nomadic Teachers

Essentially any teacher training programme must produce teachers who are able to work with a variety of pupils in many kinds of situations. However, because information is lacking regarding the nomadic cultural situation, regular teacher training programmes in the Northern states, where nomads are found, do not prepare the sedentary teacher for coping with nomadic situations. Therefore there is a need to train non-nomadic people as teachers to gain competence in the subject areas to be taught as well as knowledge on certain nomadic cultural areas which affect the learning style of nomadic children. The basic requirements for training such non-nomads are: requisite specific abilities for effective teaching and the inclusion of certain cultural aspects in their training.

Requisite Specific Abilities for Effective Teaching

To gain experience in nomadic culture demands extensive field work to determine the adaptability of the teacher candidates to the nomadic life-style, their sociability, patience and endurance.

The nomadic teacher candidates must be given the opportunity to explore their potential for teaching nomadic children through real experience with young nomads and their parents. That is, they need to be given a reality base right from the start of their training programme through involvement in discussion with nomadic parents and trying to identify with their problems, interests and needs. This will enable them to find out what the nomads want their children to be taught.

Such field experience is a time of real self-testing during which the teacher trainee will undergo considerable stress and tension. The teacher trainer must be someone who has undergone such an experience so that he/she can alleviate much of the students' stress through close expert advice. During their period of internship students should be brought together to discuss their experiences, indicate problems and suggest approaches for their solution.

Because working with small groups of nomadic children involves greater individualisation of instruction than working with large groups of children, the preparation of the trainee must reflect individualised training. The individual trainees' peculiarities should be identified by the trainer and adequate help and encouragement should be given on individual bases.

The main purpose of such field experience is to produce dedicated and enthusiastic teachers who will be able to cope with demanding and challenging situations, work closely with nomadic families and learn about them by fitting in with the timing of their lives. This will help the trainees to gain the confidence of both the nomadic parents and their children and help the children to lose their fear of non-nomadic teachers.

Cultural Areas to be Included in Training

It is important at this point to examine certain cultural values of the nomadic Fulani in order to provide a guide for the training of nomadic teachers. Culture not only influences every aspect of learning, but it also influences the ways of establishing rapport and communication and the effectiveness of educational variables, ethnic differences and teaching methods.(8)

Because of the peculiar nature of their mode of life as people constantly on the move, nomads have developed ways in which the education of their young is managed. Obviously the way Fulani pastoralists perceive themselves is directly related to the nomadic way of life. They differ from sedentary people in the way they design their life and the upbringing of their children. Their teaching strategies, which emanate from the aims of their traditional education, may also be effective in organising formal teaching for their children. In order to get the nomadic children and the school system to adapt to each other, it is important for the teacher to know their cultural values on things like their learning orientation, motivation and authority patterns.

Learning Orientation

The use of the shift system for herding work is one of the learning-teaching strategies in the cultural setting of the nomadic Fulani. Children tend to learn herding techniques from members of their family rather than from non-members of their family. The trend of the findings concerning the learning orientation of male nomadic children is that they identify more closely with members of their immediate family - fathers and brothers - than with their uncles and their fathers' friends.(9) When looking for herding labour, it is difficult for any nomadic family to employ members of other family groups.

This means that the nomadic Fulani culture does not permit a strict apprenticeship system whereby the children learn herding techniques from other nomads outside their family circle and are thereby exposed to the influence of other people. This means that much of the learning strengths of

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the nomadic children derive from the close-knit structure of their family. From birth, the young nomads are surrounded by parents, brothers and sisters who seem to have time to spend in teaching them how to care for the herd through demonstrations and oral instructions. Their exposure to other people outside their family circle is limited. This partly explains the reason for their fear of non-Fulani teachers in the nomadic schools in Ningi.

As a result of such fear, Nnorom observed that one of the obstacles to effective learning of the migrant child at school in Ningi was the poor teacher-pupil relationship. According to him "the teachers are out of touch with the nomadic children because they are ignorant of their sociability temperament and social and personal background".(10)

The implication of the close identification of nomadic children, in their learning orientation, with members of their immediate family is that they will stay longer with teachers with whom they can form some kind of identity. This could be one of the major reasons nomadic parents "preferred" residential and visiting teachers for their children. Obviously the nomadic children are sensitive to the human environment and will do well when placed in learning settings where they relate directly to their teachers and other children as a group. They will also learn effectively where the elder brother relationship situation is introduced.(11)

Motivation

Very closely related to learning orientation is the motivation of Cattle Fulani children in their herding achievement. Studies in Cattle Fulani children's motivation revealed that nomadic children are motivated to achieve more for their family and herding group than they are motivated for personal achievement.(12)

The means of motivating young nomads to achieve success are through praise and blame. Contrary to the expectation of most people that severe punishment is used by older relations to get young nomads motivated to achieve success in herding tasks, parents use praise and less severe punishments to encourage young nomads to herd well. They also motivate their sons through appealing to their sense of duty, cajoling them by telling them how well they have herded and how much they appreciate their sons' co-operation.

The implication of this finding is that the family and group feeling permeates the Cattle Fulani child's learning orientation with the result that the young nomad does not work hard in herding simply for individual praise. Cattle herding by its very nature demands collective group effort to ensure large herds for the survival of the family. In practising shifts in herding, parents encourage young nomads to work in groups and to accept collective responsibility. To strengthen such co-operation, parents praise herding groups for success achieved in herding or blame the group for herding failures instead of praising or blaming individuals. Such

motivational orientation has implications for teaching strategy. Activities which emphasise the development of the skills for all the members of the herding group instead of mere self-improvement may be more successful with Cattle Fulani children than those activities which place emphasis only on individual improvement. Activities which require co-operation rather than individually based competition will reflect the learning style of the nomadic child.

Authority Patterns

The leadership of a herding group is an important aspect of authority patterns in nomadic culture. The learning of herding techniques is not given to chance. Effective leadership is used in the deliberate effort of parents and older children to instruct the young nomads through examples and oral instruction on how to herd well.

To benefit from such instruction, it is customary for younger children to obey the herding instructions of their older relations. They are also expected to apply what they have been taught conscientiously, under the watchful eyes of their older relations. Younger children discuss herding problems and successes with their older brothers who lead the group. Through such discussions younger children learn more about herding problems and how to solve them.

The acceptance by young nomads of people performing leadership roles in their culture, has implications for formal teaching strategies. Educational activities in which older relations instruct young ones may succeed in establishing "ruga" or on-site teaching for nomadic children because structurally, the pastoral Fulbe culture makes provision for the younger children to learn from the older ones and for children approaching puberty to assume leadership roles.

Motivation of "Ruga" Teachers

In the light of the repellent rural conditions discussed above, teachers recruited to teach in nomadic schools deserve differential treatment from the Government. Apart from an enhanced salary scale, they should be provided with easy means of movement from one "ruga" cluster to another and comfortable tent living apartments.

The efforts made by nomadic teachers should be rewarded through publicising them within the community and the State. The climate in which these teachers would want to do their best should be created. This will include involving them in problem identification, assigning responsibilities and giving them the freedom to look for solutions. They should be praised for any successes and positively encouraged to provide the needs of nomadic children.

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Conclusion

The special selection and training of nomadic teachers is necessary for two reasons: firstly, to produce teachers who can live and work in harmony with conservative, hard working and persevering nomads. Secondly, to produce teachers who would not mind isolation, shortages, inconveniences of unannounced sudden movements, harsh wet and dry weather, and who would learn to provide a relevant and useful educational programme for both nomadic children and parents by drawing from a common educational frame of reference.

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