**THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION**

Education is the process of transmitting the socially approved cultural heritage of any society from one generation to another. It is also the process by which the new knowledge is spread among members of a society. The cultural heritage and knowledge are transferred through education. Education as an activity is the process of transmitting and acquiring the socially approved aspects of cultural heritage. The school is the social organisation in which education takes place. The process of socialization or culture learning usually starts informally in the family, churches, mosques, the community and then formally in schools. Education in the formal sense has come to mean systematic training by specialists within the formal organisation of the school.

**Functions of Education**

**Consult your sociology of education notes**

**Types of Education in Rural Nigeria**

There are various forms of formal educational facilities in rural Nigeria. These include the followings:

1. **Extension Education**: This is an informal out-of-school education given to rural families by experts in agriculture, home economics, health, small-scale industries among others. This type of education is often known as extension education.

2. **Adult Education**: This is semi-formal literacy education organised for adults who had no opportunity to acquire formal education at earlier age.

3. **Formal Education**: This is the type of education offered at the primary and secondary levels to rural children and adolescents. At the primary level, two main types of education can be identified in Nigeria. These are the western type of education and the koranic type of education with the latter being more prevalent in the Moslem areas in Nigeria. Since Nigeria had grown up under the influence of the western world, there has been the tendency for people to undertake koranic education generally. Until quite recently, most parts of rural northern Nigeria had only koranic schools whereas western type schools have always predominated in the south.

**PROBLEMS OF THE RURAL SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THEIR SOLUTIONS**

The rural school is of fundamental importance in the life of any nation. This is because it is the area in which basic values, attitudes and other cultural dimensions of a society are transmitted to the succeeding generations of citizens. Most of these citizens invariably move to the urban areas to constitute the cream of the society. The rural school experiences many problems when compared with their urban counter parts. Some of these include:

1. **The pupil – teacher ratio is lower in the rural than urban areas**. The anxiety to send children to school is still lower in rural areas than in urban areas. In agrarian societies some reasons are responsible for this. Some parents want their children to help them on the farm; some parents do not have sufficient money to give their children even for daily feeding at school; some are not interested in formal education because they believe that it takes children out of the home after graduation; instead they prefer their children to remain with them on their farm. In many rural parts of northern Nigeria, many parents do not want their children to go to formal school, instead they prefer sending them to Islamic schools to study the Koran.

2. **The average salary of the rural teacher is lower than that of the urban teacher**. This is because the average qualification and experience of the rural teacher is lower than that of the urban teacher.

3. **The average rural teacher is saddled with a heavier teaching load than his urban counterpart.** This is because of frequent shortage of teachers in many subjects, particularly at the high school level. Teachers, who specialise in a field such as agricultural science, may be required to teach related science subjects such as chemistry and biology. In the elementary school, many schools in fact required the same teacher to teach all the subjects because he is considered as competent enough to handle all the subjects at that level. The outcome is over-loading of the teacher, which frequently results in inefficiency.

4. **The staff-turn over in rural school is much higher than that of urban school**. Staff in rural schools frequently disturbs the school supervisors to post them to urban schools. Married female teachers in particular, prefer to stay with their husbands who frequently live in urban area. Such teachers are frequently posted to the urban area at the earliest available opportunities.

5. The **physical and teaching facilities in rural schools** such as buildings, laboratories, sporting facilities, toilet and sanitary facilities are often smaller and less efficient than those in cities. For example, lighting facilities are not in existence in many Nigerian rural schools whereas urban schools are supplied with electricity. Pipe-borne water supply is absent in many rural schools, but are present in many urban schools.

6. **Myopic**, **limited, traditional and outdated curricula/syllabi** often feature in small schools. Much of the curriculum is not related to solving rural problem. Agriculture and livestock rearing are the most common occupations in Nigerian rural areas. Agricultral science was not taught in many rural secondary schools in Nigeria. It was not until 1976 when the Federal Military Government introduced the Operation Feed the Nation campaign, that the subject became compulsory in all secondary grammar schools in Nigeria (Jibowo 1992).

7. **Supplementary** **materials for teaching in rural schools are marginal or non existent**. Libraries are poorly equipped or nonexistent. Social “promotion”, a system of moving the students along so as to give chance for the in-coming group prevails. Such a system results in ill-educated students.

8. The rate of failure is higher in rural schools than in urban schools. This leads to unfavourable image of the rural schools to such an extent that educated members of the society are not willing to send their children there.

9. Schools are more broadly separated from the homes of the students in rural areas than urban areas. Some students have to trek about 1–6 kilometers or more from their homes to school. Only a few rural secondary schools provide buses for their students.

10. Students in rural schools are often more exposed to manual work than those in urban schools. They are often asked to spend some hours in the school garden, cutting school fields, sweeping the school compound, cleaning the school toilet, washing the desks and tables at the beginning of each semester or term. Such jobs are often given to hired labourers in some urban schools. Some teachers in both urban and rural schools at times ask students to work on their personal farms even after school hours. These types of activities make the students to be too tired to do their assignments or get enough rest for the following day’s academic work.

**SOLUTION TO THE RURAL SCHOOL PROBLEM**

There are two possible approaches to providing solutions to the problems of rural schools (Jibowo 1992). First is to alter or change the structure of the rural schools from what they are at present, the other is to continue with the present arrangement but improve on them. Altering the structure involves consolidation of schools. In the United States, since 1879 when the National Education Association Report of the committee of twelve on rural schools was released, there has been a general agreement among educators and social scientists in the country that schools had problems which could be largely corrected through consolidation of schools. **Consolidation is expected to bring the following merits:**

• More qualified teachers, more effective supervision and school administrations;

• More adequate school located centrally.

• Use of the consolidated school plant as a natural social centre for its arena;

• A large and more heterogeneous range of contacts for rural children;

• Increase school attendance;

• Improved educational programme based on the social needs of rural children and aimed at improving them mentally and physically;

• Adequate number of children in schools to facilitate healthy competition and social stimulus in school work, development of group and project work and satisfaction of extra-curricular activities;

• Improvement in adult programmes in areas served by the consolidated schools;

**The demerits/criticisms of consolidation are:**

• Students from low socio-economic background might bring in unwarranted attitudes to influence other students;

• It brings students together in one school with disregard to community interest;

• Putting students in buses from one community to another for long periods of the day is not in their interest. Schools which are consolidated within each community will eradicate much of the demerits.

The second possible approach to providing solution to the problems of rural schools is to continue with the present school structure, but improve on it via community efforts. The parent-teacher association may take the responsibility for providing solutions to some of the constraints. This will be in form of cooperative relationship between the school and the community. If the parents want good quality education for their children, they should play an active role in the process of providing such education.

The third approach is the establishment of private schools to run side by side with those of government. Many groups and individuals such as missionary organisations, philanthropic organisations and private individuals could be allowed to established schools. The government should give guidelines which are to be followed by these groups and individuals for quality assurance. A new approach to providing high quality education at the rural level is the establishment of rural schools by philanthropic organisations such as the International Lions Club and Rotary Club. Some of these organisations are so rich and endowed with so many talented members that they could go into community improvement, which is their major goal through the establishment of high quality rural schools.