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Abstract

INDIGENOUS METHODS OF EDUCATION AS PRACTISED BY THE KIPSIGIS

This paper presents an overview of indigenous methods of education used by the kipsigis and its Relevance to modern education. The article is descriptive and relied heavily on published works. It shows that kipsigis instructed children through formal and informal methods. Informal methods of instructions included involving children in productive work and observation. The boys were engaged in looking after livestock while girls looked after younger brothers and sisters. Children also learnt how to observe. They also learned through play. Other forms of informal methods were myths, legends folklores, riddles and songs. Myths are regarded as tales imaginatively describing or accounting for natural phenomena. The kipsigis had songs for various occasions .Besides the numerous folksongs with which children were associated with as they grew up, there existed rich children's oral literature. Folktales among kipsigis were based on day to day happenings. Asking of riddles was a very special form of amusement. Some riddles seemed to be simple while others were complex. Proverbs were used wisely in ordinary conversation. Formal methods of instructions were initiation and apprenticeship. The period of circumcision was the most important time in the life of the kipsigis. It marked the passage from childhood to adulthood. Medicine was widely practiced in kipsigis pre-colonial times. When children were sick or ill, the mother was responsible for giving advice and first aid before the father's assistance was resorted to. Men and women learned this skill from their parents. There were individuals who were recognized as better herbalists. A person who wanted his child to learn the skills from a specialist would pay a fee and training took a period of time .The skill of iron work was transmitted from father to son .Weaving was done by women and was taught to girls .The art of pottery was learnt by the kipsigis women from luo and Abagusii.The paper concludes that there were two methods of instructions used by the kipsigis to teach their children in pre-colonial times; these were formal and informal methods.

Key words: informal methods, formal methods, myths, legends, riddles, proverbs

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents an overview of indigenous methods of education. Informal education was a lifetime process and it involves acquisition of values, knowledge and skills relevant to the day-to-day affairs of the society. The process of training was done according to age and sex.

Training for social roles was accomplished through formal instruction given during initiation and apprenticeship training; initiation marked the passage from childhood to adulthood and tested a younger ability and formally concluded learning before admitting him or her to the adult community. The initiation of both sexes significant a distinct period of formal teaching and examining with specifically selected and experienced elders giving instruction and setting test. Apprenticeship training was applied in the arts of medicine, iron work weaving and pottery. Informal method as used in this study refers to a lifetime process which involved acquisition of values, knowledge and skills. Myths are regarded as tales imaginatively and describing or accounting for natural phenomena or tales about gods or things which were beyond the understanding of men's. Legend is regarded as a tale fabricated to account for real event that took place or was believed to have taken place in time immemorial. Proverbs were the condensed wisdom of the great ancestors.

Methodology

This paper is largely descriptive; it has used written text to examine method of instruction used by the kipsigis

The main objective of this paper is to illuminate our understanding of indigenous methods used by the kipsigis to instruct their children

Discussion

Informal method

Rono (2000) point out that the kipsigis instructed children through informal and formal methods. Informal education was a life time process and it involved acquisition of values, knowledge and skills relevant to the day-to-day affairs of the society. Informal method of instruction included involving children in productive work and observation.

A child was expected to learn by seeing and imitating, it could only be given formal teaching after it had made a mistake or when the outcome of its work was found unsatisfactory.

The process of training was done according to age and sex. Training for social roles was accomplished through informal instructions given by person already filling those roles. These were often members of one's own family or kin group. Other forms of informal education were myths, legends, talk cores, riddles and songs.

Sifuna & otiende (1994) content that myths are regarded as tales imaginatively describing or accounting for natural phenomena or tales about gods or things which which were beyond understanding of men. There were tales about imaginary events, tales which tried to explain the beginning of things. An example of the myths is about the seven brothers which are today known as seven groups of kalenjin.

The seven brothers

Long ago, there was a man who was very poor .He decided to leave his country in the North and look for better place. This place was called **Emetab burgei** because it was very hot. He travelled a long a big rivers until he came to a very big lake. While at the lake he prayed to the sun **Asis** for help from his poverty. Suddenly he was given many cattle and also a wife. Soon after marrying this wife, the man gets seven sons.

Owing to his great wealth and blessings of children, the man became very arrogant and selfish. He even refused his sons to marry because of this selfishness.

Eventually, he lost all his wealth. His wife left him and married somewhere else who had cattle. The sons also left him and decided to start their own family.

The seven brothers travelled together looking for good land for their cattle. This way they scattered and settled in different places. Each married and had their own children. Only Nandi and Kipsigis were left as each other's companion. Nandi and kipsigis lived together for a long time. Eventually a time came when their land was too dry and they had to look for better land for their cattle. At this time they decided to separate so that each man and his family could get enough land. Nandi moved his people and settled in Aldai. Kipsigis moved southwards.

He passed a hill which he named Tulwop kipsigis (Hill of Kipsigis) Finally he settled in Kericho and his children and cattle increased in great numbers.

Today the seven brothers are known as the ancestors of the seven group of the kalenjin.(chesaina 1991)

Ocitti (1973) observed that legends were tales fabricated to account for real events that took place or were believed to have taken place in time in memorial. Like myths, legends sounded like fairy tales but were fragments of actual history. They were closer to real life than myth. An example of the legend is the origin of the cooking of ugali.

The origin of cooking ugali

Long ago the kipsigis did not know how to cook ugali. They ground grains mixed with a little water and left it to soak. A childless woman who was desperately anxious to have a child, undertook to look after a neighbor who was about to have a baby. When she was preparing food for the mother to be the childless woman thought to her: "If I put this food on the fire and then give it to her, it will probably make her so ill that she will die and then I shall keep her child". So she cooked the food after preparing it in the usual way and gave it to the woman who presently began to sweat. After looking at the sweating woman the child call one said to herself "she is ill already! I will go to the field so that when she is dead I can return and say I wonder how she died" When she reached the field she saw that the sun was very hot and the ground was very dry, she pulled out the bracken from the other woman's crop and use it to shed her own. When she returned home she found that her patient was still a live, so on the next day she boiled the food in same way and gave it to the expectant mother. Although boiled food was given to the patient every day she got fatter and fatter until all the neighbors remarked on it. First one tasted the boiled food and then another, until they agreed the food was good.(chesaina 1991)

Rono(2000) point that the kipsigis had songs for various occasions.

Besides the numerous folksongs with which children's were associated as they grew up there existed rich children's oral literature. There were many children's songs lullabies and tongue twisters. These were learnt, recited and sung by children during free time, enabling them partly to gain mastery of their mother tongue. Apart from the fun derived from them. They also helped to promote the mental development of children.

Examples

Don't cry baby

Quiet my brother

Don't cry baby

So mother may be come back

From the farm with some grains

The grain of millet

Sleep, now our child

Our mother is on the way

Quiet my brother (chesaina 1991)

Fresh milk

Cheruto, please go to the market

Cheruto, please go to the market

Go and buy salt

How much salt?

For fifty cents

How much salt?

For seventy five cents

The cow bellowed, mboo

The cow bellowed, mboo

The child replied thank you

For giving me fresh milk

The goat bleated, mbee

The goat bleated, mbee

The child replied thank you

For giving me fresh milk. (Chesaina, 1991)

Rono (2000) claimed that folk tales among the Kipsigis were based primarily on day to day happenings. Most of these bore very close relationships to life. Much of the ethical teaching children received come from folktales, most of which had happy endings and involved triumph over difficulties. Virtues such as communal unity, handwork, honesty, courage and conformity were reflected in many of the folk tales. Children learnt a lot about human follies, faults and weaknesses. The usual time for narrating folk tales was evening by the fireside.

Examples

The man who never attended public gatherings

Long ago, men used to go raiding for cattle. Whenever the elders gathered in order to discuss these raids, there was one man who always absented himself. He would always ask “what am I going to do at the meeting?”

One day the men met to discuss a dangerous raid. They decided to use a certain password on this particular raid. They said; ‘if we come across a monster each person should tell it: “wait for the person behind to carry you across”

On the appointed day, the warriors did as they had resolved. The man who never attended public gatherings brought the rear. The monster approached him to carry it across. The man who never attended public gatherings asked the monster “there were all men who passed through this road why did you not ask them to carry you across?” The monster replied: “they told me wait for the person behind” The man who never attended public meetings said “climb on”

The monster climbed on the man who never attended public meetings, ate him up and finished him completely.

From that day every man made a point of attending all public gathering. (Chesaina 1991)

Sifuna & Otiende (1994) explained that the judicious use of proverbs was usually regarded as sign wit .Proverbs were the condensed wisdom of the great ancestors. In proverbs one or two moral ideas were contained in a simple sentence. Most of them referred to different aspects of the socio political life. Old people and the parents used them in their dealings with children to convey moral lessons, warning and advice, since they made greater impacts on the mind than ordinary words .Example of proverbs are:

Proverbs on fate

You cannot take away someone else luck. This means your future or good luck is yours nobody can take it away from you.

This proverbs remind people that youthfulness is experienced only once in a person life.

Nobody can graze for another

Once fate is his alone. Nobody can assume someone else destiny

Death and laughter are brothers .This proverbs remind people about inevitability and proximity of death.

Proverbs on initiative courage, determination and perseverance

While waiting to eat the head on the bull,

We continue eating the head of grasshoppers

Encouragement to those who are in problems not to despair.

Struggle right and left,

One should struggle in all ways it is not advisable to give up before one has tried off many available.

Water does not stay in the sky forever

Suffering is not everlasting therefore one should not despair.(chesaina 1991)

Cautionary proverbs

If you live with a thief you also become a thief. This is a warning against exposing oneself to a bad influence.

Do not show a borne to a hyena.

Avoid courting trouble. Once you court trouble, you have to face consequences.

Do not follow a person who is running away.

Avoid being to mislead.

Proverbs on communal life.

Bees cannot get finished from a beehive.

We cannot expect everybody in a community to be perfect; it is inevitable to undesirable elements.

It is best for us to be like a tall tree.

A great deal can be achieved through units.

Many hands can uproot a mountain.

Many hands make work lighter(Chesaina 1991)

Riddles.

That which says 'Kurkar' – mouse

As flexible as a wrist chain-snake

I put it upside down and it does not spill-cow's teat

I met my father carrying arrows-porcupine

That which stand the whole night-cow's horn

I have a child who washes herself all the time-fly

I went on a visit and slept on top of a tree-safari ant

It is coming slowly down hill-caterpillar

Pepper in the ceiling-cockroach (chesaina, 1991)

Formal methods of instruction

Bogonko (1992) stated that formal instructions were given during initiation and apprenticeship training.

Orchardson(1959)content that the period of initiation was the most important time in the life of the kipsigis both for the individual initiate and for the whole community. It marked the passage from childhood to adulthood and tested youngster's ability and formally concluded learning before admitting him or her to the adult community. The initiation for both sexes signified a distinct period of formal teaching and examining with specifically selected and experienced elders giving instructions and setting tests.

A few weeks or months before start of ceremony, a site was selected for the boy's seclusion hut 'Menjo' which was located away from the homestead. The building of the hut 'Menjo' was done by candidates for initiation with assistance and instructions of young men from the neighborhood. These practical tasks associated with circumcision and training of boys gave them foundation of building their own houses when they were adults. Candidates were sent to invite their close paternal and maternal relatives to the beer party to be held at their home at the start of initiation. Each of those invited give instruction and advice to the candidates pertaining to the endurance.

Persistency (1939) point of that, before actual rite took place, boys underwent severe test of their endurance. On day of circumcision were stung with thistles as a test of their courage. As initiation approaches, the teasing that had been occasioned throughout the boy's life become frequent. As he went about his activities, men would stop him and inform him that he would be circumcised by fire and generally he would be reminded that the process was very difficult one. In the last days before initiation, the candidates in the evening at each other's homes to practice

initiation songs to be sung the night before the operation. In these songs, boys were reminded to heed the advice and instructions given by their seniors.

Rono (2000) explain that on the day of ceremony, the candidates got up very early and gathered in on of the homes and many boys joined them. These large group then went off to collect sacred plants 'Korosek' and 'Sinendoik' to be used that evening .At night, songs full of advice about endurance and perseverance on the part of the initiation were sung .Later, the candidates would be taken to the central home where they were taught lessons about the importance of courage and other related social virtues. In this central place, candidates were lined up in the order in which they would go through each part of the ceremony. This was in the order of the age or age set of their fathers with son or daughters of the most senior coming first and being known as 'Kiboretiet' .The initiation of the second most man was placed last and was called 'Koyumgoi' (the one herds the other's home) . The other candidates were placed in line in descending order according their father's age set. Initiates were trained to attach great respect to seniority, particularly to their fathers.

Fish & G. Fish (1995) claim that, the next morning as soon as the sun got warm or about 7:00 am, the actual operation begun for the girl initiates but for the boys it took place a bit earlier, as early as five o'clock in the morning. Boys were circumcised in their individual 'Menjo' huts. Girls were circumcised in the central place; usually outside the house of a well-off person 'The actual circumcision was cutting off the boy's foreskin and cutting off clitoris for the girls. After the operation, caretakers took their charge in hand .The girls were led away to the various homesteads where they would be put in the seclusion. The movement also took a form of an emotional and dramatic event, culminating in the reunions by clans and close relatives on the way. This marked test of the initiate bravery. Any girl who failed the test was finally expected to be married by an old or sick ling man of the community. Sometimes, some clans excommunicate such members. After this, elders teach candidates rules of behaviors. They were taught to be obedient throughout the period, listen to instructions carefully and make no complaints even when mistreated.

Orchadson(1959) point at that the second ceremony was Labe tap eun (the dipping of the hands) which took place after a prolonged period of seclusion. Education for the two sexes differed in methodology and curriculum because they were trained to play different

roles in society, for example boys were given instructions on military techniques and skills

This was an important task of boy's courage. Candidates were taken to stream by their instructors, dipped their hands in the water, washing off their uncleanliness, including their childhood activities. They were allowed to handle and given tools and weapons such as Machetes, knives, axes and arrows and spears. They were taught how use them both for domestic and external purpose. In the evening, the candidates were shown various constellations of stars and planets called '**Taboita**' which they were taught to recognize. This was a metaphor for blessings during procreation. For the boys, kinship knowledge was imparted by their father's. Sometimes; sponsors assumed their role. Boys' initiates had to know their genealogy and their exact position in the clan. They were farther secluded in a state of limited mobility in which they practiced physical skills of manhood such as making bows and arrow, walking sticks and similar articles for shooting birds. Rono(2000) observe that the ceremony of **labet ap eun** for girls had some similarities to that of boys. The initiates were taught some basic songs to sing led by some old women. Above all the importance of cattle to the community was emphasized at every stage in this process. Here, every morning and evening when cattle went in and out, the girls were instructed to sing praise to them. Usually girls were instructed by their mother for whom they had great respect. Following **labet ap eun** ceremony, the initiates were taught virtues of love, generosity, courage and responsibility. Formal teaching through songs (**tienjinet**) commenced at this stage. The initiates sang every early morning before and after each meal and every evening. The songs were archaic in language. The songs had lessons in proper behavior in relation to elders, parents, peers, opposite sex and children. The men usually took turn testing the boy initiates with the latter having to answer the questions carefully and systematically and correctly.

Peristaiany (1939) state that boys were taught what they could and should do what they should not do in terms of controlling natural calamities such as rain. They were advised to love and defend their communities from external attacks. Boy initiates were also taught sense of oneness, character formation, loyalty to clan and age set and importance of individual place in the community. In addition, they were taught good behaviors and kindness and were forbidden to use bad language or quarrel as this would bring curse to him and to the society and would find difficult to obtain a wife. The girls during 'Tienjinet' were expected to kneel down and put a

basket on her head while holding a stool in each hand with a stool placed on her back. She was instructed by her sponsors and elderly women to move four times round central wall of manure with touching the ceiling with her basket .She was prohibited to touch the floor with her stool. The stool was not allowed to fall off. This was a test on psychomotor skills of the girls, particularly on how to carry of many loads of possible in anticipation of domestic chores which could involve carrying heavy items from one place to another .it was also learning the skills of balancing. girls receive socialized knowledge on milking techniques ,sing, praise to their men-be husbands, clan and other community members also they were taught how to keep their houses tidy and clean gourd as well art of cloth making.

`Kayaet ceremony was the fourth stage and it took place at night for both sexes. The initiates were led by their instructors (motirenik) down to a stream. In both cases emphasis at this stage was a ritual purification.

The initiates were made to swear that whatever they saw during seclusion and whatever they had been taught at any other stage s of initiation would not be revealed to the young children or other an initiatively within community or outside. If they did, they taught that they would not prosper in future .at this stage, girls were allowed to do all domestic chores, particularly cleaning their houses and grinding grain, however, they were not allowed to cook. Their chief occupation was to sew their new dresses (sirek) which were hemmed with beads in readiness for their coming out (ngetunet).

The fifth and last stages were more ritualistic than the previous ones. It was called yatet ap oret(opening of the way).The emphasis placed was ritual protection against death for example those initiates who had lost at least three brothers older than them would squirrel or blue monkey skin. During this stage, the boy initiates mother formally recognized and anointed him as was the case during beginning stage of initiation .this implied that the young man was respected by the mother and had accepted him as any adult. The newly initiated man now took the title `**arap`** before his name.

Rono(2000 & peristiany 1939) observe that **ng'eetunet** (coming out) ceremony, girl initiates were taught how they should behave towards their husbands and how to interact with other members of the community as pertains to their social and moral conduct .Also girl initiates were given instructions and advise on ways and means of looking after husband's property ,especially

cattle .The initiates were trained to protect themselves against evils they would meet in the life ahead .Social conduct in the family and in other circles was emphasized. Girls were equipped with ritual powers to handle misfortunes .This stage constituted final break with childhood where clothes worn in the previous stage was removed and new ones put on. In addition, old hair was shaved off to mark the entry into new a new life.

By taking the child out of the home environment, the initiation rites emphasized that an individual must be responsible to the whole society and that the community and family had an interest in him

Apprenticeship training

Rono(2000) explained that medicine was widely practice in kipsigs in pre-colonial times. When children were sick or ill, the mother was responsible for giving advice and first aid before the father's assistance was resorted to. She fetched different types of curative leaves, roots and juices of particular trees .men and women learnt their skills from their parents. Girls were taught to collect medicinal herbs from forests by mothers; in initial stages, they were accompanied by mothers to the forest and learn right types of medicinal plants. There were individuals who were recognized as better herbalists. They came from special clan **Kapkerichek**. A person who wanted his/her child to learn their skills from the specialist would pay a fee and the training took a period of time. The apprentice learnt through observation and participation.

Persons practicing witchcraft did this in secret and even trained their children in the art .When discovered ,a suspected witch was driven out of his /her own home to live with maternal uncles; others could be subjected tom death through strangling. There were some specialists in exercising witchcraft; they passed skills to their offspring's.

Rono (2000) content that iron working was a major economic activity. The skills of iron work were transmitted from father to son. Blacksmith, '**Kitongik**' made hoes, knives and weapons.

Weaving was practiced by women and was taught to girls. The skill a girl obtained depended on personal interest in skills practiced by her older sister, mother or grandmother. She learnt through observation and participation.

The art of pottery was learnt by the kipsigis women from the Luo and Abagusii .In pottery, all the work from the start to finishing was done by women; the digging of the clay, beating and softening it ,the molding and drying and the burning of the pots. They made pots of different sizes and shapes for various purposes.

Conclusion and Summary

There were two methods of instruction used by the kipsigis in pre-colonial time. These were formal and informal method a child were expected to learned by seeing and imitation it could only be given formal teaching over it had made a mistake or when the outcome of its work was found insanitation. Other forms of informal education were myths, talk fore riddles and songs

There were also some other forms of teaching which were essentially formed. learning through apprenticeship was formed and direct parent who wanted their children to acquire some exceptional training normally sent their children to work with graft men such as potters , blacksmiths and basket makers who could then teach them formally

Formal education also took the form of initiation

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