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ECE 110



Childhood Education in Traditional African Society **Module 1**

ECE 110 Childhood Education in Traditional African Societies Module I

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Unit I The Meaning and Forms of Education

1.0 Introduction

I am very sure that the word education is not a new word to you. You must have been hearing it since you started schooling. In this unit, you will learn the real meaning of the word education. This unit will therefore guide you throughout your course as an educator. You will be able to tell the difference between an educated person and someone who is not educated.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of education
- identify the different aims of education
- describe an educated person mention the three forms of education.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Definitions

The word education is not new to you. You have been using the word in your discussion with friends in different places. What is education?

There is no simple answer to this question. Let us now look at some definitions of education. After that, you should be able to get your own definition.

There are many definitions of education. Many people see education from different areas. Let us see three of such definitions. Schofield (1982) quoting Lodge, says education is equivalent to experience. That is, the experience we acquire every day at home, in the streets, farm, school, etc is education. Therefore, we can say that all human beings acquire education through interactions with their environment.

On the other hand, Nduka (1964) refers to education as the process of transmitting the peoples' culture from one generation to the other. Here, culture means the ways of life of a people. That is the way of eating, dressing, including our language, religion, arts and crafts, etc. All these things which we learn from people around us help us to know how to do certain things. It has always been so in all parts of the world including Africa before modern civilization.

Another definition is the one given in the Colombian Encyclopedia. Here, education is defined as any process, formal or informal that shapes the potentialities of the maturing person. This simply means that whatever helps a person to develop his abilities so as to be useful to himself and the society is education.

We can now say from these three definitions that education is a life-long process which helps to make us self-reliant. That is a person who can depend on his own ability. It is the sum total of all the ways by which we develop the abilities, attitudes and all forms of behaviour which make us acceptable members of the society.

Education can be received anywhere, including homes, schools, farm, market, churches, mosques, workshops and other places. In fact, it is correct to say that wherever people are living, there must be a system of education. It is through the system of education that individuals within the society are made to imbibe the ideals of the society. Education is received in all societies. It does not matter whether that society is large or small, simple or complex, literate or illiterate. Education is not received only in the school. It can be received anywhere.

3.1.1 Aims of Education

In a very simple way, we can say that aims refer to long term goals. Aims are the expected outcomes. The aims of education cannot be achieved in a day. As you have just learnt from the meaning of education, it is a life-long process. That is, it goes on as long as we live. It takes a long time.

You learnt in the preceding section that wherever people are living, there must be a system of education. Then, if there is a system of education, that education must have some aims. That is, there must be some reasons why education is taking place. Since people differ from place to place, there must be differences in their aims of education. This is why we have different aims of education for different people or in different places. Let us now look at the various aims of education as given by different people.

Plato, one of the great Greek philosophers once said that, One of the chief aims of education is to turn the soul in the right direction and save it from a life of self-deceit and delusion (quoted in Akinbote, 1988 p. 6).

This aim of education by Plato has many meanings. However, let us just say the aim is more concerned with the individual's soul. Therefore, it looks more like the aim of religious education.

In another aim of education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as reprinted by Akinbote (1988) stated that:

The function of educational instructions is to help men and women, to live fuller and happier lives in adjustment with their changing environment, to develop the best elements in their own culture and to achieve the social and economic progress which enable them to take their place in the modern world and to live together in peace.

This aim of education by UNESCO is concerned with the development of people according to their changing environment and culture. No one can develop without his or her environment. It is the society that determines the type of education to give, and how to deliver education.

Some other aims of education which we can regard as vocational aims include, education should make a person productive or education should help individuals to earn a living. From these aims, we can see that the aims of education cannot be the same everywhere. It is what the people want in life at a particular place and time that will determine their aims of

education. All you need to note very well is that, there cannot be any system of education without aims. In one of the units ahead, you will learn the aims of education in traditional African societies before the coining of Islam and Christianity.

3.1.2 The Educated Person

Let me first ask you one simple question, which I always like to ask my students. The question is: Are your parents educated? Many students have answered this question in form of either Yes or No. Those who said yes meant to say that their parents were educated and those who said no meant that their parents were not educated.

By saying their parents were educated, many students have told me that it was because their parents could read and write. Those who said no also said so because their parents could not read and write. There are many people who think like this. Are you one of them? In this section, you will learn to differentiate between education and literacy which is the ability to read and write.

In the first section of the unit, you learnt that education is the process by which we learn throughout our life the skills, abilities, attitudes and values which help us to live meaningful lives. That is to say, education helps us to learn to do things. Without education, it could not be possible for our local farmers to plant their crops at the right time and place. Even without going to school, our grandmothers were able to cook good food and take good care of their families. All these are skills which they acquired through education outside the formal school system.

Who then is educated? From our discussion so far, we have learnt that education is the process of acquiring or learning how to do things or behave in ways that will make us useful to ourselves and our community. You also learnt that education can take place anywhere. Our great grandfathers and great grandmothers learnt to do many things without attending the type of school you are attending. Since they did well what was expected of them at that time, we can say they were educated in their own way.

Therefore, we can say that an educated person is one who has acquired some skills and is able to use the skills intelligently in solving his day to day problems. The person must not only be useful to himself and the society but he must also be an acceptable member of the society. It is not correct to say people who did not attend formal school are not educated. They may not be able to read and write (literate) but they have learnt to earn a living through the skills they have acquired.

As you will learn in the next section of this unit, there are various forms of education. That is there are various ways by which you can be educated. The school is just one of them and not the only means of acquiring the necessary skills, attitudes and values we need to live in the society.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Who is an educated person?

3.2 Forms of Education

3.2.1 Informal Education

You have just learnt that some of our great grandparents learnt to do many things without school education. There are still many people in towns and villages all over the country who have never been to school. That is, they are people who cannot read and write. However, without formal education, they are able to do many things to earn a living. For example, the local farmers, cattle rearers, drummers, fishermen, cloth-weavers and many others. You can mention them. Where did they learn to do all these things since they have never attended a school?

The answer is simple. They learnt to do them from other people around them. This could be done anywhere depending on the type of trade and craft they want to learn. For example, the cattle rearer will take the young man along with him into the field or farm where they feed their cattle. The fisherman will take the boy along with him in the canoe to the river, lake or lagoon where he will be shown how to fish. There is no special timetable for them to learn. All they are taught is done as the need arises.

Informal education is the oldest and most natural way of learning. It is available everywhere and it is open to everybody. Nobody is too old to learn in this natural way. It is also known as traditional education. Therefore all our great grandfathers and great grandmothers who lived many years ago, and many others who are still living around us had this form of education.

In the informal system of education, our ancestors learnt how to do certain things, which helped them to live useful lives. Even if they were not able to read and write, they were accepted members of their communities. They contributed to the development of their various communities.

Because informal or traditional education does not involve reading and writing like the Arabic or Western education, many people think it is not good. Many people, particularly the Europeans did not think Africans had any system of education before they came down to our land.

This informal or traditional education is not limited to Africans. As you learnt earlier on, it is the oldest form of education in the world. That is to say, it is as old as man. Wherever people have lived in the past, the informal system of education was there. You will learn more about the nature and characteristics of traditional or informal education in the next unit.

3.2.2 Formal Education

You are very familiar with this form of education. That is, it is the form of education that takes place in the schools and colleges. It involves reading and writing and this probably explains why it is the most popular form of education. This form of education is usually associated with the Christian Missionary Education which was introduced in Badagry in 1842. It is true that the first school was established in 1842 by the Christian Missionaries.

However, we should not forget that the Arabs also introduced their own education, which involved reading and writing through Islam. This was done many centuries before the Christian Missionaries introduced this our formal education which is now referred to as Western Education. In other words, both the Arabs and the European introduced their formal systems of education in Nigeria through Islam and Christianity. You will learn more about this in other units.

Now, what are the major characteristics of formal education? Let us see some of them.

- It involves reading and writing (literacy). This is perhaps one of the most important characteristics of formal education. In many instances, people make the mistake of saying as learnt earlier on that only people who can read and write are educated.

Let us remember that literacy is just an aspect of education. It is quite good to be literate because of its many advantages. For example, literacy helps us to keep records of all human activities in the society. As you know, this helps us to know many things, which are done by other people in other places. This has promoted our knowledge of people in other parts of the world.

Moreover, literacy has helped us to use some scientific and technological inventions brought from other places. This is because we can read how to use them. You can mention some of the other benefits of literacy to the individual or the society generally.

- It has fixed points of entry and exit with little or no consideration for re-entry. This means that with formal education, there is a fixed place and time for teaching and learning. For example, when you were in the primary or secondary school, your teachers taught you certain subjects in the school at a given time on the timetable. They must follow the timetable as much as possible so that there will not be problems.

For example, when your English teacher has his lesson, the Mathematics teacher cannot say he wants to teach at that time. He must keep to his time no matter how urgent, useful or important the topic is.

In the same way, there is age limit or some admission requirements for formal education particularly as it is in the school. For example, a 20 year old boy cannot just go and register in primary one. He will be considered too old for that level of education. Also, a secondary school leaver cannot just go into the university and be registered. He has to pass the JAMB entrance examination and also possess the required number of credits in the relevant subjects. In the formal system, there is usually little or no opportunity for re-entry.

In other words, those who could not complete a given level of education for various reasons may not, be able to come back again. Take for example a primary school pupil who dropped out in primary three or four at the age of eight or nine years. Later in life may be at the age of 20 or more years, he cannot go back to the primary school to complete his schooling there. He may even be ashamed to come. The school also will not accept him. So, during formal education, if you miss an opportunity, you may not get it again.

- Formal education has regular teachers who are professionally trained and paid for the work they do. For example, in Nigeria today, all primary school teachers are expected

to be trained before they can be allowed to teach in the schools. Moreover, once they are employed, they are paid salaries every month for the work they do. Anybody cannot just go to the school to teach the pupils without the permission to do so no matter what he knows. In some schools, some teachers are employed and paid to teach specific subjects. This is particularly so in secondary schools, colleges of education and other higher institutions of learning.

- Formal education as offered in the school system, is well organized. There is a syllabus to follow at every stage of teaching. The teachers cannot just teach what they like. They have to teach what is written down in the syllabus at the given time. Except in some rare cases, the teacher cannot change what is in the syllabus and replace it with what he thinks is good for the pupils. In other words, there is always a rigid programme which the teacher cannot just change. You have just learnt some of the major characteristics of formal education. This knowledge will help you to identify the major differences between formal and informal education later.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

What are the major characteristics of formal education?

3.2.3 Open and Distance Education

You have learnt some things about informal education and formal education. You -learnt that informal education is the oldest 'form of education that takes place outside the formal school system. - In the same way, you learnt that formal education refers to the thrift of education, which takes place in the school. It involves reading and writing. Now, let us look at the third form of education, which takes some of the characteristics of both informal and formal education. It is open and distance education. This is the form of education that is well organized and managed.

However, it is not limited to the four walls of the classroom like in the formal education. It can take place in the workshops or late in the evenings after office hours. It may also take place through the radio, television and by mail. You can see that this form of education takes some aspects of informal and formal education. For example, like informal education, it can take place anywhere and at any time.

But like formal education, it is well organized in such a way that you will have some specific teachers and the things you are to learn. Examples of open and distance education include education through correspondence courses, continuing education centers, apprenticeship under artisans such as carpenters, motor mechanics, bricklayers, tailors, welders. A very good example is your study at the NOUN.

The major characteristics of open and distance education are:

- It is open and flexible in terms of admission, curriculum, place of instruction and mode of instruction. By being open, we mean to say that it allows people of any age that are interested to come in. Unlike the formal school system, there is no age limit.

By being flexible, it means that it does not necessarily have a fixed time and place like the formal school system. This therefore gives room for many people who for various reasons cannot undergo formal schooling to improve themselves. This includes both male and female, young and old people.

- Open and distance education is based on individual interest and needs. This means that you are not forced into it. The individual will just decide what he likes and then go in for it. For example, you have decided to come into this Open University programme because you like it. Nobody forced you. In the same way, there may be people who want to become carpenters, bricklayers, motor-mechanics and so on. Nobody is forcing them but such individuals choose to learn such trades. They may have special interest in it.
- Open and distance education is based on the formal and non-formal education. As you have just learnt, it can take place anywhere and at any time. It is also well organized and coordinated with specific teachers or instructors. It also has duration for the programme. In other words, while it can take place anywhere and at anytime, it has to follow certain guidelines that may be prescribed by the organizers.

Open and distance education has been gaining some popularity in Nigeria in recent years. This is because of the many advantages that can be derived from it. Some of the advantages include the fact that it helps the old and young people to improve themselves. In other words, there is no age limit.

It gives opportunity to those who cannot receive formal education to acquire some skills with which they can take care of their needs. Open and distance education also promotes working and studying. There are many people who cannot do away with their work for a full time school education. Such people can continue to work while studying in an open distance setting.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, you have learnt some important facts about education, which will help you to understand the other units in this course very well. You have learnt the meaning of education, aims of education and forms of education. In this unit, you have also learnt how to identify an educated person.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you learnt that education is the process of acquiring the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that make individuals useful to themselves and the society. You also learnt it is not only those who can read and write that should be regarded as educated. Those who cannot read and write but who have learnt how to do certain things to earn a living are also educated in a way. You also learnt the aims of education and the three forms of education. In the next unit you will learn the major characteristics of informal or traditional education.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What is Education?
2. List two characteristics of formal and non-formal education.
3. List two characteristics of open and distance education.

7.0 References/Further Reading

Akinbote, O. (1988). Teaching and General Methodology. Ibadan: Global Books.

Schofield, H. (1983). The Philosophy of Education: An introduction. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Unit 2 Characteristics and Goals of Traditional African Education

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, you learnt about the meaning and forms of education. In this unit, you will learn the major characteristics and goals of traditional African education. This will give more information about the nature and purpose of traditional education, which will be very helpful to you in learning the other units in this course.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify three major characteristics of traditional African education
- list and explain the seven goals of traditional African education.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Illiteracy

In the last unit you learnt the meaning and forms of education. You also learnt that informal education is known as traditional education. In that unit, you also learnt that some students often say their parents are not educated because they cannot read and write. We said this is not correct. People who cannot read and write are only illiterates.

In other words, one of the major characteristics of traditional African education is that it does not involve reading and writing as it is done in Western Education and Islamic (formal) education. This is probably why some people refer to traditional education as primitive. This is not correct.

As you learnt in the last unit, many Africans who did not know how to read and write were respected members of their societies. Some were even respected by the Europeans who visited their areas. Examples of such popular people are King Jaja of Okpobo, Nana of Itshekiri, Oba Ovoramwen of Benin and many others.

Literacy is just an aspect of education. People who cannot read and write (illiterates) can still be regarded as educated in a way. If they have some economic skills, good character and the ability to apply their knowledge well to solve their problems, they are educated. Education is not just the ability to read and write.

3.1.1 Place of Learning

You learnt in the last unit that informal education, that is traditional education, can take place anywhere anytime. There is no particular place or time fixed for learning as we have under the formal school system. This means that learning can take place anywhere and at any time.

In traditional African education, the whole community serves as the classroom. Whenever and wherever there is need for teaching and learning, there is no wasting time at all. For example, a man is going to the farm with his son and on the way sees a plant that is good for treating a particular sickness, he will not wait for any other time or place to tell him what the plant is used for and how to use it. He teaches him right there on the spot. This means that traditional education takes place wherever there is need for it. All adult members of the family or community are the teachers.

3.1.2 Job Oriented

As you will learn when we are discussing the goals of traditional education, everyone is trained to have a skill. In other words, it is a kind of education that is related to life and work. Traditional education is a practical system of education which is aimed at giving everyone a work to do so as to earn a living. It starts early in life when the boy for example goes to the farm with his father. He learns practically from the father all the things necessary to become a good farmer.

So, by the time the son is old enough to be on his own, his father will just give him his own land to cultivate. He then does this without much difficulty. As you will learn in the next unit, there is no problem of unemployment in the traditional African societies. As someone said, sometime ago, it was the formal system of education that introduced unemployment into Africa. Do you agree with that view?

3.1.3 Flexibility in Admission

Traditional African education is not too strict about entry, exit and reentry into the system. That is, there is no age limit as to when somebody cannot be allowed to learn. In the same way, a man or woman who stopped learning a particular skill can be allowed to return if and when he is ready for it again.

We can therefore say that traditional education gives everybody the opportunity to learn. There is usually no problem of over age or under age. You may have seen some big boys and big girls learning some trades or crafts from the same master in your local government even in recent times. The old people are never ashamed of what they are doing. The younger ones will see the elders as brothers who should be respected. On the other hand, the older ones will see the younger ones as real blood relations. So there is mutual respect for all of them no matter their age.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Explain three characteristics of traditional African Education.

3.2 Goals of Traditional Education

3.2.1 The Seven Cardinal Goals

Many people including some Africans hold the wrong view that traditional African education has no clearly defined goals. This is because they think that since traditional education does not involve reading and writing, it could not have got any clear goals. As you have learnt in unit one, there is no system of education without its own aims or goals. Therefore, traditional African education has its own goals even if they are not clearly written down as it is done under formal education. We shall now identify the seven cardinal goals of traditional education as listed by Fafunwa (1974). They are:

1. To develop the child's physical skills
2. To develop character
3. To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority
4. To develop intellectual skills
5. To acquire specific vocational training and develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour
6. To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs
7. To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community.

How these goals are achieved in traditional African societies you will learn in the remaining sections of this unit.

3.2.2 Physical and Mental Development

In the traditional African societies, the physical and mental/intellectual development of the child is adequately taken care of. We shall see how this is done. I am sure you know the way this is done in primary schools that is the formal school system. Although, there is no written syllabus in traditional African system of education, yet there are ways of developing the physical and intellectual skills of the child.

For example, there are games and sports which children in traditional societies always participate in mostly in the evenings. They run, jump, climb and dance in games, which are given different names in different communities.

In Yoruba land for instance, there are games such as 'Bojuboju', 'Ekun meran' etc. which encourage children to do much running. Do you know that wrestling is one of the sporting activities in many African societies? Many African communities organize wrestling competitions for their youths. For the girls, it could be dancing competitions. All these go a long way in the physical development of the African child.

As regards the intellectual development, there are many things which are done to help his intellectual development. For example as the child grows up, he learns the history of his people from the elders. The elders always take joy in telling the children stories about their ancestors. Even, if such stories are not written down, they are kept in memory and passed on from generation to generation. This is what is known as oral tradition. Most of the

known histories of Africa that are studied in schools and colleges or from textbooks are got through oral tradition.

In the same way, there are riddles and jokes which help to promote logical and critical thinking in children. Such riddles and jokes are usually directed by elders during the evening get-together. There are also proverbs which are used by elders to explain some difficult points during discussions.

Do you know that Mathematics is taught in the traditional societies? Yes, they do it but in a very practical way. For example, in the local language, the parents or somebody else could say bring one cup etc and the child brings it. As the child grows older, he effortlessly learns the numerals in his or her mother tongue.

Therefore, along with his language development the child learns most of the things which make him an intelligent person in the society. For example he learns to add, subtract, multiply and divide in very practical, ways.

As once observed by Fafunwa (1974), no number is too large or too small for the Yoruba or Nupe man or woman to calculate. Areas are measured on the farms, according to Fafunwa by the number of heaps that could be accommodated.

All other areas of knowledge, which in the formal school system we call subjects, are also taught in traditional societies. Take for instance, Geography. The child acquires the knowledge of his physical environment by learning from parents and others the names of rivers, lakes, the heavenly bodies – stars, moon and the sun, etc. He learns the four cardinal points and even reads the time through the position of the sun.

You may also be surprised that in traditional societies, people learn the climatic conditions of a place to determine what crops to grow there and when. All these are things which we spend year to learn at different levels of formal education.

From this short discussion on the physical and intellectual or mental development of the African child, you will agree that there is almost nothing left out. In other words the traditional African education is in a way very comprehensive.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Enumerate the seven major goals of traditional African education.

3.2.3 Moral and Character Development

You have just learnt how the physical and intellectual development of the child takes place. Now let us discuss moral and character development.

In traditional societies, much attention is given to the development of good character in children. There is much respect for a well-behaved person in the traditional societies. In fact children who are of good character bring honour to the parents.

Therefore, in order for children to be good ambassadors of the family, the parents and other relations jointly train the child to behave in culturally accepted ways. In doing this, the parents are usually role models to their children. No child is ever allowed to get away with any misconduct. He is punished or corrected immediately.

Respect for elders and those in position of authority is taught right from infancy. This begins with the mode of greetings. There are special ways of greeting people of different categories and for different occasions. For example, boys are expected in Yoruba land to prostrate for the elders while girls should kneel down. This is also done by men and women for elders and those in position of authority no matter their age. For example, greeting kings, high chiefs, and religious leaders.

Among the Hausa people, elders and those in positions of authority are given respect. The young man often raises his clenched right fist to greet an important person such as a chief or a religious leader. Generally, it is not right in the African culture for a younger person to first want to shake hands with an elder. It must be the elders who are to show the desire to shake hands with the younger person who often sees it as a special privilege for him. This is an important aspect of traditional education which we should not allow to die. Western civilization has in recent years been making it difficult for most young men and women to keep to this tradition particularly in the urban cities. Do you respect your own parents, elders and those in position of authority? How do you show your respect towards them?

3.2.4 Vocational Training

In traditional societies, everybody is expected to be gainfully employed. In other words, there is no question of unemployment in the traditional African societies. There are various types of vocational training available in the society for the child to pick from. Some may be within the family while some may be from outside. There are three main groups of vocational training usually provided in the traditional African societies. These according to Fafunwa (1974) are:

- Agriculture education which includes farming, fishing, animal rearing and care.
- Trades and crafts such as weaving (cloth, baskets, etc), smithing (iron, silver and gold), hunting, carving, building, drumming, hair dressing, pot making, boat making, etc.
- Professions such as medicine (native doctors, priests, civil servants, village heads, chiefs, hunter, etc.).

Any of these vocational training can be received within the family. For example, if a man is a farmer, fisherman, cattle rearer, native doctor or drummer, his son can learn directly from him. In the same way, others who are weavers, pot makers, hair dressers, etc. can teach their daughters.

It is only when such an occupation for which a child is considered fit is not available in the family that the child could be sent to another person outside. The child then goes to the person as an apprentice. The period of training may be long or short. It depends on the nature of the work, the ability of the child or the wish of the parents. There are some cases where the apprentice child could stay from childhood to adulthood in order to master that trade or profession very well. A good example is the native doctor (medicine). Therefore, with the training received, nobody is expected to be jobless.

Everybody in the village for example is expected to have a visible means of living otherwise, he may not be wanted in the community. The only people expected at home during the day are the old people, children, the sick, disabled and possibly a nursing mother. It is only on

special days such as market days, festivals meetings, etc. that you may find most people at home. It is even a sign of laziness to find a man at home doing nothing. No one will respect him and he may not even get a wife in the community. Thus, everybody is proud of his work and takes it seriously.

3.2.5 Promotion of Cultural Heritage

From our discussion so far, you should have realized now that Africans generally like their culture and they always want to keep it. This, is one of the reason why in the traditional African education, much attention is given to the cultural heritage.

The child learns to do things according to his cultural environment through the imitation of adults. As a matter of necessity, children are always taken to different places by their parents or other adult relations so that they can learn what they do in such places and how they do it. For example children are allowed to witness the coronation of kings, the annual religious festivals, the various displays and competitions. All these are done in the traditional society to ensure that the young ones who will keep on the tradition when the elders are no more know exactly what to do.

In the same way, the children are given special trainings to make them useful to themselves and the community. Thus, whatever the training a child has received, he is not expected to keep it to himself. He is to cooperate with other members of the extended family when he grows up. For example, there are various age groups and other community based associations to which each person must belong.

The age groups do some community work such as clearing of the 'roads' to the farm, the river, lake or brook where they get their water. The age groups also help members to do some of their personal work such as clearing their farms, planting and harvesting of crops as well as building their houses.

In the traditional societies, everyone is expected to help his relatives or neighbours when there is need for it. As you will learn in one of the units later, there is a 'we-feeling' or team spirit or a sense of belonging among traditional people. This means that there is love and cooperation among the people. In many cases, there could be levies imposed by the family to help any member who is in difficulty. The levy may even be imposed by the age group or even the community. Everybody is expected to pay the levy without complaining as a mark of love, respect or solidarity.

We must also not forget that there is also the economic cooperation which in modern societies we refer to as Cooperative and Thrift Society. In Yorubaland as an example, the Thrift society is known as 'Eesu' or 'Ajo'.

In other words, you keep some amount regularly may be on every market day, with the society and at a particular time, you can come in to borrow money for a project or programme. These are some of the ways by which the individual is made to participate actively in all community activities. At the same time he is introduced into his culture which he is expected to hold dearly. No normal person in the traditional society can keep away from his cultural environment. You just have to be an active participant in all cultural activities.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, you have learnt many important things about the characteristics and goals of traditional African education. You should now be able to explain the major characteristics and the seven goals of traditional education. Moreover, you should be able to explain how the child is trained to achieve the goals of education. These are necessary for you to be able to correct the wrong impressions held about traditional education that it has no goals.

5.0 Summary

You have just learnt in this unit that traditional education does not involve reading and writing. You have also learnt that it is job oriented, flexible, practical and can take place anywhere. You learnt in the unit the seven major goals of traditional education and how the goals are achieved. In the next unit, you will learn the nature of the African family system and how the extended family system has also helped to achieve the goals of traditional education.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. List three major characteristics of traditional African education
2. In what ways has illiteracy affected traditional education?
3. Explain how the physical and intellectual development of children take place under traditional education.

7.0 Reference/Further Reading

Fafunwa, A. Babs (1991). *History of Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Chapter One.

Unit 3 The African Family System

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, you learnt the major characteristics and goals of traditional education. In this unit, you will learn the meaning of family system in Africa, the structure and the effects of external influence on the traditional family system. Generally, your knowledge of the traditional African family system will also make the process of achieving the goals of traditional education clearer. It will also serve as a guide to the understanding of the next unit.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning and importance of the family
- describe the composition/membership of the extended family system
- explain two factors that have been affecting the extended family system in recent times.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Importance of the Families and Types of Families

The family is the basic unit upon which all other human societies and organisations are built. That is, without the family, there cannot be any other form of human organization. The family can be described as a group of people who are related by blood. In other words, all members of a family can trace themselves to the same root or parents. Every human being therefore comes from a family. Thus, the family into which you are born is called the family of orientation. This means the family where you receive your initial upbringing. It is where you learn the ways of life of your people. All of us belong to this family.

There is another one, which is the family through which individuals raise their own children. This is known as the family of procreation. It is not everybody who may have this type of family. Why? It is simply because, there are some people who may decide not to marry and have their own children for various reasons. Such people will only belong to the family of orientation, or the family to which they are born. That is why we said earlier on that everybody belongs to or comes from a family. Nobody came from the sky.

The family is an important institution that is found in all parts of the world. It is found in all villages, towns and cities all over the world. The family makes it possible for life to continue in every society. Therefore, there cannot be anything like a village, town, city or even a country without the family. Even God himself at creation introduced the first family from whom all other human beings and families started. That is, if we are looking at it from the religious angle. It is the family that gives the child his first education.

As we shall learn later, the family plays an important role in the education of children in traditional societies. Therefore, it may be correct to say that the family background of individuals like you and me somehow determines how you and me behave in the society. We shall discuss this further in other units.

3.1.1 Monogamous, Polygamous and Extended Family Systems

In the section above, you have just learnt the meaning of the family and its importance. You also learnt that we all belong to or come from a family. That family into which we are born is called the family of orientation.

Now, let us go a little further by looking at the family set up or structure. As we have just discussed, we all belong to or come from a family. A simple family is therefore made up of the father, the mother and the children. The family where the father has only one wife is called a monogamous family. But if a man has two or more wives, then that is a polygamous family. I want you to note the two words very well. These two family structures can be found in different parts of the world. Which of them is more common in Africa?

In the two families, that is a monogamous family and a polygamous family, the major difference is that in the first one, the man has just one wife and in the second, the man has two or more wives.

However, there is a family system which is commonly found in Africa. It can even contain both the monogamous and the polygamous families. This is known as the extended family. The extended family is larger and wider in number and composition than the monogamous or polygamous families discussed above. Unlike the monogamous and polygamous family, the extended family is made up of husband, and his wife or wives, their children as well as their parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and other blood relations.

As a result of the large number of people in the extended family, it is not possible for all of them to live in a house. This is why they live in a compound which is made up of many houses. In Yoruba land, this is what they call "Agbo-ile". In other words, an extended family is made up of many family units. Remember that, a man and his wife or wives and his children make up a family unit. That is, one family.

If for one reason or the other, members of the extended family have to go and live in another town, the male members usually carry their family names along with them. In the past, some families among the Yoruba people had special marks either on the face or other parts of their bodies. The marks were used to identify members of such families. So, as soon as you hear the family name or see the tribal marks, you easily can say this person is my blood relation or is from a particular family.

In the extended family, all grandchildren call themselves brothers and sisters and not cousins as the English people do. In the same way, your father's elder sister or brother is your 'mother' or 'father' and not aunt and uncle. That is the type of close relationship that exists in the extended family system.

Self-Assessment Exercise

Explain what you consider to be the difference between:

- family of orientation and family of procreation
- monogamous family and polygamous family.

3.2 External Influences on the Family System

3.2.1 The Importance of the Extended Family

You have just learnt that the family is an important aspect of the human society. It is through the family that we have other large human groups such as a village, a town, a country and even the whole world. This means that no other societies can exist without the family. We have also discussed the meaning of the extended family, which is larger than the monogamous or polygamous family.

Now, let us look at the importance of the extended family system to Africans. The extended family system, which is very common in Africa, has some benefits to the people. Can you mention one?

In the first place it has some economic and social benefits to the people. For example, in the past and even now in some places, the number of people in the family was a sign of wealth and prosperity. This is because there are usually many people who can help in the work of the family. They also help one another in times of difficulty.

As we shall see in another unit, there are always many children in the compound. This helps children to have many people to play with. This means that children in the extended family will be able to learn quickly some of the social norms in the family and the society generally. As you will also see later, it helps the language development.

In another way, on happy occasions such as marriage, naming and other social activities, there are always many people to celebrate with you. In some parts of Nigeria, the number of your relations seen at your ceremonies often tells much about you and your family background generally.

In general, the extended family helps to promote the spirit of cooperation, love and belonging in African societies. What is the situation now in African societies? This is what we shall discuss in the next section of this unit.

3.2.2 The Religious Influence

You have just learnt some of the benefits of the extended family system. You may have noticed in many places now that the popularity of the extended family system is gradually going down. There are many reasons for this. Let us take one of them first.

The two most popular religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity have many followers. The ways of life of our people have been greatly affected by these religions. For example,

Christianity requires that a man should marry only one wife. Therefore, many Christians after marriage keep away from the extended family members.

In some cases, they even change from their family names to other names that indicate their new religion. The same thing is true about some Muslims. Although, their religion allows a man to marry more than a wife, you still find some of them for other reasons marrying only one wife.

There are also cases of people from both religions who see members of their extended families as unbelievers. They therefore keep away from them. Some Christians and Muslims even see their extended family members as wicked and dangerous people who want to kill them. They therefore run away from home to other places where the family members will not see them. Some have traveled to other countries or towns with their wife and children.

3.2.3 Influence of Western Education

As you have learnt in unit one, Western education means that formal education or school education that was introduced by Christian Missionaries, who came from Western Europe. As a result of this formal education, many Nigerians and Africans have become too much interested in the ways of life of Europeans.

Many of us as a result of our school education have no time for such things as extended family matters. As a result of their employment, some even live in faraway places. They therefore have no time to participate actively in extended family matters.

As we mentioned earlier, there are some who have traveled to and even settled permanently in other towns or countries. Do you know of any person like that in your own family or town? There are many of such Africans and Nigerians in particular in faraway countries like Britain, Canada, United States of America, France and other places. Even those who live in other towns in Nigeria do not remember to visit their hometowns again.

By so doing, many people no longer know members of the extended family system. They now keep to the European ways of life, which is, I and my family. Many of the children of such people do not even know the towns or villages their parents come from. Thus, they do not know other relations of their parents. You may ask some of your friends in the urban cities if they know their parents' relations back home in the village. They will tell you they know just one or two people. Some may even tell you they have never been to their father's town or village.

One other thing about the influence of Western Education is that many of the children of these people with Western Education cannot speak their African language. You see many parents in urban centers who do not even allow their children to speak their own language at home. All they do is to speak English or other foreign language at home. In the process, such children may think that the foreign language is better than their local language. This may lead to the general disregard for anything African including the extended family system.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Describe the composition of the extended family system in Africa. Your answer should include

3.2.4 Economic Influence

You have just learnt that religion and western education have affected the attitude of people towards the extended family system. You also learnt why many people do not have time any more for the extended family matters. Another important factor which has been affecting the attitude towards extended family has to do with money. This can also be called economic factor.

You will still remember that we said that under the traditional system of education, everybody is employed. That is, no person is without a job. You learnt in one of the units that the child learns a trade or occupation right from the family or from outside the family. This means that by the time he becomes a man, he already has what he can do for a living. With the coming of Western and Arabic education, things have changed. You have just learnt in the last section of this unit that many people go to other towns and countries to work. That is after their school education, they have to look for a job.

In most cases, such a job is got outside their own towns and villages. There are others who do not even get any work to do at all after their school education. They could have left the secondary school, a college or university. Even among those who have got a job, the salary they earn may not be enough to take care of their family. As a result of urban or city life, they have to pay high house rent, pay school fees of their children, buy books, clothes and other materials for the children. They have to pay transport fare to and from work. Above all, they have to buy food to feed the family. As you will expect they will also have to buy their own clothes and other materials.

If you consider all these expenses, there are some families who cannot do all the things mentioned above very easily. This is because they do not have enough money to do so. Among those who receive big salaries, many of them also do not have much left after spending on their children. They therefore continue to try to make money so as to meet their needs.

In this way, many people no longer have time for their extended family members. They do not also have enough money to help other members of the extended family. You will still remember that in the extended family, they help one another particularly in times of difficulty. This is one of the advantages of the extended family system that we discussed earlier on.

Therefore, there are some financial difficulties such as unemployment, poor salary, high cost of living and so on in modern societies. These problems have made it difficult for people to even remember to go home. Those who even have the mind of going home cannot do so. They always do not have money to meet their extended family obligations. So, little by little, people tend to cut themselves away from the extended family members. You must have heard some stories about people who do not want their relations to visit them. This is very common in the urban centers among government workers. This may not be because they hate their people as such.

As we have just discussed, such government workers may not be having enough money to spend for the extended family members. By so doing, some workers have offended

members of their extended families. In the same way many extended family members have refused to visit their relations again.

We can now see that there are many reasons why the extended family system is no longer very strong and popular among some Africans. Their new religion could force them to keep away from their extended family members whom they may see as unbelievers. Their level of school education may also force them to behave more like the Europeans who only keep to their immediate family. That is their family of procreation. There could also be some economic factors which make it difficult for people to visit their extended family members. Therefore, we can see that extended family system is gradually giving way among Africans. This is not to say however that there is nothing like the extended family system. We have them in different places and they still function very well. There are even some families who use the radio, television or newspapers to announce the date of their extended family meetings. Have you heard or read such thing before?

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, you have learnt the meaning and importance of the extended family system in traditional African societies. You have also learnt the different ways of grouping the family types. You also learnt some of the problems facing the traditional family system in different parts of Africa in modern times.

5.0 Summary

You have learnt in this unit that the family is the important foundation for all human societies. You learnt the various types or groups of families you can have in the society. You also learnt the special advantages of the extended family system and how some factors have been affecting its popularity in modern African societies. In the next unit, you will learn about marriage and attitude towards children in traditional African societies. This is an interesting and important unit that will give you a clear idea of how and why people marry in traditional societies.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Describe the membership of the extended family system.
2. Why is the extended family system becoming unpopular among many Nigerian?

7.0 References/Further Reading

Fafunwa, A. Babs (1991). *History of Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers.

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Unit 4 Marriage, Child Bearing and Care

1.0 Introduction

You have learnt the meaning and structure of the family system in Africa. In this unit, you are going to learn about marriage, the purpose of marriage, pregnancy and the care of the baby among other things in traditional societies. This is an interesting and important aspect of the family life in Africa.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the nature and purpose of marriage in traditional African societies
- mention some of the pregnancy taboos
- explain the traditional method of child birth and care.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Nature of Marriage

As you have already learnt in the last unit, the African man is allowed to marry more than one wife if he can cope. That is to say, African culture is not against polygamy. You still remember that polygamy refers to a family type where the husband has more than one wife. Therefore for various reasons, most African men are polygamists. That is, men with two or more wives. Do you know why the African man likes to have two or more wives? Some of them marry two or more wives because they want to have many children. By having more children, they will be having more helping hands on their farms.

Moreover, the more wives and children a man has the more popular he becomes in the traditional societies. Therefore we can say that Africans are allowed by their culture to marry as many wives as possible. There is no limit to how many wives a man can marry. There are however some conditions or factors that may determine who to marry. That is, the choice of marriage partners in the traditional way can be due to some reasons. As noted by Uka (1973), some of the reasons or things that can determine the choice of a marriage partner are:

A good family background — You learnt in one of the units that Africans appreciate good behavior very much. We also said then that people who misbehave bring shame to their parents and the whole family. Therefore, one of the conditions to be considered before anybody can be allowed to marry a person is good records about his or her family. The family must not be known for any bad thing or disease. So, people from both families always take their time to find out many useful information about the family of the person to be married. Bad ways of life or a family disease can make people from either the side of the man or the woman say no to a marriage. Is that good? Is that still in practice in your area?

Wealth: Well we know that no parents want their daughters to marry a poor man. We said earlier on in one of the units that a jobless or lazy man in a village may not get a wife. Therefore, one of the factors to take into consideration in marriage is how wealthy that person is. The wealth could be in terms of the large farmland, cattle, number of houses and other essential things of life. Is this not common in modern societies?

Social standing: This means the type of popularity the person enjoys in the society or community. For example, is he a chief, a king, a great hunter or a popular drummer? etc. Girls can be asked to marry such a man by their parents. In the same way, young men could be asked to marry girls from such popular families.

Tribal or racial group: In the traditional societies, people always like to marry from their own ethnic group. If possible some may not even like to go outside their immediate cultural environment. For example, in Yorubaland, an Ekiti man may prefer to marry an Ekiti girl and so on. Why do you think this was done? There could be many reasons. However, you will still remember we talked about the extended family system? Therefore many parents may not like their daughters to be too far away from them so that the extended family link can be maintained. If there is anything they want to do in the family, they can easily get to her.

Hardwork: If a man is very hard working and not lazy, he will easily get a lady to marry. Like we said earlier on, nobody likes to marry a lazy man who will not be able to meet his family responsibilities.

There could be some other factors, which you can find out. But let us quickly look at another thing which African men like very much in the girls they marry. That is virginity. A Virgin is a girl who has not misused herself by having pre-marital affairs with other men. According to Uka, virginity is very much valued in girls in African culture. Therefore, if on their first meeting after marriage, a man discovers the wife to be a virgin, he is always happy. He will buy special gifts for the wife and her parents. The parents of the girl will be respected and honoured for giving their child good home training. However, on the other hand, if a girl has lost her virginity before marriage, she will not only bring disgrace to her parents but she may even be sent away by the husband. Do people in your town still value virginity?

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

What are the factors that determine the type of person to marry in traditional societies?

3.1.1 Purpose of Marriage

You have just learnt the nature of marriage in traditional societies. Now let's look at the reason why people marry in traditional societies.

In some other parts of the world like Europe and America, people may marry not purposely to have children. They may marry because of their love for each other and to have a companion. This is not the situation in traditional societies. In African societies, the major reason why people marry is to have their own children. Nobody wants to have a childless marriage. It could happen in other parts of the world but not in Africa. In fact there have been many cases of even Christians, Muslims and the highly placed government workers

who divorced their partners because there was no child in their marriage. Have you seen such a case before?

Therefore, we can say our people marry in Africa because of their love for children. In other words, Africans have a warm attitude towards children. We shall discuss about their love and attitudes towards children in the next section of this unit.

3.2 Pregnancy and Child Bearing

3.2.1 Conception

You have just learnt in the above section that Africans marry because they want to have children of their own. This shows how much importance we attach to children in Africa. Therefore, **the** new wife is expected to become pregnant very soon after marriage. If however, pregnancy does not occur soon after marriage, the parents of both the husband and the wife will become worried. There are many reasons which Africans think or believe can cause the problem. It could be because the gods are angry with either the man or the wife or both. It could also be due to a mismatch of the blood of the husband and wife. There are many other reasons often given for lack of pregnancy. As you can see, some of them may be just superstition while some could have some scientific support.

At any rate, as soon as the problem is identified, the necessary steps are taken to correct the situation. In some cases where there is no pregnancy after doing all they can, divorce may be the last thing to do. We discussed this earlier on and the man will look for another wife. In some cases, the man may not divorce the childless wife but could get a second wife. One thing about the problem of pregnancy in African traditional societies is that the woman is often blamed for the lack of pregnancy. Do you support this attitude?

If however, pregnancy occurs soon after marriage, it is usually a happy occasion for both husband and wife and their extended family members. It is regarded as a sign of many good things to come. Proper care is usually taken to ensure that nothing bad happens to the pregnant woman and the pregnancy. Medicine men are in many cases consulted to give special medicinal herbs for the woman to either boil or drink or bathe with it. All these are just to ensure the proper development of the baby inside the mother.

On his part, the husband makes sure he provides all the food and other things needed by the pregnant wife. The older women in the family are always around to educate the woman on what to do and what not to do. This is usually in form of taboos or superstitions. We shall discuss that in the next section. But before then, let us note here that the husband should not beat his wife or engage in any form of serious disagreement with her during pregnancy. The traditional people's belief is that it is a delicate period for the woman. Therefore, anything that could cause problem for her and the baby should be avoided.

3.2.2 Pregnancy Taboos

Generally in Africa, there are some things people do or say that may not have any scientific explanation. They may do or say such things to prevent people from doing certain things. In some cases, they may like to teach certain good habits, prevent accidents and so on. Such

things that are related to the dos and don'ts are known as taboos. Some people may call them superstitious beliefs.

Pregnancy as we have just discussed is an important and happy situation to the newly married husband and wife. We also learnt that it is a delicate period when every care must be taken to prevent accidents or other bad things from happening to the woman and the pregnancy. It is in view of the desire of the people to have a happy and safe birth of a baby that certain taboos are given. Some of the taboos as identified by Uka (1973) are as follows:

- Pregnant women should not look at ugly objects so as not to have ugly babies.
- Pregnant women should not commit adultery. It is the belief among some ethnic groups in Nigeria that a woman who commits adultery may die during child birth or have a difficult time during labour.
- People should not cross over the feet of a pregnant women. This according to some people can make the child resemble that person that crossed over the pregnant woman's legs.
- Hunters should not kill animals during the time the wife is pregnant. The reason is that the killing of blooded animals or creatures may have some bad effects on the pregnant woman. She may give birth to a dead baby or the baby may be badly deformed.
- The pregnant woman should not go out at particular period of the day such as mid-night and mid-day. She should not also go to some places during these times.

For example, she should not go to the stream or river to fetch water or go to the market. It is the belief that evil spirits are always around in those places and at those particular hours of the day. However, if she has to go out at all during these hours or to those places, she has to tie a stone or a sharp object like a pin, blade or knife on her wrapper. This will help to drive away the evil spirits or render them harmless to the pregnant woman.

Do you believe such things? Well there are a number of people even in modern societies who still take to all the taboos. Whether the taboos are true or not, one thing that is clear is that some of them could be just to prevent the woman from doing certain things. Try and find out more about the pregnancy taboos from your own people.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Why is pregnancy usually a thing of joy to a newly married husband and wife?

3.2.3 Birth and Care of the child

We discussed earlier on that the African man and the Nigerian men in particular like children. We also discussed the fact that Africans marry not purely because of love but in order to have children. This as we discussed above makes the family to be happy when the pregnancy comes. Therefore they do all things possible to take care of the pregnant woman and the baby inside her. This as you have learnt makes people in traditional societies to have a set of taboos on what to do and what not to do by the husband and the wife during pregnancy.

Now when the baby is born, the joy is always very great. It is usually a great occasion that is well celebrated. All members of the extended family as well as friends and neighbors always join them in the celebration. The date for naming the child varies from place to place. In

some places, the sex of the baby or the particular tradition of the family may determine when the naming ceremony will take place. But in most cases, it takes place on the 8th day early in the morning.

It is usually done by the eldest member of the extended family or someone chosen by him. There is a bowl of water in which people who want to give names to the child will drop the money for the purpose. This is particularly common in Yoruba land where in those days cowries were used as money. Later, the coins introduced by the white men were used. Various things are used for giving the child a name. They vary from place to place. Find out what your people use.

The names given are sometimes a reflection of people's attitude towards children, or the peculiar situation of the birth or the family history. For example among the Yorubas, there are names such as Omowumi — I like children, Moyosore — that I am happy about God's gift, etc. Among the Igbo people, there are names like Chinyere — God's gift, Nwabueze — Children are priceless. As you have just learnt, gifts will be presented to the mother of the baby by all relations and friends. As we said earlier, there would be dancing, drinking and eating in the house throughout the day. In some cases, the eating and drinking may continue for two or three days. It all depends on how wealthy the husband is.

As there was no hospital in those days, the birth of the baby usually takes place in the house. The woman is helped by the older women in the family. Men are usually not allowed there except when there are problems. If there is any serious problem that the woman could not handle, they will send for the medicine man (native doctor) who would give things for the woman to eat or drink. In some cases, he may recite some incantations. When the baby is born, it must first cry before they can tell other people about the arrival of the baby. If a baby does not cry, there are certain things to do to make it cry. After that the placenta is carefully removed and buried in the ground. The baby is washed with native soap and sponge and later covered with oil and other things that could protect the skin. Among the Yoruba people, the cram wood powder mixed with oil is very popular. What do they use in your place?

The baby is washed two times in a day. All the best care possible is given to the baby by all the relations. The baby sleeps with the mother who breast feed to keep him quiet. The baby is never allowed to cry too much particularly at night. This is to prevent evil spirits who move freely in the night from causing any problem to the child.

During the day, the baby is carried on the back or on the palms by the mother depending on the situation. For example, when the baby is sleeping, the mother or the grandmother may carry him on her back. All these actions show the love they have for the child. As you have learnt earlier on, Africans have a very kind and loving' attitude towards children. 'This may explain why they do all things to make the child comfortable. The mother of the baby is also given adequate care so that she can look after the child well.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, you have learned some things about the nature of marriage and why people marry in traditional societies. You have also learnt the care of the pregnant woman and the baby when he is born.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you have learnt that Africans marry mainly because of children. You also learnt some of the conditions that may tell a young man or woman who to marry. The care of the pregnant woman and the baby have also been learnt by you in this unit. In the next unit, you will learn the method of breast feeding and weaning the child in traditional societies.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Why is polygamy popular among African men?
2. Identify and explain two taboos associated with pregnancy in traditional societies.

7.0 Reference/Further Reading

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Unit 5 Breast Feeding and Weaning In Traditional African Societies

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, you learnt about marriage, child bearing and care in traditional African societies. In this unit, you are going to continue with the care of the child. In this case, you are going to learn why and how breast-feeding is done in traditional African societies. You will also learn what they do in traditional societies to stop breast feeding and the problems associated with it.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- enumerate the meaning and importance of breast feeding
- describe some of the cultural practices associated with breast feeding.
- list some of the weaning foods commonly used in your own local environment.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Meaning and Importance of Breast-Feeding

Towards the end of the last unit, you learnt that African mothers take good care of their children. They do this by bathing the baby two times a day.

You also learnt that the mother was always ready to feed the baby anytime the baby needed food. Now what type of food does the mother give the new baby? Yes, it is the milk from the mother's breast. That milk is known as breast milk. Therefore, the method of giving the child the mother's breast milk is called breast-feeding. This is what we want to discuss in the section.

As you should know, the new baby cannot eat any solid food like bread or rice at this stage. However, the baby needs a complete food intake to make him grow very well. The only food that is natural and contains all the good things for the child's body at this stage is the mother's breast milk. It is very good and necessary for the child. Even before the modern day scientists and doctors discovered that the mothers' breast milk is the best for the child, our grandparents have known it.

Therefore, the breast milk is given to the child as food early in life because it contains all what the body need. It keeps the child in good health and prevents the child from having some common diseases that could affect children. A child that takes the mother's breast milk regularly will have proper physical and mental development. Such a child will also look healthy, good looking and happy. Do you know that doctors in hospitals now advise mothers to give their babies only the breast milk for at least six months? This shows that some of the things done by our grandparents who did not know how to read and write

could be very correct and even necessary. We should therefore take the time to study their activities so that we can gain from their experience.

In Nigeria, research findings have shown that breast-feeding is common among women in the rural areas up till now. It is probably only the women in urban centres that refuse to breast feed their children. Now let us see how our people go about this important aspect of childcare.

The first thing our people do after the birth of the child is to test the mothers breast milk. This is done before the mother starts breast-feeding so as to be sure that the baby is given good breast milk. There are many ways of testing the breast milk in traditional societies. One method that is very common in many parts of Nigeria is to get a little quantity of the mother's breast milk in a small cup. After that an ant is put into the milk. According to Ulm, the condition of the ant in the milk, that is, whether it dies or not will tell them if the milk is good or bad. If it is good, the mother will receive the go ahead order to feed the child with it. However, if it is bad, there are ways of treating it before it could be given to the child. As we discussed in the last unit, the baby is fed as many times as possible in a day. There is no particular time or place when the child should be fed. Whenever the child cries, even if the mother is not around, people will call her to come and feed the baby.

Therefore, whether the mother is at home, in the farm or market or even going with a load on her head, she is always ready to breast feed the baby. This means that our culture encourages the mother to breast feed as many times as the baby wants it. However, if a baby refuses to take the breast milk, it means something is wrong with him. Then the necessary herb tea will be used to treat the baby. This could be used for bathing or feeding the baby.

Breast-feeding is allowed to continue in many parts of Nigeria for about two years. It could be less or more. It depends on some factors. Some of the reasons that may affect the period of breast-feeding include the following:

The health of the mother — If the mother is seriously sick or if she dies, the breast-feeding child will be stopped. If the child is considered too young to stop breast-feeding completely, a nursing mother within the family can help. That is, in traditional societies the extended family system provides the opportunity for having a nursing mother at any time. Since they see themselves as one, there is no difficulty in getting another woman to help in breast-feeding any of their babies.

Health of the baby — Babies who are always sick or those who were born before nine months (pre-mature) are usually breast fed for a longer period. This is to give them more time to receive the natural body building materials in the mother's milk.

Sex of the baby — In many communities, boys tend to be on the breast milk longer than the girls. This is because boys need to build up strong bones and muscles for their future activities as men. On the other hand, girls are said to be more gentle and kind to their mothers by stopping earlier than boys. That is, girls even stop breast-feeding on their own earlier than boys. Have you ever heard of this in your area? Try to find out what obtains in your area. **Mother's pregnancy** – If a mother becomes pregnant, she has to stop breast-

feeding immediately. This is because of the belief that the milk could become dangerous for the child. That is, a child that takes such milk could become sick and even die.

The cutting of the teeth — When the child starts growing his teeth, he could use them to bite the mother. Therefore, in such cases, breast — feeding will have to stop to save the mother from being bitten by the child.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Give three reasons why breast-feeding is regarded as necessary for the child.

3.2 Weaning

3.2.1 Meaning of Weaning

You have just learnt in the section above that breast-feeding is important for the child. You also learnt that it can continue for as long as two or more years. As you know, the child cannot go on taking the breast milk forever. In fact, it will get to a stage when the breast milk alone will not be enough for the child.

Therefore, as from a particular age, the mother will start to introduce some of the adult food in the area to the child. That is, the child will be taking the breast milk as well as the adult food. This will gradually reduce the number of times the child will take the mother's breast milk in a day. The age for weaning is not fixed.

This process of giving the child adult food along with the breast milk till the baby no longer depends completely on the breast milk is known as weaning. That is, it is the period of reducing breast feeding and introducing adult food to the child.

Therefore, we can say that weaning is an important period in the life of the child. It is the period the child changes from depending only on breast milk. He starts eating adult food that is available in the society. You must however remember that weaning is not keeping away the child from the breast milk. It only means that during the period of weaning, adult food will be given to the baby together with the breast-feeding. In other words, both the breast-feeding and the eating of adult food will go together.

The mother must be very careful during the period of weaning. This is because if the food is not prepared under good, neat and clean condition, germs may easily get into the child through the food. As you may already know, this can cause sickness for the child.

3.2.2 Importance of Weaning

As you have just learnt in the last section, weaning is the gradual process of reducing the number of times a child is given the breast milk in the day. Instead of taking just the mother's breast milk, the child now begins to eat some adult food.

This is a very important stage in the life of the child. In the first place, it is the period when the child is introduced to the types of food that is eaten in the environment. That is, the child being introduced into the culture of his people through their food.

The weaning period is also important because it is a period when the mother enjoys some freedom. That is, during the time, the rate of breast-feeding has reduced. Therefore, the mother can now leave the child for some time to do some other things. It is also the period

when the child's parents need to be more careful about their personal hygiene. As we discussed in the last section, the child can easily eat up germs with unclean food. This may cause sickness for the child. Therefore, mothers, should always be very careful about what they give to their children to eat.

3.2.3 Problems of Weaning

Earlier on, we talked about some reasons that lead to the long and short period of breast-feeding for the child. If you can still remember them, we mentioned health of the mother, sex of the child, the growing of teeth by the child, the health of the child and the pregnancy of the mother. Now, do you know that there are some children who do not want to stop breast-feeding at all? In such cases, mothers have to do something to stop the child from taking the breast milk. Some of such things have been identified by Uka (1973) as follows:

- The use of bitter leaf : mothers will put the water from the leaf on the top (nipples) of their breasts. This will make it bitter when the child wants to take breast milk. In many cases, some children are discouraged from their frequent demand for breast-feeding.
- Some mothers may send the child to stay with some relatives during the day. For example, such a child could be taken to the grandmother or sister where there are other children to play with. By playing with other children, the child will not remember breast milk during the time.
- Another method is to give the child more of the adult food which the child likes most. That is, if the child likes to take banana, the mother will always give it to him to enjoy. As he eats it, he will not remember to ask for breast milk.

3.2.4 Weaning Foods

You have learnt the problems of weaning among some difficult children.

You were told then that some mothers can use bitter leaf on their breasts. They also send such children to go and play with the grandmother, sister or aunt. Some mothers may be giving the child more of the adult food which the child likes very much. By doing this, the child's demand for breast-feeding will reduce very well.

Now, when the mothers have started to give the child adult solid food, what type of food are they given? This may be different from one place to the other. In Yoruba land, some of the weaning foods, that is used for introducing the child to adult food include the following.

- corn pap
- yam porridge
- mashed beans
- amala with drawing soup
- moimoi and akara (made from beans)
- boiled yam'
- banana and other Soft fruits.

We must remember that meat is not usually given to the child by most parents in the traditional society. Their belief is that the child could have some worm infections if given meat at that age.

Do you agree with them? Well, they may have a good point because some of the meat we eat may carry worms. Except we cook our meat well, even those of us who are adults may get some diseases from the-meat.

4.0 Conclusion

Breast-feeding and weaning are very important aspects of childcare in traditional societies. So, what you have learnt in this unit is part of the childcare and love for the child which you learnt in the last unit.

5.0 Summary

What you have learnt in this unit concerns the care of the child which we also talked about in the last unit. You have learnt why breast-feeding is good for the child, how the mother breast-feeds the child as well as how adult food is introduced. In the next unit, you will learn how the toilet training of the child is done in traditional societies.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Why do mothers breast feed'?
2. Explain the meaning of weaning.
3. List five weaning foods that you know.

7.0 Reference/Further Reading

Fafunwa, A. Babs (1991). *History of Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan N. Ps Educational Publishers.