ECE 110

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

Childhood Education in Traditional African Society

Module 3

ECE 110 Childhood Education in Traditional African Societies Module 3

Course Developer/Writer
Dr. Olusegun Akinbote, University of Ibadan

Programme Leader
Dr. Uche Mercy Okonkwo, National Open University of Nigeria

Credits of cover-photo: Henry Ude, National Open University of Nigeria

National Open University of Nigeria - 91, Cadastral Zone, Nnamdi Azikwe Express Way, Jabi, Abuja, Nigeria

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Unit 1 Social and Emotional Development

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, we discussed the importance of language development and how children acquire language in the traditional societies. In this unit, you are going to learn how the social and emotional development of children takes place in traditional societies.

2.0 Objectives

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

- explain the process -and agents of socialization in traditional societies
- identify the nature of emotions in children
- indicate how the emotional needs of children are met traditional societies.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Meaning and Process of Socialization

In the last unit, you learnt that the acquisition of language helps children to interact better with people in their environment. In other words, language is an important factor in the social development of children. It is through the spoken language that the child acquires most of the ways of life of his people.

The general process by which the child learns the way of life of his people in order to become an accepted member of the family or community is known as socialization. That is, socialization is the process of learning the attitudes, beliefs and other socially accepted ways of living in the society.

The African child, like children in the other parts of the world has a wide range of behaviours to choose from. Therefore, he could grow up to be selfish or generous, honest or dishonest, kind or wicked. In short, the child learns the behavior patterns that are acceptable to his own people. It is however the culture of the people that will determine how and what the process of socialization will be.

When a child is born into the family, as you have learnt in a previous unit, the child is given the necessary care and love. He learns to imitate the parents and other people around him in both what they say or do. When the child starts to speak, the words that come out of his mouth are usually those spoken by people around him. There are certain patterns of behaviour they will expect from him. These patterns of behaviour may be taught directly by the parents or some other elder relations.

In such cases, the child could be told what to do in certain situations. Just as you learnt in one of the units, it could just be a misconduct that brings about the direct instruction.

The child may learn the pattern of behaviour through the examples given by parents, brothers, sisters and other members of the extended family. In other words, the child does what people around him do. For example, you must have seen children kneeling down or prostrating when they see their parents doing so. They may initially not know what they are doing or why they are doing it. It is much later that they will come to realize the importance of kneeling down or prostrating when greeting people.

Outside the family, members of the immediate community also take part in the socialisation of the child. We discussed earlier in another unit that the whole community serves as the classroom while all the adult members serve as the teachers. In this regard, every adult member of the society is involved in the socialization process.

We can therefore say that the socialization of the child is a joint responsibility of members of the family and the community. The process starts from the home where the child is born and spends most of his time. It then continues in the larger community as soon as the child starts interacting with people outside the family. In the next section, we shall discuss the various agents or bodies responsible for the socialization of the child.

However, it should be emphasized that even within the family, the socialisation process starts from the mother who is always close to the child. From the mother, it goes on to the father and the other siblings, that is other brothers and sisters from the same parents. This family' is what we referred to earlier on as the family of orientation. It is from this family of orientation that the extended family members and later those of the larger community come into the socialization of the child.

The foundation for the socialization of the child is first laid in the immediate family before others could build on it. Now let us look at the agents or bodies responsible or the socialization of the child in traditional societies.

3.1.1 Agents of Socialization in Traditional Societies

All human societies have some groups which are responsible for doing certain things at certain times. They may be officially recognized to do so and they may not. Such groups may be formal or informal. What is important is that they carry out some important assignments which affect the lives of individuals or groups within the society.

In traditional African societies, we have such organizations in every community. Our discussions in other units have in many instances brought out such groups or agents into our attention. Since we have not really referred to them as agents of socialization, we shall now briefly discuss their roles in the socialization process.

The Home or Family

The home is the first and possibly the most important of all the agents of socialization. This is because as we have discussed in various parts of the course, the home or family is the basic unit on which all other groups or communities are built. The family therefore has to lay its own foundation before other bodies can build on it. In other words, where the family/home has done its own work very well, other agents will not have difficulty later to build on it.

Now, as we were saying, it is the family that first introduces the child to the various ways of living acceptable to the community. From simple politeness to the more complex cultural practices such as marriage, naming and so on. The society always expects parents to give their children proper training in the generally accepted ways of living by the society.

Since the family is always a co-operating member of the larger communities' parents in the traditional societies do all things possible to make sure that their children behave in ways that agree with the expectations of the community. No family wants their children to bring disgrace to them in any way. This however does not mean that the family can do it alone. That is why other bodies or groups play some roles too in the general desire to make the child behave well.

The Peer Group

The peer group is an important agent of socialization. As soon as children develop and use their language, their level of interaction with people and places or things will increase., As we are all aware, the extended family system with large compounds and many children make it possible for children to have many play mates or peer groups:

Therefore, they are always, in the company of their play mates except may be when they are sleeping. As young as the children may be, the peer groups have a lot of influence on them. They make their own rules when they are playing and when anybody breaks the rules, others may punish him by saying they will not play with him again. This may often force many children to keep to their rules. You know that children always like to play with other children, therefore, to tell a child that nobody will play with him or her again is a great punishment which they do not like.

Apart from the fact that the playmates or peers help in the language acquisition of children as we discussed earlier on, they also teach various behavioural patterns and social roles. For example, at play the children will assign roles such as father, mother, son, king, etc. to themselves to act. In the process they put into demonstration what they have seen or heard from their different parents. By so doing children even learn sex and other roles through play mates. They also play games where they learn to cooperate.

Parents in traditional societies always encourage their children to go out and play with other children. Even if they do this in most cases to give them some free moments, such has been found to have very great socialization effects on the children.

As the children grow older, their friends may no longer be limited to children from the compound but also to those from the neighborhood. Children make friends easily although they can disagree easily too.

Generally speaking, therefore, the peer group plays an important role in the socialization of children in traditional societies. Even right now in modern societies. It is still taking place. Do you sometimes observe new behavior, dancing steps or slangs from your children when they return from school? That is peer influence. Let us now have a look at another agent of socialization.

The Age Grades

You have already learnt that the age grades form part of the means of integrating the individuals into the society. It is a little different from the peer groups because it is recognized within the society as one of the cultural groups organized for specific purposes in town. The peer group is mainly a group of children who play together without anything binding them together. They perform no specific functions in the community. It is not a life long association like the age grades.

Therefore, the age grades perform some other socialization roles which the peer groups cannot perform. As you have learnt in our earlier unit the age grade is one of the means through which the young ones become integrated into the society. Some of the roles of the age grades include community service such as clearing the roads to the farm, stream and so on. Here the group teaches not only cooperation but also selfless service to the community. Such community service is a must for all members of the age group. Any member who fails to turn up without good reason is always made to pay a fine which may vary from place to place and from time to time.

In addition, the age grades help to inculcate in the members respect for elders and those in position of authority. From among their own group members, a leader is usually appointed based on some qualities such as age, experience, dedication, kindness, firmness, fearlessness, and so on. Once the leader is appointed, he is given much respect by all other members.

Similarly, a particular age group is expected to respect members of a higher age group. This is an important social norm which is taught by the age grades. Other things which members learn from the age grade include obedience to rules and regulations, avoidance of behaviours that may be socially unacceptable to members and the community generally and many other socially approved ways of life. They also engage in political education of their members.

The Larger Community

This is also an agent of socialization. It is highest of all the agents of socialization in the traditional setting. The elders in the community as we said earlier on are teachers to the younger ones. They are always ready at any time to correct mistakes of the younger ones. They inform them about some cultural practices they may not know and serve as models to the young ones in whatever they do. Leadership by example is always the motto or philosophy of the elders in any community.

We have now seen how socialization takes place in traditional societies. From the family unit level to the community level, it is a collective effort. No particular group is even let alone in the socialization of the child. While the parents do all they can to introduce their children into the social environment, the age groups and the larger society never take anything for granted. They all participate in making sure that the children learn all the socially acceptable ways of life of the community.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. **What is socialization?**
2. **Who is responsible for the socialization of the child in traditional societies?**

3.2 Emotional Development

3.2.1 The Meaning and Nature of Emotions in Children

You must have heard or even used the word emotion before. What does it mean to you? Emotions according to psychologists, is an internal reaction or feeling which may be positive or negative (Vasta et al, 1995). That is to say emotions are inner feelings which are often expressed in our outlook. The feelings could be in form of joy or sorrow. They can be expressed through our faces, gestures or actions. It is not peculiar to any age group, sex or race. All human beings express their emotions on any given situation, event, story or information. Our attention will be focused on children in traditional African societies.

In the last section, we learnt about how children play together and in the process learn some social behaviours which in most cases are acceptable to the larger society. We should remember that during play, at home with parents or even in the streets, children often express various types of emotions. Now let us see the various types of emotional behaviours in children. Later, we shall see how parents treat them. In a study of some Nigerian children, Kolawole (1989) and Uka (1973) have identified the following among others;

1. Fear

This a state of mind in which children usually react to some external factors which are not pleasant. This is not peculiar to children alone. It also happens to adults. It is not peculiar also to traditional African children in the rural areas. It is what happens to both rural and urban African or European children.

The causes of fear may however vary from one group to the other among those mentioned above. Also the way children react to fearful situations may differ from those of adults. Now let us first look at the causes of fears among traditional African children.

Children fear strange objects or people. For example, children fear strange objects such as animals, masquerades, or some loud noises. In some cases, some people from other ethnic groups may cause fear in the children particularly if they dress or appear in an unfamiliar way. Can you recall such people from your own childhood experience?

In some cases, children could be afraid of punishment from the parents. At times when mothers promise to report their children to their father, fear may grip them as soon as the father comes home. We may also add that children are often afraid of darkness or going into the room alone at any period of the day.

What are the fear reactions of children? They often react to fearful situations by crying, trembling, cringing to the mother or an elderly person, shouting for help, running away, etc.

2. Anger

This is one of the emotional bahaviours often displayed by children. Many things could cause children to be angry. Some of them as highlighted by Uka (1973) include – when they are not given certain things they want, when they are prevented from doing certain things that may be of interest to them, when they disagree with play mates, if a play mate beats their

brother or sister, etc. These are some of causes of anger in children. How does one know that they are angry?

Depending on the age of the child, anger could be expressed by crying with hands and legs movement in an unusual way. Some children may even be rolling themselves on the ground. In older children it could be by disobeying instructions, beating the younger brothers or sisters. In the extreme cases, they may throw stones, destroy or throw away some of their own materials and so on.

All these appear to be negative emotions. Children often express some positive emotions. Let us quickly see two of them – joy and love.

3. Joy

When children are happy it is not difficult to know. They could shout, jump, clap or in some cases smile or laugh. Many things could being about this emotional reaction. For example, when the mother or father returns from the farm, market or a long journey. It could also be a gift of a new dress, meat, money or a promise to do something or take them out.

4. Love

Blood is thicker than water. We said earlier on that children could become angry if a playmate beats the brother or sister. That is a demonstration of love. They also love their parents. This in the traditional societies is understandable particularly in the case of their mothers. They may also love some other relations like the grandmother, uncle and so on. They usually show their love by always wanting to be with the person.

You often see some children crying when their parents are going out without taking them along. Why? Children also show their love by running errands for their parents, brothers, sisters and other relations. Another way of showing their love is to obey their parents.

3.2.2 Meeting the Emotional Needs of Children

In the traditional societies, parents' love children and they do whatever they can do to satisfy their needs. Let us quickly see how parents react to some of the emotional behaviours discussed above.

The first we identified was fear. This is one thing, which our grandparents were very good at handling. For example, a boy or girl that is afraid of certain animals like dogs or cats, what they do is to hold such pets and ask the child to touch it. Some parents also teach their sons how to kill snakes.

As regards the fear of people from other ethnic groups some parents try to tell them stories about such people such as where they come from or what they do and why they often appear the way they do. As children grow older, most of the fears often disappear. This is particularly the case with boys. Some girls do not outgrow their fears easily.

As regards anger, there are certain steps that are taken to correct the situation. For example, when a child of two to five years is angry over what the parents consider to be minor, they just pretend as if they do not see the child. In some other cases, mothers may

sing for the child call him some of his pet names and threaten to deal with the imaginary person or thing that caused the child to cry.

With the older children, when they express unnecessary anger, they could be punished. But like the younger ones, the mothers in particular may wish to calm him down by calling his pet names and promising him a few things.

We must emphasise here that parents by tradition are expected to show maximum love to their children. At the same time, they ensure that they themselves give good examples by not betraying their emotions in the presence of their children. Whatever they do, they do not always want to hurt the feelings of their children as much as possible.

4.0 Conclusion

The social and emotional development of children are very important aspects of traditional education. The socialization process involves every adult member and groups in the community. The emotional development is also handled with care such that the children are given adequate attention and care right from infancy.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you have learnt the process of socialization of children in the traditional societies. The agents of socialization and their roles were discussed in the unit. Similarly, the meaning and nature of emotions in children as well as the methods of handling their emotional behaviours were discussed. In the next unit, you will learn .the various ways used in the moral development of children in traditional societies.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What are the differences between the peer groups and the age groups as agents of socialisation?
2. What are emotions?
3. Explain how the following emotions are expressed by children:
- anger
- fear
- love.

7.0 References/Further Reading

Kolawole, D.O. (1989). *Nursery and Early Primary Classes in Nigeria.* Ibadan: Vantage Publishers.

Vasta, R., Haith, M.M. and Miller, S.A. (1995). *Child Psychology: The Modern Science* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

Unit 2 Moral Development

1.0 Introduction

You have already learnt the 'social and emotional development of children in traditional societies. In this unit, you are going to learn the moral development of children in traditional societies.

2.0 Objectives

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

• explain the concept of morality in the traditional African society

• identify the major areas of emphasis in the moral development of children in traditional African society.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 African Perception of Morality

Generally speaking, morality is concerned with good or bad behaviour. Therefore when we are talking about morals, as explained by Schofield (1982) we are referring to acceptable behaviors in the society. In other words, every society develops its own general guides or what we can also refer to as the code of conduct that individual will use to judge whether his relationship with others is good or bad. Without these moral standards, there will be no means of knowing whether what an individual s doing is right or wrong. By so doing, there will be disorder in the society.

In traditional African Societies, there is a great link between morality and education. In fact we can say that the two cannot be separated in traditional African societies. You will still remember that in one of the units, we said that the training for the acquisition of vocational skill starts as early as possible in traditional societies.

However, the acquisition of the appropriate moral standard is as important as the skills acquired by the individuals. In fact, in traditional societies, it is not considered useful for anybody to acquire a good skill and then be rejected by the society as a result of immoral behaviour.

As you have learnt in one of the earlier units, the development of morals is one of the important aims of traditional education. This is why every family' gives the moral training of its members the necessary attention that it deserves. Thus, the moral training of children starts as early as possible in the family.

In fact, we can correctly say that it is a joint responsibility of the extended family members and even the larger society to be actively involved in the moral training of their children. This is because everybody wants the child to be morally upright in addition to being efficient in one skill.

Therefore, moral training is deeply cherished by Africans. This may explain why they have in their various communities established moral standards through which they can assess the different modes of behaviour of their members.

It is through the standards they set that they are able to determine whether certain behaviours are acceptable or not. As rightly observed by Schofield (1982), it is in the light of values which the society holds that it makes its value judgements which the result into the moral code or codes of conduct.

In the traditional African societies, if any one breaks the codes of conduct, he is punished in various ways. There is usually social disapproval in which the person will be made to experience a feeling of shame. This could be at the family level or the community level. We shall discuss further on this in the next section where we shall be talking about the agents of moral development.

3.1.1 Agents of Morality in Traditional Societies

The Family

In some of our earlier discussions, we have mentioned how the whole community is involved in the education or the upbringing of the child. The spirit of love and oneness is reflected in everything that takes place in traditional societies. Unlike the acquisition of skills which may be in a way limited to the family setting or a master or mistress outside, moral training involves everybody just as in the socialization of the child.

However, whatever the extent of love and co-operation that exists within the African traditional societies, much is still expected from the parents and the family generally. Let us therefore consider the role of the family or home as one of the agents responsible for the moral training of children.

The family as the basic unit upon which all other human societies are built is very important in the moral development of the child. The family as the first place where the child lives during the formative periods is deeply involved in the moral training of the child. This is because of the fact that no family member wants their children to bring' disgrace to them in any form.

Therefore, from the very early age, as soon as the child can talk and walk, the training of the child in some morally acceptable behaviours is started. No effort is even left unused in the proper moral upbringing of the child.

The parents are the interpreters of morals to their children. They help their children to bring a union between the general codes of conduct expected in the society with those of other smaller groups within the larger society.

As we said earlier on, it is not only the biological parents of the child alone that are involved in the moral training of the child at this level. As it is done in the social and emotional development of the child, the brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and the grandparents are involved. In fact, the extended family members take it as a duty to help in bringing up' the child properly. There are usually established code of conduct which are strictly observed in the family. All members keep to them strictly. Any violation by the child is immediately handled with the appropriate punishment.

The mode of training is not different from the usual ways either directly or indirectly teaching the child the codes of conduct. There are instances when they will even tell the child that such and such is forbidden in the family or by the society.

As an example, no one including the adult members even talk about sex related issues openly. You do not even call the sex organs by their real names. This is particularly very common among the Yoruba people. Also, as discovered by Uka, when parents are discussing with other adults, children are not expected to listen at all. They should even get out of the place where their parents are discussing with others.

The Community

Another important agent of moral training is the community. The community has some other minor groups which we have discussed earlier on. They include the age grades, the religious groups and the various cults. These sub-groups within the society exercise great powers in ensuring that the appropriate moral codes are strictly followed.

We are already aware that the child has to be integrated into the society at one time or the other. The integration is usually done through any of the groups mentioned above. It is therefore the duty of these groups to ensure that members keep to the codes of conduct. Any violation of the codes is punished appropriately. Members who fail to comply after many warnings or fines could be expelled from the group.

In the traditional societies, anybody expelled for any serious misconduct will become lonely and completely isolated. That means nobody will interact with him or her and he or she may eventually end up not getting a marriage partner in the community.

Therefore, in order to ensure peace and order in behaviour in the society, codes of conduct are set in line with their needs and aspirations. It is through the codes that they judge whether an individual is behaving well or not. As we have said, those who fall below the expected level of moral behaviour are in various ways made to experience a feeling of shame. Such a person does not only bring shame unto himself but also to the whole family Therefore, every child is trained to behave well in the family and the community.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. Explain the meaning of the word moral.
2. Why do parents and other relations play active roles in the moral training of the child?

3.2 Morality and Character Development

3.2.1 Major Areas of Emphasis in Moral Development

We have just discussed how the family and the community generally help in the moral development of the child. Now, let us see some specific areas where they often expect high moral standards from every child. There could be some differences in the areas of emphasis from one community to the other. What we are having here as indicated by Uka (1973) is common to most of the traditional societies in Africa. The areas are — honesty, kindness,

loyalty, fair play, respect for human life and the property of others, politeness and chastity, etc.

Honesty is taught as easily as possible. Parents do not take it kindly with children who tell lies or steal another person's material. In fact, stealing is particularly not acceptable hence it is forbidden. You must have heard about cases of parents or guardians who have inflicted very serious body injuries to children who steal.

Parents therefore do everything possible to ensure that children are honest in everything they do. They do not allow children to pick anything that does not belong to them.

According to a popular saying among the Yoruba people, it is an indirect way of stealing to pick some materials found on the ground because such a thing surely belongs to somebody. So, if a child out of curiosity brings anything strange home, the parents would ask him or her to return it immediately to the place where he/she got it.

In the same way, kindness and loyalty are highly encouraged in the traditional societies. The child is taught through the example of parents to be kind to others. You should help anybody you can help and you must not be wicked to anybody. It is the general belief that wickedness is evil and the gods always punish wicked people.

Children are taught to be loyal and obedient. Any sign of disloyalty or disobedience is punished. This is why everybody in the society is expected to participate actively in all community festivals and other activities. Children who disobey their parents are generally regarded as bad children. All possible means are therefore used to ensure that children obey their parents. This spirit of obedience is further enforced among the play mates and the age groups as we have already discussed.

Human life is so important to our people that it is treated with great respect. Even when in those days our ancestors engaged in human sacrifice to the gods, it was done as a last resort. That is why as much as possible, they normally used strangers. The death of relations particularly those considered to be young are always sad occasions not only in the family but in the community generally. It is out of this respect for human lives that corpses are never allowed to be seen in open places. They are usually buried with much respect by close relations.

As far as politeness is concerned, it is the first moral training that is given to the child. Different types of greetings for various occasions or times of the day, how to say thank you are taught right from infancy. Rudeness or any form of abusive language is not encouraged. This is where mothers are particularly expected to watch out for their own actions and words. They are expected to be role models to the children since they stay more with them at home. All the moral codes are usually enforced strictly and any violation is met with the appropriate punishment as we have discussed earlier on.

3.2.2 Chastity and Sex Education

You have just learnt that parents and other relations ensure that children are honest, kind, obedient, loyal and polite among others. That really tells you how the moral codes are enforced in traditional societies. Let us now look at another important area of moral development among children in traditional societies. That is chastity and sex education.

Chastity refers to living a life of purity. A life free from sexual immorality. This is especially so for girls. In the traditional society, girls are not expected to have pre-marital sex as well as extra-marital sex relations. Ladies who engage themselves in any of these immoral behaviours often face very serious sanctions.

We discussed in one of the earlier units on marriage that virginity is highly valued by African men. Virginity tells much about the moral uprightness of the girl. It shows that she has not engaged herself in any pre-marital sex. It is usually a thing of great joy to the husband as well as the parents of' both the new husband and wife.

Therefore, any lady found to be a virgin is usually presented with different gifts by the husband. He also sends gifts to the parents of his wife for their ability to bring up their daughter under high moral standards.

Therefore, in order to ensure that their daughters bring them honour and not shame after marriage, parents, particularly protect their daughters from unnecessary exposure to pre-marital sex. In fact, it is a taboo in African culture to have pre-marital sex. Girls are therefore riot allowed to interact unnecessarily with boys as from -a particular age which may vary from community to community.

The idea of keeping boyfriends is never allowed as it is even a strange thing to Africans. Even when a boy is known to be the future partner of a girl, they are never allowed to be too close. This is why there are go-in-between which is known as `Alarena' in Yoruba. In many cases, the boy and the girl may not meet face to face till after their marriage. This is done to prevent pre-marital sex relations between them.

Where a girl is found not to be a virgin by her husband, she will not enjoy the respect and confidence of the husband. In some cases, she could be sent to her parents as a disgrace to them. This actually makes it necessary for parents to always keep a close watch on their girls.

As we said earlier on, any close association between boys and girls is usually not allowed. It is only when there is evidence that the boy is going to marry the lady that such a thing may be allowed. Even then, there is a limit to which they can go in their association or relationship.

As regards sex education, this is something that is done with much care.

It is only given when it has become very necessary to do so. Parents consider it immoral to discuss sex related issues with the young „ones, Not even among adults at all. This however does not ,mean that there is no sex -education at all in traditional education.

Girls for example, are only told things about their monthly period when they start menstruation. Similarly, .sexual matters including pregnancy, ' labour and child birth are only discussed when the girl is getting ready for marriage or she is already married. It is usually the mother, and other elderly women in the family that openly discussed these issues. They are privately discussed with the girl so that other unqualified children around may riot hear.

One of the reasons for early marriage in traditional societies is to prevent immoral acts. Therefore as soon as a girl is considered old enough for marriage either as a result of her age or her physical, appearance she is allowed to-get married. There is no uniform age for

marriage among the nineteen years. This could be a year or so earlier, or liter depending on the physical appearance of the girl.

When a girl is getting above this age bracket and is now in her early twenties, without anybody asking for her hand in marriage, it becomes a source of worry not only to the girl but also to her parents. There are certain steps usually taken under that situation. In the first place, they could consult the oracle to know the reason for this. After that, the necessary sacrifices are made to beg the gods who are probably angry with the girl or her parents.

Another step is that the girl's father may give her out in marriage to a friend's son or a chief as a sign of their cordial relationship. This is very common in almost all the major ethnic groups in Nigeria.

We must also remember that by African culture, a girl or even a man should be married. As we discussed in one of the earlier units, marriage is important for the purpose of bearing children. Anyone who has no children is regarded as unfortunate and will not have anybody to inherit his property. Above all, such a person will not have a decent burial when he or she is dead. So early marriage among African girls is to prevent immortality.

4.0 Conclusion

Morality is an important section in traditional education. In fact, it could be regarded as die pillar upon which the system of education rests. No matter how skillful a person may be he is not recognized, accepted and respected if his moral behaviour falls short of what the society expects.

Therefore, as much as the acquisition of skill is necessary, there is always the need to combine it with good moral behaviour so that the individual will become an acceptable member of die community.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you have learnt the importance of proper moral development in traditional societies, you have also learnt how the various interest groups in the society work in co-operation with the parents to give children proper moral training. You have also learnt that honesty, kindness, politeness, loyalty and chastity are among the areas often emphasised in the moral training of children. In the next unit we shall discuss the various techniques used in traditional education.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Who are the people responsible for the moral training of the child in traditional African societies?

2. List five areas of emphasis in the moral training of the African child

3. Explain why chastity is encouraged among African.

7.0 References/Further Reading

Schofield H. (1982). *The Philosophy of Education: An Introduction.* London: George Alien & Unwin.

Uka, N. (1973). Growing *Up in Nigerian Culture,* Occasional Publications No. 6. Ibadan: Institute of Education, University of Ibadan.

Unit 3 The Techniques of Traditional Education

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, you learnt how the moral development of the child. was handled in traditional African societies. In this unit, you are going to learn the techniques used in traditional African education. It is going to be another interesting experience for you.

2.0 Objectives

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

- enumerate the various techniques used in traditional education.

- explain with examples how each of the techniques were applied in traditional education.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Indirect Teaching

In one of the earlier units, we discussed the meaning of education. We said then that there is no community of people without their own system of education. You then learnt that Africans had their own traditional system of education before the coming of Islam and Christianity.

Therefore, if Africans had their own system of education with clear goals, then there must be some techniques which they used to achieve the desired goals. The five major techniques of traditional African education as identified by Majasan (1974) and cited by Akinbote et al (2001) will be discussed in this unit.

One of them is the indirect technique. We discussed in one of the units how Africans developed the intellectual skills of their children. Can you remember any of the special ways through which it was done? Yes, you can still remember the use of stories, proverbs, taboos, riddles and folklores. That is good. Now let us quickly look at them again and see how they were used.

In those days when there was no formal schooling as we have it now, all the young men and women in African societies knew their history very well. They learnt about their ancestors' right in their own families.

At different occasions, the elders in the family would relate their history with their songs of praise. In this way, everyone in the family will learn their family history and praise songs in such a way that they will not even know they are learning. This is indirect teaching and learning.

In the same way, children are made to learn many things indirectly through the riddles and jokes and folklores. All these riddles and folklores teach various things from good morals to simple etiquette in a relaxed way without the children knowing they were learning. There are also taboos which were used for teaching various principles of hygiene and safety.

For example, one of the taboos to discourage children from packing refuse with their bare hands after sweeping is that, by the time the child is old, his hands will be shaking.

In the case of proverbs, deep thinking which relates to modem studies in philosophy and logic is taught in very simple but effective ways. Through these indirect techniques people in the traditional societies learnt many things which promote their well-being in very simple ways.

3.1.1 Initiation

This is a word that often makes many people to be afraid because it is associated with secret cults or societies. This may be right but there could be another side to it.

According to Akinbote (1988) ordinarily, to initiate a person is to perform certain rites on him in order to admit him into the society, office or cult. The rites are usually performed by the elders, the priest or the leader of that particular group. By this initiation, the individual is qualified to enjoy certain rights and privileges enjoyed only by members of that group.

Let us now see how initiation has been used as a technique in traditional education. You can still remember when we discussed naming ceremony and the age grades that special rites were usually performed by the elders.

In the case of naming ceremony, which is indeed a kind of initiation ceremony, the old man performing the rights would use various food items, water and implements or tools for carrying out his duties to pray for the child. In the process of using these items to pray, the old man would signify what each stands for.

For example, in Yoruba land when he takes honey, after putting a little into the mouth of the baby he would say, honey is sweet and whenever honey is used, it is always for joy.

Therefore the life of the baby will be sweet and full of joy. In this way, all the children there will be learning some basic cultural practices as they relate to naming. In future, without anybody teaching them how to do it again, they could be called upon as adults to do a similar thing. In fact, there is no other place where they can ever learn such things. It is therefore the knowledge they acquired at such ceremonies that will make it possible for them to do it successfully if asked to do so.

In the case of the age grades, the newly initiated members of the age grades also learn many things as regards how they are done, why they are done and when they are done. In fact, they would be exposed to many other learning experiences which could be of great use to them in their day to day living. Such learning experiences cannot be got at any other situation since they are not taught anyhow.

We can now see that although initiation can be used by secret cults, it is not for them alone. Moreover, the various initiation ceremonies such as naming, wedding, age grades, the installation of kings and chiefs, etc. have some educational values and principles. Children who attend such ceremonies learn many of the principles and values of their cultural practices live and direct. At no other time or place could they learn such things.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Outline the various ways through which the indirect techniques were used in traditional African education.

3.2 The General Technique

3.2.1 Reward and Punishment

Reward and punishment are old techniques of teaching and learning. They are used everywhere and also at every stage of human existence. They are used by parents at home, and used by the various age groups, religious association and communities. In modern societies, they are also used under various names. For example in our schools.

In our different homes, we use reward and punishment possibly daily for one reason or the other. Let me ask you this question if you are a parent.

What do you do each time your child does something which you think is wrong or bad? Do you praise him for doing the wrong or bad thing? What about when the child does something good or something that makes you happy? Is it the time for you to scold him or punish him?

Surely, when the child does something wrong or bad, you do not praise him or her. Rather, you scold him, warn him or give him light punishments like touching his nose, pulling his ears, etc. You do all those things so as to discourage him from repeating that mistake again.

On the other hand, when the child does something that makes you happy, you praise, you commend him and at times buy him special clothes or other things. You do all these things to encourage him to continue with the good things and even do better.

That is what our ancestors have learnt to do many years ago. In fact, we could. say it was an important technique in the traditional system of education. Let us start from the family. Do you still remember our discussion

on toilet training'? Yes, any time a child who is of age defecates in the wrong place, he would be corrected immediately either by scolding him, giving him a light punishment or giving some materials to personally remove the waste from there and take to the appropriate place.

But when the child goes to the appropriate place to defecate, he will be praised for doing the right thing. In another example, if a child does not greet his parents or other elders when he meets them at any time particularly in the morning or when returning from a place. What happens? The child is corrected immediately through some verbal warnings, abuse or if it is found to be intentional, he could be punished in a more serious way.

However, when a child particularly among the Yorubas greets his parents with all respect. He is praised, and prayers are usually offered for his long life, success and prosperity. This usually encourages the children in the family to greet their parents well in the morning before they go out.

As regards those learning some skills such as farming, weaving and other crafts, the child is punished at times with some strokes of the cane or a knock on the head for not doing certain things properly. But when a child has performed well to the expectations of the parents or the master or mistress, he is praised.

In some cases, the child could be given special gifts of some material or tool to encourage him to continue to do well. We can see -now that rewards and punishment have been used to bring the best of the children in all circumstances.

3.2.2 Experimentation

One of the essential characteristics of traditional education is that it is practical oriented. What does this mean'? It means that you learn everything through personal experiences and practice. You do not just learn anything by receiving, only instructions from whatever source without trying it out. That is possibly why traditional education makes the products of the system very confident, practical, active and efficient whenever there is need for them to put their skills into use.

You may now be asking whether or how people under traditional education can perform experiment. Do they have laboratories and the instruments for performing experiment? These are the type of questions often asked because of people's misconception of the word experimentation. It is true that you perform experiments in the laboratories with very modern equipment.

If we look at the meaning of the word experiment, it means to try out, to test, to find out the expected outcome of any act, etc. on activity. It does not mean that we can only try out or test whether something works or not. You can experiment on the farm in the workshop and any other place where people are working.

Let us take the example of any of the trades, crafts or the profession. If a girl is an apprentice under a woman who is an expert in dyeing in for instance, the girl must have been told how to get and prepare the materials used for dyeing traditional societies. After sometime, she could on her own want to try it out.

Therefore, she goes into the forest to get the leaves and other things her mistress normally use. After mixing them the way she has been taught, she now wants to test it. In other words she wants to see what the result will be. She wants to find out whether her own dye will produce the same colour or quality like the one her mistress has been using. She therefore dips a piece of cloth into it for the usual period of time.

What the girl is doing is experimentation. If you like you can say she is performing an experiment. It is a way or technique of either putting into practice what she has learnt or just to see what the outcome of what she has got will be.

This is the general practice in all the three broad areas of vocational skills acquisition which you learnt earlier on. The farmers, the fishermen, the cattle rearers, the hunters, the weavers, the medicine man and all the others. Without experimentation, they will never know how competent or good they are at doing what they claim to be learning or have learnt.

You probably must have seen small Fulani boys taking some cows or sheep out into the field to eat grass. He is experimenting here to see how good he is at controlling the animals. That is how it is done in traditional education. Without experimentation, you cannot be regarded as competent or good enough to be on your own later.

3.2.3 Apprenticeship

You have come across apprenticeship in some other units you studied earlier on. Therefore, you should know what it is all about. The question one should like to ask you now is, who is an apprentice? How does one become an apprentice in the traditional setting? Yes, I know you can try to provide answers to those questions.

However, let me quickly refresh your memory about some of the things you have already learnt about it.

In traditional African societies, as we have already discussed, everybody acquired a skill with which he can take care of himself and the family. That is why we said in traditional African societies, there is no unemployment as everybody is trained to acquire a skill right from childhood. How does one acquire a skill in the traditional society? This is what we are now going to discuss.

Since everybody is employed in one way or the other, it means that parents in all the families that make up the community are experts or

masters/mistresses in a particular trade, craft or profession. As you must he aware, most Africans are engaged in agriculture.

In such cases where the father is engaged maybe in farming, fishing, or animal rearing, the child naturally learns the skills involved from his father. For example, the farmer starts taking the child to the farm at a very tender age of five or six years.

We discussed in one of the units that boys are usually not allowed to remain too long with the mother at home. Can you remember why? This is because they do not always want the boys to take too much after their mothers. Therefore, as soon as the boy can walk some distance, they start taking him to the farm. Occasionally, they even have to carry the boy for the greater part of the journey to and from the farm.

As the body grows older, he learns to do some of the things his father does every day. He teams this through observations first. Later, he is encouraged to join the father in doing some of the little things that he can handle very well. This is how the acquisition of farming skills go on for years till the boy has become capable of doing everything in farming with or without supervision.

As you have already learnt, some of the techniques usually employed on the farm to train the boy include indirect instruction, punishment and rewards and experimentation. In most cases, the boy will have to work on the father's farm till even after his marriage. At the appropriate time, the boy will be given his own provision of farmland to cultivate. The same goes for other trades or professions that are practiced in the family.

There are however some conditions which may force the child to go outside the family to learn or acquire a skill. This could be a particular trade, craft or profession that is not available in the family. Take for instance medicine. The decision to allow the child to go and learn that profession could have been taken after consulting the oracle. Whatever the case, the decision is usually based on proper counselling.

When it is agreed that the boy should go and acquire that skill, then a reputable master in that area would be chosen. He could be a close friend of the family. The father then goes to make the necessary arrangements with the master who could be in the same village or another one. The child is then taken to the person where he would stay with the master. He may have to first serve as a house-boy to the master.

After some years of good conduct, the child is now allowed by the master to start observing him. This goes on and the usual techniques of traditional education will continue.

Meanwhile, the boy, that is, the apprentice may remain with the master for more than ten years. In some cases such as those who want to become doctors or witch doctors they may have to stay much longer. This is because

of the nature of the profession which does not allow the very important secrets to be made known to the boy too soon. He has to be seen to be really ready for such a valuable knowledge before he could be made to know them.

These are the techniques used in traditional education. It is interesting to note that some of the techniques are also being used in the modem day system of formal education. It confirms once again that most of the things done by our ancestors are not as bad and useless as we were often made to believe.

4.0 Conclusion

The traditional system of education has always been made as practical as possible. That is why all the techniques involved have always ensured good understanding of the various skills acquired by the learners. Nobody ever learns any abstract thing which he or she cannot illustrate or demonstrate. That is the reality of traditional education.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you have learnt the five major techniques used in traditional education. You learnt how each of the techniques were used with practical examples drawn from the various vocational areas. In the next unit, we are going to critically look at the traditional education and identify the problems associated with it.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Identify the five major techniques used in traditional African education.
2. Explain with examples how any two of the techniques are used in the teaching and teaming of various skills in traditional education.

7.0 References/Further Reading

Akinbote, O., Oduolowu, E., Lawal, B. (2001) *Pre-primary and Primary Education in Nigeria- A Basic Text.* Ibadan: Stirling Horden Nig. Ltd.

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Unit 4 Problems of Traditional African Education

1.0 introduction

So far, we have discussed in the various units the process of traditional African education. You have in the process learnt the nature, characteristics, goals and techniques of traditional education among others. In this unit, you are going to learn the major problems or difficulties associated with traditional African education. Although, you must have been coming across such problems in the discussion of various units, nowhere has this been taken together as a unit.

2.0 objectives

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

- enumerate the major problems associated with traditional African education
- suggest ways of solving each problem where possible.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Rigidity of Content and Process

In some of the units in this course, you have learnt the major characteristics and goals of tradition-al African education. In the same way you have learnt the processes involved in the achievement of the goals.

Therefore, I expect you now to be able to explain the advantages of traditional education. For example we said it is a system of education that is practical and job oriented. That is, everything is learnt practically in the system which prepares everybody for a gainful employment.

You will still remember when we said that because traditional education is practically learnt, children usually have a proper understanding of whatever they learnt. In the same way you learnt that the traditional system of education gave proper attention to the physical, mental, social, emotional and moral development of the child. All these focus on the advantages or the strong points of traditional education.

Since every coin has two sides, it is necessary for us to look at the other side of traditional education. That is, the problems of traditional African education. In what ways have such problems made it difficult for the system to become very relevant to the needs of modern societies? These are some of the things we want to examine in this unit.

One of the major problems facing traditional education is that of rigidity. That means to say that things do not change much in the system.- The old ways of doing things by our ancestors many decades ago are still being followed. There is no room for bringing new ideas or methods into the system. The same old ways of doing things are passed on from

one generation to the other. There is even a popular saying in the traditional societies that things must be done the way things are usually done so that the same results could be obtained. In other words, there should be no modification, alteration or a local departure from the traditional ways of doing things.

Therefore anyone in the society who openly departs from the traditional ways of doing things is usually punished. There are different ways of punishing the offender. It all depends on how serious his offence is considered to be by the elders within the society. It could be just by verbal abuse or isolation, expulsion from the community or in some extreme cases, the offender could be put to death (Akinbote 2002).

In this way, the traditional system of education can be regarded as rigid. No ideas are ever allowed no matter how good, if it is not in line with the traditional ways of doing things. This has led to the backwardness of some communities in Africa up till this present moment. We can easily observe this in people's mode of dressing, farming, cooking, housing, child rearing practices and economic activities.

We are not saying some or all of these ways of life are bad completely. What we are saying is that life could made easier and more comfortable if new ways of doing things are introduced or allowed into such areas. As we are all aware, nothing is permanent in life. Therefore with changes in different ways of doing things life could become better in many aspects. Can you give some examples of such areas where we need some changes?

3.1.1 Secrecy, Fear and Superstition

Secrecy

Most of the teaching and learning that take place in traditional education are based on secrecy, fear and superstition. In other words, there are some very important facts of life and living that are taught only to a selected few. Not everybody in the society is open to such knowledge. This is particularly common with the secret cults and religious organizations. Even in medicine, some valuable knowledge used for the treatment and cure of some difficult diseases are often kept as top secrets. The apprentice for example may spend over a decade with a master without being given the complete information as it relates to a particular disease and what could be done to cure it. I will give you a true-life example here.

There used to be an old woman in one of the towns in the South Western part of Nigeria. The woman was very good at treating fractures of the legs or hands. She could rightly be described as a bone surgeon in the modern medical practice. Accident victims were often taken to her for treatment from different parts of the country. Some hopeless cases that were to be solved only by amputation and those who were declared as unable to walk again were treated by the woman successfully. She had many children both male and female. Some of the children went to school but some did not.

However, the woman died some years ago. Everybody was thinking that some, if not all the children, would have learnt how to treat fractured bones from their mother. To everybody's surprise and disappointment, none of them could treat fractured legs because according to one of them, Mama did not teach them. In other words, the old woman kept

the secret to herself and died with that valuable knowledge. Her know ledge and skill could have been written down for others to read.

You may even think that is just an unusual situation. Do you .know that even right now, some of' the traditional doctors still do it? Many do not allow their patients to know all the ingredients used for the medicine given to them'? In modern medical practice, when a doctor gives you a particular medicine to buy, you will see on the cover of the pack what the particular medicine is made from.

Fear

Another area that could be regarded as a major problem in traditional education is that most things are based on fear and superstition. For example, you remember what we said about taboos in one of the earlier units? A pregnant woman should not go out at a particular hour of the day without carrying a sharp object like a pin, blade or a stone on her. There is no scientific reason for doing that. It is only based on the belief of the people.

There are even some instances when good health habits and other principles are taught with fears in the minds of children. They are also tied to some taboos which often create unnecessary fears in children.

For example, children should not pack the refuse with bare hands so that their hands will not be shaking when they grow up to adulthood. Although the idea is to teach simple hygiene, it has created fear in the children. Many of such taboos must be kept by the child, otherwise he will be threatened with death or other misfortunes if they refuse to cooperate with the elders.

We can now see that many useful ideas or knowledge that could have been of great benefit to humanity have been kept as secrets in many traditional societies. The recent popular advertisements in the electronic and print media by some traditional doctors on their ability to cure or treat certain diseases are not taken seriously by many people.

People who even visit some of the exhibitions by these traditional doctors said some of them are not very open. That is, they do not give them complete treatment so that people could always go back to them. That is still part of the problem of secrecy we are talking about. If all the knowledge used by medical doctors and other scientists to treat people in hospitals have been kept as secrets by a few people, the world could not have been as good as it is today. Many children could have died from diseases that are now preventable through vaccinations.

3.1.2 Illiteracy

As you have learnt in one of the units, traditional African education does not involve reading and writing. This could be regarded as one of the greatest problems facing traditional education. You must have heard or read it that illiteracy is a disease. As practical and job oriented as traditional education is, the simple fact that it does not involve reading and writing has created some problems.

For example, the problem of secrecy that we have just discussed could not have been very serious if reading and writing was involved. If that old woman was able to write all the things used in her treatment of broken bones it could have been better. Even if she did not directly teach the children, at least those of them that went to school could have been able to read them and now be able to make use of that knowledge to help others.

In one of the earlier units, you learnt that all the events in traditional societies were passed down through oral traditions. That is to say, a father or whoever has the information, may be about their origin and so on, would have to keep the story in their memory until they have their own children to tell the story.

What do you think could happen to such stories that are passed down from generation to generation like that? There could be some additions or subtractions. This is because there is a limit to what one can keep in memory for a very long time. 'The events around and of course, old age could lead to forgetting some of the important aspects of the stories. This may be the reason why we have different stories about the origin of different communities who claim to be from the same ancestors in Africa. The different claims by each group even in the same community have often led to disputes and fighting over issues such as chieftaincy.

The story could have been different if the founders of such communities have been able to write down their personal accounts of their history. For example, if the founder had written down the number of his children, their names, their order of seniority and how they should conduct the affairs in his domain, most of the present day problems could have been avoided. The little we have been able to get from the archives in recent years were the recorded aspects of our history through our contact with the Arabs and Europeans.

As we mentioned earlier on, the problems associated with being rigid and superstitious could have been reduced if people were able to read and write. For instance, with the ability to read other people's ideas and what they have done and how it was done, our people could probably have been able to accept new ideas. The traditional rigid ways of doing certain things or beliefs could have been changed. You can see what has happened to most of the beliefs and ways of doing things since the coming of the Arabs and the Europeans with their formal system of education.

Their formal system of education has affected many aspects of our traditional practices such as religion, arts and crafts and even agriculture. May be one of the reasons why many people including some Africans, say traditional education is not good is because it does not involve reading and writing.

However, as we said in Units one and two of this course, the absence of reading and writing in traditional education does not make it useless. After all, it served the purpose and needs of our ancestors at that time. May be the inclusion of literacy could have made it more organized and more relevant to meet the needs of modern societies.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Explain with examples, what you understand by saying that African traditional education is rigid.

3.2 Problems with Modes of Delivery

3.2.1 Authority of the Elders

Traditional African education gives room for community participation. That is every adult member of the society is a teacher. The task of educating the child is therefore not left in the hands of the parents alone or any one particular group.

As you have learnt in one of the earlier units, the whole community serves as the classroom while all the adult members of the community including the parents and other relations are the teachers. This in itself is not a bad thing in that it makes the education of the child the responsibility of all. A popular adage says two heads are better than one.

However, as good as this idea of the whole community's involvement in the child's education is, there is a problem in it. This is the notion that the elders are always right. The young ones should not question the authority of the elders. This means that in the traditional African societies, the elders are always right.

It is generally regarded as bad manners for the younger ones to say that the elders are not right. As you have just learnt in the section above, people must follow the traditional ways of doing things.

In this regard, only the elders know how best things should be done. The younger ones should therefore accept whatever the elders say, or do exactly what the elders say we should do. The child cannot use his own new ideas or initiative in doing certain things in the community. Any young person who challenges the wisdom or authority of the elders openly risks being punished in the society for misconduct. In many cases, as we discussed earlier on, the young ones are threatened with various sanctions.

This is particularly not good for progress in the society. While we should recognize and respect the wisdom and authority of the elders, the young ones should be allowed to contribute their own ideas. This is what brings progress since two heads are better than one.

3.2.2 Suppression of Curiosity

Children are generally eager to find out things themselves. They always want to know hence they ask different questions. This is natural with children all over the world. It is by asking questions from people around them that they understand the world around them. You must have observed that children usually ask questions beginning with why, how, when or where. Apart from asking questions, they often want to see things with their own eyes. The children will not mind going anywhere just to satisfy this natural curiosity of theirs.

However, in traditional African societies, this natural desire of children to know or find out things for themselves is sometimes not encouraged. Although parents encourage their children to go out and play with their peers, they still hinder the children in many ways. If you will still remember, we said in one of the earlier units that in traditional societies, children are to be seen and not to be heard. This means that children are much welcome by adults but they are not expected to talk when elders are talking. In some cases, children are

prevented from asking too many questions from adults. It is even considered bad manners for children to ask visitors questions. I still remember one of my uncles who used to give me a knock on the head for either talking too much or asking 'silly questions' when I was a primary school boy.

Mothers are always very close- to their children as discussed earlier on. In this regard, you will expect mothers to allow their children to ask them as many questions as they want. It is not all mothers who could do that. Even among some literate African women, there are many of them who still tell their children to stop troubling them with questions. Do you often take time to answer your children's questions?

All the questions children ask are aimed at finding out more about things, people, places or issues that are not clear to them. Therefore to stop them from asking questions or refusing to answer their questions is not good enough for their intellectual development.

As Fafunwa (1967) has rightly pointed out there are many environmental factors that place the African children below the age of six at a disadvantage when compared with their counterparts in Europe and North America. One of such environmental factors is the restrictions placed on them as to when to talk and ask questions from elders. This has led to many African children feeling shy or timid in the presence of others.

We are happy there are now pre-school establishments around where children are given every opportunity to develop their curiosity fully. You must have seen some of the Nursery school boys and girls around in your town. They are always very lively and happy. If you talk to most of them, you will see that they are very bold. That is the effect of being free to talk to adults and ask them questions. This may not be so if you go into the traditional African communities where children are not very free to talk to adults and ask them questions.

Therefore, children in addition to being allowed to play with other children in the compound should be allowed to ask questions from adults. The philosophy that children should be seen and not heard should change to children should be seen and heard. We must not suppress them at this very tender age. This is because, any damage done to them either emotionally or mentally at this stage may be very difficult to correct later in life.

3.2.3 Prolonged Apprenticeship

One of the techniques of traditional education which we discussed in one of the earlier units is the apprenticeship. This involves a boy or girl staying with a master or mistress for training in a particular occupation. It is a practical way of acquiring specific vocational skills in traditional African societies. As a result of the importance attached to the apprenticeship system of skill acquisition, the Nigerian government is also using it as a means of helping the youths to acquire specific skills through the National Directorate of Employment (NDE).

In the traditional societies, a boy or a girl who is to acquire the necessary skill will have to stay with the master or mistress for a few years in the first instance. In other words the boy for example will first serve as a house boy to the master for an unspecified number of years. It is the general performance of the boy during this period of 'houseboyship' that will determine when his training. will begin.

This means that a boy could remain with the master for as long as the master wants without anybody raising any objection. Now when the training proper begins, the duration or length of the training is not fixed. In some of the professions like medicine, the apprentice could be there for ten or more years. This is in addition to the many years already spent as a house boy to the master.

You can now see that even if the apprenticeship system is good, the way it is practised may be very frustrating. For example, how can a person start training in a particular trade or profession and he will not know when it will end? Even if the total number of years spent in the apprenticeship program is no longer than the number of years a child spends from primary school to the University, the problem is still there. That is, the unspecified number of years. Whereas, in the formal school system, the child will know right away how many years he or she is expected to spend at a given level. So, if that child is spending some extra years after that, he will know why he is doing so.

In modern societies where the apprenticeship system is becoming popular, there is now a limit to the number of years an apprentice can spend with the master. This is usually determined at the beginning when the child is coming in. The master and the parents of the boy will agree on the number of years to be spent by the boy before he can gain his freedom. This is a welcome development as it will remove the exploitation of the apprentice by their masters.

Try and find out how many years the apprentice boys or girls in your area spend on their training.

4.0 Conclusion

There is no system of education that is perfect. Therefore, the various problems associated with traditional African education do not imply that it is a bad system of education. As you have already learnt in the various units of this course, the system worked well for our forefathers and it is still working for millions of Africans today. However, is the traditional education could be made better by correcting or improving on some of the problems identified above.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you have learnt the various problems associated with traditional African education. You learnt how the various problems such as illiteracy, rigidity, secrecy and superstition and the authority of elders have affected the system. By now, you should be in a position to suggest solutions to some of the problems.

In the next unit, we are going to compare traditional African education with Western (formal) education. In that unit, you will learn not only the differences between the two forms of education but also how they can be integrated to bring out the best in our children.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Enumerate five major problems associated with traditional African education.

2. Suggest ways of solving any two of the problems associated with traditional African education.

7.0 References/Further Reading

Akinbote, O. (2002). *An Introduction to Teaching. (*2nd ed.). Ibadan: Stirling Borden Publishers Ltd.

Fafunwa, Babs A. (1967). *New perspectives in African Education.* London: Macmillan Edu. Ltd.

Unit 5 Integration of Traditional African Education into Formal School System

1.0 Introduction

We have discussed many things about traditional African education in the previous units of this course. Similarly, we have discussed some of the major characteristics of formal education. In this unit, we are going to discuss the major difference between traditional (informal) education and the Western (formal) education. We shall also discuss how some aspects of traditional education can be integrated into the formal school system.

2.0 Objectives

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

- identify four major differences between traditional (informal) education and Western (formal) education.

- explain how some aspects of traditional (informal) education can be integrated into the formal primary school system.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Illiteracy and Literacy

You learnt in the previous units the major characteristics of traditional African education and the Western formal school system. You will still remember we said that traditional African Education does not involve reading and writing. This is one of the major characteristics of western system of education. That is, Western education involves reading and writing. It is one of the advantages which formal schooling has over the traditional system of education.

As you have already learnt, because traditional education does not involve reading and writing, no records of events could be kept. Therefore, there is no written syllabus to be used in the education of children in traditional societies. This gives room for an individual to teach the child what he thinks is necessary or right.

Therefore, we can say that because traditional education has no written syllabus, it is not well organized like the formal education. The absence of a written syllabus has given the elders in traditional societies the authority to teach whatever they think is right or necessary. Therefore, nobody could challenge their authority.

On the other hand, the formal school system is well organized with syllabus and time table for the daily activities. As a result of the organized syllabus, every teacher knows exactly what he is to teach at any particular stage of development. It is not just teaching the child whatever the teacher likes.

Similarly, there is accurate and adequate record keeping in formal education. For example, there is a record of each child's progress in his studies. This could be in the progress chart or the card. Apart from the fact that the records can be used to take the necessary decision about the child now or in future the records could also be kept for many years.

A French philosopher named Volatine was once quoted as saying that it is those who can read and write that will lead the world. In other words, the ability to read and write is necessary for anybody or group of people to make meaningful progress in the modern world.

As you have learnt in some of the previous units, the traditional system of education. was able to meet the needs of the society at a particular point in time.

However, the recent development brought about by literacy has made traditional system of education inadequate. Therefore in order to make the traditional system of education relevant to the present age, it must include reading: and writing. This means that all the men and women in the traditional societies should be, made literate through adult education programs. The ability to read and write will further enhance their cultural practices in many ways.

3.1.1 Rigidity and Flexibility

In traditional education, there is not much room for change. This means that things have to be done the same way over the years. Whatever traditions and other ways of doing things that were passed down to us by our ancestors have to be followed. As you have learnt earlier on, there is no opportunity for the younger ones to bring in new ideas. In fact, the young ones should not talk when elders are talking.

Moreover, the younger ones should not question the authority of the elders. Anyone who openly disagrees with the elders is considered to be of bad character. Such a young person could be punished in various ways. The elders are always right hence their ideas and views have to be respected and observed.

While it is a good thing to respect the views of elders, it is also good to allow the younger ones to make their own ideas or views known on any particular situation. The elders should not be too rigid in their ways of thinking or doing things.

As we mentioned earlier on, if the elders were literate and had been exposed to new ways of doing things as in other parts of the world, things could not have remained the same for so long. But because they had no link with the literate world as such, it was not possible for them to get new ideas. They therefore felt their own ways of doing things were the best.

On the other hand, formal schooling allows for new ideas and new ways of doing things. The fact that people could read and write makes it possible for products of the formal schools system to get new ideas from different places. This gives room for comparing things and by so doing, they accept new ways of doing things which they found to be better than their old ways.

Formal education gives the opportunity for everybody to investigate anything and discover new knowledge or ways of doing things. There is no discrimination against anybody in terms of age or sex in the formal system of education. Children are free to question the authority of the elders without any fear if the younger person's ideas are better.

Most of the scientific and technological inventions of the present age are the products of critical investigations. If the scientists have been rigid and not open to new ideas, we could not have made much progress. The whole world could have remained as it was a hundred or more years ago.

Therefore, since the world is changing fast, traditional African societies should move with time and become open to new ideas and new ways of doing things. Although in recent years, many changes have been introduced into many African societies, we still need more.

For example, in many towns and villages, the introduction of formal schooling has brought some changes. Many farmers are now using modern machinery like tractors on their farms. In the same way, many people are now making use of hospitals for health care and getting new ideas on how to make life better. This is done by reading different publications which are made available by the government and other bodies.

However, there are still many people in traditional African societies who still keep on with the old ways of doing things. Even in the cities, there are people who are literate and still engage in some of the old traditional practices. For example, things such as female circumcision, early marriage, dictatorial tendencies by the father and other such practices are still prevailing.

It is necessary for government to increase the various enlightenment programs on radio and television so that more people could go to school. With more people becoming literate, there is a better assurance that rigidity in the ways of life will gradually give way to flexibility. That is, our people will be ready to accept new ideas and change from their old ways which are no longer good for modern societies. This is not saying that all the cultural practices that are good should be forgotten. There are many aspects of the traditional African education which are good and should be integrated into the formal school system. We shall discuss this later in this unit.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

What are the negative consequences of illiteracy on traditional education

3.1.2 Secrecy and Openness

In one of the units, you learnt that in traditional African education, certain things are never made known to everybody. Even an apprentice to a master may not be given details of what he is expected to know. We have also discussed how some people keep as top secret some of the knowledge they have in a particular field. They do not always want others to know it. You have seen the case of the old woman who died without telling her children the secret behind her healing cases of fractured legs and arms.

Apart from keeping some important facts and knowledge secret from the young ones, elders in traditional African societies also have other ways of creating fears in the minds of children. They use a lot of taboos to create fears in children and in the process, children are made to be afraid of many things which they should not. This may have been part of the reasons why the average African child is always timid and lacking in self confidence.

You will still remember what we said about elders not allowing children to ask questions from elders or talk where elders are talking. This may not be unconnected with the simple reason that by allowing too many questions from children, they may be forced to tell the children many things, which the children should not know. They therefore make it as a rule that children must not talk where elders are talking or ask many questions.

Therefore, by keeping many things away from the children and not allowing them to ask. questions on certain matters, traditional education is not made open enough. This has greatly affected the popularity of its system of education. That may be the reason why some people say traditional African education is not good. Do you agree with them?

The formal school system on the other hand allows freedom of expression by children. In fact, any teacher in the school system who does not allow the pupils to ask questions is not regarded to be a good teacher. It is therefore compulsory for teachers in the formal school system to allow children to ask questions. Teachers also answer the questions asked by their pupils as much as possible.

In some cases, teachers may even direct the pupils to where they can get the correct answers. This has in many ways been able to satisfy pupils' natural desire to know. There is no restriction as to what questions pupils can ask as long as it is reasonable. The formal school system could therefore be regarded as more open in terms of pupils' freedom to find out things for themselves. They could on their own go to anybody to collect the needed information. There is no secrecy in whatever is learnt in the school.

This therefore makes formal schooling more acceptable to people in the modern world. Everybody is free to find out or discover anything and if found useful, it will be accepted by the 'elders'. The world has become a better place for all of us today as a result of the scientific attitude, which is encouraged among our students.

May be if traditional education could give room for new ideas and allow children to ask questions freely from the elders, there will be more progress. Those with any useful knowledge that can be of great use to the society in any form should put it into writing. At least, when such things are written down, like it is written in the western world, others will be able to critically look at it.

By so doing, other people will be able to see what you are doing and how it is done. This is the way by which exchange of ideas brings more benefit to the society. The society does not gain much from things that are kept secret.

3.2 Possible Areas of Integration

3.2.1 Learning through Practical Activities

One of the major advantages of traditional education is that it is practical. That is learning takes place under natural conditions with practical activities to support it. Nothing is ever learnt in theory without giving the learners the practical aspect of it. This makes learning more meaningful, real and enjoyable to children in traditional societies. In most cases, the child does not really have to feel it that he is learning a particular thing. In short, we can say that learning is made easy in traditional education as far as practical work is concerned.

Let us take an example of the son of a farmer who goes to the farm with the father every day. Along the line, he watches the way things are done and he is given the opportunity to try the particular activity. He is corrected if he makes a mistake by practically showing him how it should be done. That is to say, it is learning by doing.

As we are all aware, this is not what happens in our schools. The learner is made to learn most things by rote memory. Even those that are not learnt by heart are not given any practical support. For example, in Mathematics, children in primary one are made to memorize figures when they should have been taught numerals practically.

In many schools, the teacher will just put the figures 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10, etc on the chalkboard and ask the pupils to recite them. The same thing happens even in the upper classes of the primary school when children are made to memorize the multiplication tables. As a result of these methods of instruction in the formal school system, learning becomes very uninteresting and is probably responsible for the general lack of interest and poor performance of children in Mathematics.

In order to make teaching and learning more natural, interesting and effective in our schools, we can bring the practical aspect of traditional education into it, that is, nothing must be taught without a practical illustration and/or practice by the learners.

For example in traditional societies numerals are not first taught orally. There is always a link between the figure and an object. For example, they could say to a child, bring me one mango there, take the two cups to the kitchen, etc. In that way the child although is learning, he may not know since learning is practically linked with his daily life.

The school (classroom) environment cannot be compared with the whole community which serves as classroom in traditional education. However, we can still make teaching and learning in the school very practical, interesting and lively. For example, we can take pupils out of the classroom to see things in their natural setting.

We could also make use of real objects to make teaching and learning more real to the pupils. The traditional way of introducing numerals to the children can be used. That is, we should avoid teaching numerals in a dry and abstract way. Every figure must be associated with a real object instead of just asking children to recite them.

In the same way, teachers must give opportunities for pupils to have enough practical demonstrations or exercises. Whatever they teach their pupils must be supported with

practical exercises. It is by doing this that the pupils will be able to master whatever they are taught very well. Therefore, if the practical ways of teaching in traditional education could be introduced, it will be more helpful to the learners.

3.2.2 Promotion of Dignity of Labour

In one of the units in this course, we discussed how every child in the traditional societies is trained to acquire a skill. We also discussed how everybody in the society is expected to be gainfully employed. This really shows that people in traditional African societies appreciate the fact that there is dignity in labour. Everybody is proud of what one is doing. The only person that is not liked or wanted in the society is the lazy person who cannot work with his hands.

Therefore, in order for the child to acquire a skill with which he can take care of himself in future, he is introduced to a trade or occupation early in life. He is made to observe and work with his father or master in the case of an apprentice. It is right from this young age that the child is made to appreciate the dignity of labour. He is made to see it as a way of life, which brings you the respect and love from the society.

So, by the time the child is old enough to be independent, he is already used to working hard to earn his living. He is not ashamed to be identified as a farmer, a fisherman or a cattle rearer. It is a thing of great joy and pride to be associated with any of those occupations.

I think the formal system of education has much to learn here. The child should not be made to feel that it is a punishment to be engaged in manual labour. The ways some teachers refer to some artisans often make them look inferior to other professionals in the society. Parents also, particularly the wealthy ones either in public or private service often go against their children doing manual labour in schools.

Therefore by the time these children finish their studies after primary or secondary education, they cannot really do any manual work again. They even laugh at any of their mates who are seen to be engaged in manual work. All these things may be responsible in one way or the other for the high level of crime in the society today. Those who cannot secure office work either in government service or the private companies cannot do manual work to earn a living. Since the society in which we are now, recognises wealth and not how it is got, people have taken to criminal activities to get money.

Therefore, in order to get out of this problem, we must try to inculcate the spirit of working with our own hands in the children. Right from clearing their classrooms to cutting the grass and other bushes around, children are made to appreciate the dignity of labour. I remember in those days when we had school gardens. We were all made to work there every week. In fact, the school football field is assigned to us for clearing on regular basis.

Therefore, up till today, many of us who are in various professions still take time to do some manual work at home. Some of us even engage in farming as a hobby. The school products will be made more useful to themselves and the society, if they are made to appreciate the dignity of labour. This as we have already said could start with the participation of pupils in the physical clearing of the school compound, working on the school farm, producing some materials during Cultural an4Creative Art periods etc.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Explain why many of our school products do not like manual work.

3.2.4 Moral Development

Moral and character training could be regarded as the pillar on which traditional education rests.

As you have learnt in one of the earlier units, the society does not recognise anybody who is found wanting in good character.

This is why every family ensured that the best training is given to their children right from an early age. It is true that traditional African communities expect individuals to be fully engaged in an occupation. But at the same time, they expect a high moral standard from the individuals in the performance of his day to day duties.

Nobody is even happy in the traditional societies with anyone who is lacking in good character. Our people always recognise and appreciate good character and high moral discipline than material wealth. In other words, more emphasis is placed on high moral standard than on the acquisition of material wealth. Whatever you have without being morally upright is regarded as useless.

I am particularly very convinced that the formal school system can benefit much from this aspect of traditional education. We should not wait till the child has become an adult before we start looking for ways of inculcating good moral standards in him.

In the traditional society, we learnt earlier on that the process starts as early as possible. Therefore, the development of good moral standards in children should start from the primary school. Moreover, it should not be limited to the primary school. It should continue from primary to university level.

You may be asking how this could be possible. Well, it is quite simple. Like it was done in the traditional society, everything that the child learns has some elements of morality attached to it. In other words, we can do it in the school system first by including moral education in the curriculum. It could be taught even in the higher institutions as part of the General Studies program.

In addition to teaching morals, it should be part of the teachers and pupils' ways of life. While the teachers should serve as role models to the learners, any immoral behaviour on the part of the pupils or teachers should be punished appropriately.

If we do not follow the traditional ways of emphasizing high moral standard in the society, we may not get the best out of the educational system. The present situation whereby only high academic performance and the attainment of degrees are emphasized without good moral standards cannot help. We should not allow our desire for rapid socioeconomic development through formal education to encourage immorality. Whatever we may achieve in that area without proper moral standards to back them up will always create problems for us.

4.0 Conclusion

Traditional African education is a system of education that has been in practice in different parts of Africa for a long time. It is true that it has some weaknesses. This is natural since no system of education can be perfect. There are some aspects of the traditional system of education that have worked well for mg people over the years.

We can therefore identify those good aspects and then introduce them into the formal school system. This will help in correcting some of the weakness of formal schooling. By so doing, the products of our schools will be more useful to themselves, their families and the society as a whole.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you have learnt the major areas of differences between traditional (informal) education and die western (formal) education. You also learnt that there are some aspects i3f traditional education that are good. Such aspects which have promoted the acquisition of practical knowledge of the various skills, the dignity of labour and high moral standards among our people should not be forgotten. Therefore, such areas could be brought into the formal school system. If it is done it will make the products of our school more competent and useful to themselves and the larger society.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Identify three major areas of differences between traditional African education and the Westem (formal) school education.
2. Explain how any two aspects of traditional education can be introduced into the primary school system.

7.0 Reference/Further Reading

Akinbote, O. (2002). *An introduction to Teaching,* Ibadan: Stirling Hodden Nig. Publishers.