

## **ECE 110: Childhood Education in Traditional African Societies**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

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

### **2.0 Objectives**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

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

### **3.0 The Meaning and Aims of Education**

#### **3.1 Definitions**

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

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

There are many definitions of education. Many people see education

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

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

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

We can now say from these three definitions that education is a life-long process which helps to make us self-reliant. That is a person who can depend on his own ability. It is the sum total of all the ways by which we develop the abilities, attitudes and all forms of behaviour which make us acceptable members of the society. Education can be received anywhere, including homes, schools, farm, market, churches, mosques, workshops and other places. In fact, it is correct to say that wherever people are living, there must be a system of education. It is through the system of education that individuals within the society are made to imbibe the ideals of the society. Education is received in all societies. It does not matter whether that society is large or small, simple or complex, literate or illiterate. Education is not received only in the school. It can be received anywhere.

### **3.1.1 Aims of Education**

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

You learnt in the preceding section that wherever people are living, there must be a system of education. Then, if there is a system of education, that education must have some aims. That is, there must be some reasons why education is taking place. Since people differ from

place to place, there must be differences in their aims of education. This is why we have different aims of education for different people or in different places. Let us now look at the various aims of education as given by different people.

Plato, one of the great Greek philosophers once said that,

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

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

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

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

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

Some other aims of education which we can regard as vocational aims include, education should make a person productive or education should help individuals to earn a living. From these aims, we can see that the aims of education cannot be the same everywhere. It is what the people want in life at a particular place and time that will determine their aims of education. All you need to note very well is that, there cannot be any system of education without aims. In one of the units ahead, you will learn the aims of education in traditional African societies before the coining of Islam and Christianity.

### **3.1.2 The Educated Person**

Let me first ask you one simple question, which I always like to ask my students. The question is, Are your parents educated? Many students have answered this question in form of either Yes or No. Those who said yes meant to say that their parents were educated and those who

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

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

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

Therefore, we can say that an educated person is one who has acquired some skills and is able to use the skills intelligently in solving his day to day problems. The person must not only be useful to himself and the society but he must also be an acceptable member of the society. It is not correct to say people who did not attend formal school are not educated. They may not be able to read and write (literate) but they have learnt to earn a living through the skills they have acquired. As you will learn in the next section of this unit, there are various forms of education. That is there are various ways by which you can be educated. The school is just one of them and not the only means of acquiring the necessary skills, attitudes and values we need to live in the society.

### **Exercise 1.1**

Who is an educated person?

Your answer should include the following: -

- the person who has acquired some knowledge and / or skill and can use these to help himself.

- the person with appropriate social character and who contributes to the development of his society.

## **3.2 Forms of Education**

### **3.2.1 Informal Education**

You have just learnt that some of our great grandparents learnt to do many things without school education. There are still many people in towns and villages all over the country who have never been to school. That is, they are people who cannot read and write. However, without formal education, they are able to do many things to earn a living. For example, the local farmers, cattle rearers, drummers, fishermen, cloth-weavers and many others. You can mention them. Where did they learn to do all these things since they have never attended a school? The answer is simple. They learnt to do them from other people around them. This could be done anywhere depending on the type of trade and craft they want to learn. For example, the cattle rearer will take the young man along with him into the field or farm where they feed their cattle. The fisherman will take the boy along with him in the canoe to the river, lake or lagoon where he will be shown how to fish. There is no special timetable for them to learn. All they are taught is done as the need arises.

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

In the informal system of education, our ancestors learnt how to do certain things, which helped them to live useful lives. Even if they were not able to read and write, they were accepted members of their communities. They contributed to the development of their various communities. Because informal or traditional education does not involve reading and writing like the Arabic or Western education, many people think it is not good. Many people, particularly the Europeans did not think Africans had any system of education before they came down to our land.

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

next unit.

### 3.2.2 Formal Education

You are very familiar with this form of education. That is, it is the form of education that takes place in the schools and colleges. It involves reading and writing and this probably explains why it is the most popular form of education. This form of education is usually associated with the Christian Missionary Education which was introduced in Badagry in 1842. It is true that the first school was established in 1842 by the Christian Missionaries. However, we should not forget that the Arabs also introduced their own education, which involved reading and writing through Islam. This was done many centuries before the Christian Missionaries introduced this our formal education which is now referred to as Western Education. In other words, both the Arabs and the European introduced their formal systems of education in Nigeria through Islam and Christianity. You will learn more about this in other units.

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

- (a) It involves reading and writing (literacy). This is perhaps one of the most important characteristics of formal education. In many instances, people make the mistake of saying as learnt earlier on that only people who can read and write are educated. Let us remember that literacy is just an aspect of education. It is quite good to be literate because of its many advantages. For example, literacy helps us to keep records of all human activities in the society. As you know, this helps us to know many things, which are done by other people in other places. This has promoted our knowledge of people in other parts of the world. Moreover, literacy has helped us to use some scientific and technological inventions brought from other places. This is because we can read how to use them. You can mention some of the other benefits of literacy to the individual or the society generally.
- (b) It has fixed points of entry and exit with little or no consideration for re-entry. This means that with formal education, there is a fixed place and time for teaching and learning. For example, when you were in the primary or secondary school, your teachers taught you certain subjects in the school at a given time on the timetable. They must follow the timetable as much as possible so that there will not be problems. For example, when your English teacher has his lesson, the Mathematics teacher cannot say he wants to teach at that time. He must keep to his time no matter how urgent, useful or important the topic is.  
In the same way, there is age limit or some admission

requirements for formal education particularly as it is in the school. For example, a 20 year old boy cannot just go and register in primary one. He will be considered too old for that level of education. Also, a secondary school leaver cannot just go into the university and be registered. He has to pass the JAMB entrance examination and also possess the required number of credits in the relevant subjects. In the formal system, there is usually little or no opportunity for re-entry. In other words, those who could not complete a given level of education for various reasons may not, be able to come back again. Take for example a primary school pupil who dropped out in primary three or four at the age of eight or nine years. Later in life may be at the age of 20 or more years, he cannot go back to the primary school to complete his schooling there. He may even be ashamed to come. The school also will not accept him. So, during formal education, if you miss an opportunity, you may not get it again.

- (c) Formal education has regular teachers who are professionally trained and paid for the work they do. For example, in Nigeria today, all primary school teachers are expected to be trained before they can be allowed to teach in the schools. Moreover, once they are employed, they are paid salaries every month for the work they do. Anybody cannot just go to the school to teach the pupils without the permission to do so no matter what he knows. In some schools, some teachers are employed and paid to teach specific subjects. This is particularly so in secondary schools, colleges of education and other higher institutions of learning.
- (d) Formal education as offered in the school system, is well organized. There is a syllabus to follow at every stage of teaching. The teachers cannot just teach what they like. They have to teach what is written down in the syllabus at the given time. Except in some rare cases, the teacher cannot change what is in the syllabus and replace it with what he thinks is good for the pupils. In other words, there is always a rigid programme which the teacher cannot just change. You have just learnt some of the major characteristics of formal education. This knowledge will help you to identify the major differences between formal and informal education later.

## Exercise 1.2

What are the major characteristics of formal education?

- Your answer should include the following:
- literacy-reading and writing
- well organized with specific syllabus
- has professionally trained and regular teachers

- takes place in the school
- it is rigid.

### 3.2.3 Open and Distance Education

You have learnt some things about informal education and formal education. You -learnt that informal education is the oldest 'form of education that takes place outside the formal school system. - In the same way, you learnt that formal education refers to the thrift of education, which takes place in the school. It involves reading and writing. Now, let us look at the third form of education, which takes some of the characteristics of both informal and formal education. It is open and distance education. This is the form of education that is well organized and managed. However, it is not limited to the four walls of the classroom like in the formal education. It can take place in the workshops or late in the evenings after office hours. It may also take place through the radio, television and by mail. You can see that this form of education takes some aspects of informal and formal education. For example, like informal education, it can take place anywhere and at any time. But like formal education, it is well organized in such a way that you will have some specific teachers and the things you are to learn. Examples of open and distance education include education through correspondence courses, continuing education centers, apprenticeship under artisans such as carpenters, motor mechanics, bricklayers, tailors, welders. A very good example is your study at the NOUN.

The major characteristics of open and distance education are:

- (a) It is open and flexible in terms of admission, curriculum, place of instruction and mode of instruction. By being open, we mean to say that it allows people of any age that are interested to come in. Unlike the formal school system, there is no age limit. By being flexible, it means that it does not necessarily have a fixed time and place like the formal school system. This therefore gives room for many people who for various reasons cannot undergo formal schooling to improve themselves. This includes both male and female, young and old people.
- (b) Open and distance education is based on individual interest and needs. This means that you are not forced into it. The individual will just decide what he likes and then go in for it. For example, you have decided to come into this Open University programme because you like it. Nobody forced you. In the same way, there may be people who want to become carpenters, bricklayers, motor-mechanics and so on. Nobody is forcing them but such individuals choose to learn such trades. They may have special interest in it.



- (c) Open and distance education is based on the formal and non-formal education. As you have just learnt, it can take place anywhere and at any time. It is also well organized and coordinated with specific teachers or instructors. It also has duration for the programme. In other words, while it can take place anywhere and at anytime, it has to follow certain guidelines that may be prescribed by the organizers. Open and distance education has been gaining some popularity in Nigeria in recent years. This is because of the many advantages that can be derived from it. Some of the advantages include the fact that it helps the old and young people to improve themselves. In other words, there is no age limit.

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

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

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

#### **5.0 Summary**

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

#### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments**

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

#### **7.0 Further Reading and Other Resources**

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

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

**UNIT 2: CHARACTERISTICS AND GOALS OF**

# TRADITIONAL AFRICAN EDUCATION

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## 1.0 Introduction

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

## 2.0 Objectives

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

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

## 3.0 Characteristics of traditional African education

### 3.1 Illiteracy

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

one of the major characteristics of traditional African education is that it does not involve reading and writing as it is done in Western Education and Islamic (formal) education. This is probably why some people refer to traditional education as primitive. This is not correct. As you learnt in the last unit, many Africans who did not know how to read and write were respected members of their societies. Some were even respected by the Europeans who visited their areas. Examples of such popular people are King Jaja of Okpobo, Nana of Itshekiri, Oba Ovoramwen of Benin and many others. Literacy is just an aspect of education. People who cannot read and write (illiterates) can still be regarded as educated in a way. If they have some economic skills, good character and the ability to apply their knowledge well to solve their problems, they are educated. Education is not just the ability to read and write.

### **3.1.1 Place of learning**

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

### **3.1.2 Job Oriented**

As you will learn when we are discussing the goals of traditional education, everyone is trained to have a skill. In other words, it is a kind of education that is related to life and work. Traditional education is a practical system of education which is aimed at giving everyone a work to do so as to earn a living. It starts early in life when the boy for example goes to the farm with his father. He learns practically from the father all the things necessary to become a good farmer. So, by the time the son is old enough to be on his own, his father will just give him his own land to cultivate. He then does this without much difficulty. As you will learn in the next unit, there is no problem of unemployment in the traditional African societies. As someone said, sometime ago, it was the formal system of education that introduced unemployment into Africa. Do you agree with that view?

### **3.1.3 Flexibility in Admission**

Traditional African education is not too strict about entry, exit and re-entry into the system. That is, there is no age limit as to when somebody cannot be allowed to learn. In the same way, a man or woman who stopped learning a particular skill can be allowed to return if and when he is ready for it again. We can therefore say that traditional education gives everybody the opportunity to learn. There is usually no problem of over age or under age. You may have seen some big boys and big girls learning some trades or crafts from the same master in your local government even in recent times. The old people are never ashamed of what they are doing. The younger ones will see the elders as brothers who should be respected. On the other hand, the older ones will see the younger ones as real blood relations. So there is mutual respect for all of them no matter their age.

### **Exercise 1.1**

Explain three characteristics of traditional African Education. Your answer should include — illiteracy, practical, job oriented, learning takes place anywhere (itemize).

## **3.2 Goals of Traditional Education**

### **3.2.1 The Seven Cardinal Goals**

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

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

How these goals are achieved in traditional African societies you will

learn in the remaining sections of this unit.

### **3.2.2 Physical and Mental Development**

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

For example, there are games and sports which children in traditional societies always participate in mostly in the evenings. They run, jump, climb and dance in games, which are given different names in different communities. In Yoruba land for instance, there are games such as 'Bojuboju', 'Ekun meran' etc which encourage children to do much running. Do you know that wrestling is one of the sporting activities in many African societies? Many African communities organise wrestling competitions for their youths. For the girls, it could be dancing competitions. All these go a long way in the physical development of the African child.

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

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

Do you know that Mathematics is taught in the traditional societies? Yes, they do it but in a very practical way. For example, in the local language, the parents or somebody else could say bring one cup etc and the child brings it. As the child grows older, he effortlessly learns the numerals in his or her mother tongue. Therefore, along with his language development the child learns most of the things which make him an intelligent person in the society. For example he learns to add, subtract, multiply and divide in very practical, ways.

As once observed by Fafunwa (1974), no number is too large or too

small for the Yoruba or Nupe man or woman to calculate. Areas are measured on the farms, according to Fafunwa by the number of heaps that could be accommodated.

All other areas of knowledge, which in the formal school system we call subjects are also taught in traditional societies. Take for instance, Geography. The child acquires the knowledge of his physical environment by learning from parents and others the names of rivers, lakes, the heavenly bodies – stars, moon and the sun, etc. He learns the four cardinal points and even reads the time through the position of the sun. You may also be surprised that in traditional societies, people learn the climatic conditions of a place to determine what crops to grow there and when. All these are things which we spend year to learn at different levels of formal education. From this short discussion on the physical and intellectual or mental development of the African child, you will agree that there is almost nothing left out. In other words the traditional African education is in a way very comprehensive.

### **Exercise 2.1**

Enumerate the seven major goals of traditional African education.

### **3.2.3 Moral and Character Development**

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

In traditional societies, much attention is given to the development of good character in children. There is much respect for a well-behaved person in the traditional societies. In fact children who are of good character bring honour to the parents. Therefore, in order for children to be good ambassadors of the family, the parents and other relations jointly train the child to behave in culturally accepted ways. In doing this, the parents are usually role models to their children. No child is ever allowed to get away with any misconduct. He is punished or corrected immediately.

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

Among the Hausa people, elders and those in positions of authority are

given respect. The young man often raises his clenched right fist to greet an important person such as a chief or a religious leader. Generally, it is not right in the African culture for a younger person to first want to shake hands with an elder. It must be the elders who are to show the desire to shake hands with the younger person who often sees it as a special privilege for him.

This is an important aspect of traditional education which we should not allow to die. Western civilization has in recent years been making it difficult for most young men and women to keep to this tradition particularly in the urban cities. Do you respect your own parents, elders and those in position of authority? How do you show your respect towards them?

### **3.2.4 Vocational Training**

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

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

Any of these vocational training can be received within the family. For example, if a man is a farmer, fisherman, cattle rearer, native doctor or drummer, his son can learn directly from him. In the same way, others who are weavers, pot makers, hair dressers, etc can teach their daughters. It is only when such an occupation for which a child is considered fit is not available in the family that the child could be sent to another person outside. The child then goes to the person as an apprentice. The period of training may be long or short. It depends on the nature of the work, the ability of the child or the wish of the parents. There are some cases where the apprentice child could stay from childhood to adulthood in order to master that trade or profession very well. A good example is the native doctor (medicine).

Therefore, with the training received, nobody is expected to be jobless.



Everybody in the village for example is expected to have a visible means of living otherwise, he may not be wanted in the community. The only people expected at home during the day are the old people, children, the sick, disabled and possibly a nursing mother. It is only on special days such as market days, festivals meetings, etc that you may find most people at home. It is even a sign of laziness to find a man at home doing nothing. No one will respect him and he may not even get a wife in the community. Thus, everybody is proud of his work and takes it seriously.

### **3.2.5 Promotion of Cultural Heritage**

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

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

In the same way, the children are given special trainings to make them useful to themselves and the community. Thus, whatever the training a child has received, he is not expected to keep it to himself. He is to cooperate with other members of the extended family when he grows up. For example, there are various age groups and other community based associations to which each person must belong. The age groups do some community work such as clearing of the 'roads' to the farm, the river, lake or brook where they get their water. The age groups also help members to do some of their personal work such as clearing their farms, planting and harvesting of crops as well as building their houses.

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

or solidarity.

We must also not forget that there is also the economic cooperation which in modern societies we refer to as Cooperative and Thrift Society. In Yorubaland as an example, the Thrift society is known as 'Eesu' or 'Ajo'. In other words, you keep some amount regularly may be on every market day, with the society and at a particular time, you can come in to borrow money for a project or programme. These are some of the ways by which the individual is made to participate actively in all community activities. At the same time he is introduced into his culture which he is expected to hold dearly. No normal person in the traditional society can keep away from his cultural environment. You just have to be an active participant in all cultural activities.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

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

#### **5.0 Summary**

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

#### **6.0 Tutor marked assignments**

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

#### **7.0 Further reading and other resources**

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

### **UNIT 3: THE AFRICAN FAMILY SYSTEM**

## **Contents**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 The Nature of the African family system
- 3.1 Importance of the Families and Types of Families
- 3.1.1 Monogamous, Polygamous and Extended Family System
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- 3.2.1 The Importance of the Extended Family
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- 3.2.3 Influence of Western Education
- 3.2.4 Economic Influence
- 3.0 Conclusion
- 4.0 Summary
- 5.0 Tutor marked assignments
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### **1.0 Introduction**

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

#### 2.0 Objectives

After studying this unit very carefully, you should be able to:

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

### **3.0 The nature of the African family systems**

#### **3.1 Importance of the families and types of Families**

The family is the basic unit upon which all other human societies and organisations are built. That is, without the family, there cannot be any other form of human organization. The family can be described as a group of people who are related by blood. In other words, all members

of a family can trace themselves to the same root or parents. Every human being therefore comes from a family. Thus, the family into which you are born is called the family of orientation. This means the family where you receive your initial upbringing. It is where you learn the ways of life of your people. All of us belong to this family.

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

The family is an important institution that is found in all parts of the world. It is found in all villages, towns and cities all over the world. The family makes it possible for life to continue in every society. Therefore, there cannot be anything like a village, town, city or even a country without the family. Even God himself at creation introduced the first family from whom all other human beings and families started. That is, if we are looking at it from the religious angle. It is the family that gives the child his first education. As we shall learn later, the family plays an important role in the education of children in traditional societies. Therefore, it may be correct to say that the family background of individuals like you and me somehow determines how you and me behave in the society. We shall discuss this further in other units.

### **3.1.1 Monogamous, Polygamous and extended family systems**

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

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

In the two families, that is a monogamous family and a polygamous family, the major difference is that in the first one, the man has just one

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

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

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

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

### **Exercise 3.1**

Explain what you consider to be the difference between

- (a) family of orientation and family of procreation
- (b) monogamous family and polygamous family.

Your answers should include:

- (a) Family of orientation — the family into which you are born i.e. where you are a son or a daughter. Family of procreation is your own family where you have your own children.
- (b) Monogamous family — one-man, one wife. Polygamous family — one man and two or more wives.

### **3.2 External Influences on the Family System**

### **3.2.1 The Importance of the extended family**

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

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

In the first place it has some economic and social benefits to the people. For example, in the past and even now in some places, the number of people in the family was a sign of wealth and prosperity. This is because there are usually many people who can help in the work of the family. They also help one another in times of difficulty. As we shall see in another unit, there are always many children in the compound. This helps children to have many people to play with. This means that children in the extended family will be able to learn quickly some of the social norms in the family and the society generally. As you will also see later, it helps the language development.

In another way, on happy occasions such as marriage, naming and other social activities, there are always many people to celebrate with you. In some parts of Nigeria, the number of your relations seen at your ceremonies often tells much about you and your family background generally. In general, the extended family helps to promote the spirit of cooperation, love and belonging in African societies. What is the situation now in African societies? This is what we shall discuss in the next section of this unit.

### **3.2.2 The Religious Influence**

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

The two most popular religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity have many followers. The ways of life of our people have been greatly affected by these religions. For example, Christianity requires that a man should marry only one wife. Therefore, many Christians after marriage keep away from the extended family members. In some cases, they even

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

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

### **3.2.3 Influence of Western Education**

As you have learnt in unit one, Western education means that formal education or school education that was introduced by Christian Missionaries, who came from Western Europe. As a result of this formal education, many Nigerians and Africans have become too much interested in the ways of life of Europeans. Many of us as a result of our school education have no time for such things as extended family matters. As a result of their employment, some even live in faraway places. They therefore have no time to participate actively in extended family matters. As we mentioned earlier, there are some who have traveled to and even settled permanently in other towns or countries. Do you know of any person like that in your own family or town? There are many of such Africans and Nigerians in particular in far away countries like Britain, Canada, United States of America, France and other places. Even those who live in other towns in Nigeria do not remember to visit their hometowns again. By so doing, many people no longer know members of the extended family system. They now keep to the European ways of life, which is, I and my family. Many of the children of such people do not even know the towns or villages their parents come from. Thus, they do not know other relations of their parents. You may ask some of your friends in the urban cities if they know their parents' relations back home in the village. They will tell you they know just one or two people. Some may even tell you they have never been to their father's town or village.

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

African including the extended family system.

### **Exercise 3.2**

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

The father, the wife and their children, their parents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters.

#### **3.2.4 Economic Influence**

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

You will still remember that we said that under the traditional system of education, everybody is employed. That is, no person is without a job. You learnt in one of the units that the child learns a trade or occupation right from the family or from outside the family. This means that by the time he becomes a man, he already has what he can do for a living.

With the coming of Western and Arabic education, things have changed. You have just learnt in the last section of this unit that many people go to other towns and countries to work. That is after their school education, they have to look for a job. In most cases, such a job is got outside their own towns and villages. There are others who do not even get any work to do at all after their school education. They could have left the secondary school, a college or university. Even among those who have got a job, the salary they earn may not be enough to take care of their family. As a result of urban or city life, they have to pay high house rent, pay school fees of their children, buy books, clothes and other materials for the children. They have to pay transport fare to and from work. Above all, they have to buy food to feed the family. As you will expect they will also have to buy their own clothes and other materials.

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

In this way, many people no longer have time for their extended family



members. They do not also have enough money to help other members of the extended family. You will still remember that in the extended family, they help one another particularly in times of difficulty. This is one of the advantages of the extended family system that we discussed earlier on.

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

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

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

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

#### **5.0 Summary**

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

### **6.0 Tutor marked assignments**

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

### **7.0 Further reading and other resources**

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

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

## **UNIT 4: MARRIAGE, CHILD BEARING AND CARE**

## **Contents**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Nature and Purpose of Marriage in African Societies
  - 3.1 Nature of marriage
    - 3.1.1 Purpose of Marriage
  - 3.2 Pregnancy and child bearing
    - 3.2.1 Conception
    - 3.2.2 Pregnancy taboos
    - 3.2.3 Birth and care of the child
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 Further Reading and Other Resources
- 1.0 Introduction**

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

### **2.0 Objectives**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

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

### **3.0 Nature and purpose of marriage in African societies**

#### **3.1 Nature of marriage**

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

societies. Therefore we can say that Africans are allowed by their culture to marry as many wives as possible. There is no limit to how many wives a man can marry.

There are however some conditions or factors that may determine who to marry. That is, the choice of marriage partners in the traditional way can be due to some reasons. As noted by Uka (1973), some of the reasons or things that can determine the choice of a marriage partner are:

- (a) **A good family background** — You learnt in one of the units that Africans appreciate good behavior very much. We also said then that people who misbehave bring shame to their parents and the whole family. Therefore, one of the conditions to be considered before anybody can be allowed to marry a person is good records about his or her family. The family must not be known for any bad thing or disease. So, people from both families always take their time to find out many useful information about the family of the person to be married. Bad ways of life or a family disease can make people from either the side of the man or the woman say no to a marriage. Is that good? Is that still in practice in your area?
- (b) **Wealth** — Well we know that no parents want their daughters to marry a poor man. We said earlier on in one of the units that a jobless or lazy man in a village may not get a wife. Therefore, one of the factors to take into consideration in marriage is how wealthy that person is. The wealth could be in terms of the large farmland, cattle, number of houses and other essential things of life. Is this not common in modern societies?
- (c) **Social standing** — This means the type of popularity the person enjoys in the society or community. For example, is he a chief, a king, a great hunter or a popular drummer? etc. Girls can be asked to marry such a man by their parents. In the same way, young men could be asked to marry girls from such popular families.
- (d) **Tribal or racial group** — In the traditional societies, people always like to marry from their own ethnic group. If possible some may not even like to go outside their immediate cultural environment. For example, in Yorubaland, an Ekiti man may prefer to marry an Ekiti girl and so on. Why do you think this was done? There could be many reasons. However, you will still remember we talked about the extended family system? Therefore many parents may not like their daughters to be too far away from them so that the extended family link can be maintained. If there is anything they want to do in the family, they can easily get to her.
- (e) **Hardwork** — If a man is very hard working and not lazy, he will easily get a lady to marry. Like we said earlier on, nobody likes

to marry a lazy man who will not be able to meet his family responsibilities.

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

#### **Exercise 4.1**

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

Your answer should include — good family background, wealth, social standing, tribal or racial group and hard work.

#### **3.1.1 Purpose of marriage**

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

In some other parts of the world like Europe and America, people may marry not purposely to have children. They may marry because of their love for each other and to have a companion. This is not the situation in traditional societies. In African societies, the major reason why people marry is to have their own children. Nobody wants to have a childless marriage. It could happen in other parts of the world but not in Africa. In fact there have been many cases of even Christians, Muslims and the highly placed government workers who divorced their partners because there was no child in their marriage. Have you seen such a case before?

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

### **3.2 Pregnancy and Child bearing**

### **3.2.1 Conception**

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

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

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

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

### **3.2.2 Pregnancy Taboos**

Generally in Africa, there are some things people do or say that may not have any scientific explanation. They may do or say such things to prevent people from doing certain things. In some cases, they may like to teach certain good habits, prevent accidents and so on. Such things that are related to the dos and don'ts are known as taboos. Some people may call them superstitious beliefs.

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

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

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

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

### **Exercise 3.2**

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

Your answer should include the following

- a sign that good things are coming
- that the manhood of the husband is complete

#### **3.2.3 Birth and Care of the child**

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

Now when the baby is born, the joy is always very great. It is usually a great occasion that is well celebrated. All members of the extended family as well as friends and neighbors always join them in the celebration. The date for naming the child varies from place to place. In some places, the sex of the baby or the particular tradition of the family may determine when the naming ceremony will take place. But in most cases, it takes place on the 8<sup>th</sup> day early in the morning. It is usually done by the eldest member of the extended family or someone chosen by him. There is a bowl of water in which people who want to give names to the child will drop the money for the purpose. This is particularly common in Yoruba land where in those days cowries were used as money. Later, the coins introduced by the white men were used. Various things are used for giving the child a name. They vary from place to place. Find out what your people use.

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



As there were no hospital in those days, the birth of the baby usually takes place in the house. The woman is helped by the older women in the family. Men are usually not allowed there except when there are problems. If there is any serious problem that the woman could not handle, they will send for the medicine man (native doctor) who would give things for the woman to eat or drink. In some cases, he may recite some incantations.

When the baby is born, it must first cry before they can tell other people about the arrival of the baby. If a baby does not cry, there are certain things to do to make it cry. After that the placenta is carefully removed and buried in the ground. The baby is washed with native soap and sponge and later covered with oil and other things that could protect the skin. Among the Yoruba people, the cram wood powder mixed with oil is very popular. What do they use in your place?

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

During the day, the baby is carried on the back or on the palms by the mother depending on the situation. For example, when the baby is sleeping, the mother or the grandmother may carry him on her back. All these actions show the love they have for the child.

As you have learnt earlier on, Africans have a very kind and loving' attitude towards children. This may explain why they do all things to make the child comfortable. The mother of the baby is also given adequate care so that she can look after the child well.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

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

#### **5.0 Summary**

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

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments**

- (i) Why is polygamy popular among African men?
- (ii) Identify and explain two taboos associated with pregnancy in traditional societies.

## **7.0 Further Reading and Other Resources**

Akinbote, O.; Oduolowu, E. and Lawal, B. (2001) *Pre-primary and Primary Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Stirling Horden Publisher Nig. Ltd. Uka, N. (1973). *Growing up in Nigerian Culture*. Occasional Publications No. 6. Ibadan: Institute of Education, University of Ibadan.

## **UNIT 5: BREAST FEEDING AND WEANING IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETIES**

### **Contents**

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2.0	Objectives
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## **1.0 Introduction**

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

## **2.0 Objectives**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

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

## **3.0 Breast-feeding**

### **3.1 The meaning and importance of breast-feeding**

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

You also learnt that the mother was always ready to feed the baby anytime the baby needed food. Now what type of food does the mother give the new baby? Yes, it is the milk from the mother's breast. That

milk is known as breast milk. Therefore, the method of giving the child the mother's breast milk is called breast-feeding. This is what we want to discuss in the section.

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

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

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

The first thing our people do after the birth of the child is to test the mothers breast milk. This is done before the mother starts breast-feeding so as to be sure that the baby is given good breast milk. There are many ways of testing the breast milk in traditional societies. One method that is very common in many parts of Nigeria is to get a little quantity of the mother's breast milk in a small cup. After that an ant is put into the milk. According to Ulm, the condition of the ant in the milk, that is, whether it dies or not will tell them if the milk is good or bad. If it is good, the mother will receive the go ahead order to feed the child with it. However, if it is bad, there are ways of treating it before it could be given to the child.

As we discussed in the last unit, the baby is fed as many times as possible in a day. There is no particular time or place when the child should be fed. Whenever the child cries, even if the mother is not around, people will call her to come and feed the baby. Therefore, whether the mother is at home, in the farm or market or even going with

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

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

- a. **The health of the mother** — If the mother is seriously sick or if she dies, the breast-feeding child will be stopped. If the child is considered too young to stop breast-feeding completely, a nursing mother within the family can help. That is, in traditional societies the extended family system provides the opportunity for having a nursing mother at any time. Since they see themselves as one, there is no difficulty in getting another woman to help in breast-feeding any of their babies.
- b. **Health of the baby** — Babies who are always sick or those who were born before nine months (pre-mature) are usually breast fed for a longer period. This is to give them more time to receive the natural body building materials in the mother's milk.
- c. **Sex of the baby** — In many communities, boys tend to be on the breast milk longer than the girls. This is because boys need to build up strong bones and muscles for their future activities as men. On the other hand, girls are said to be more gentle and kind to their mothers by stopping earlier than boys. That is, girls even stop breast-feeding on their own earlier than boys. Have you ever heard of this in your area? Try to find out what obtains in your area. **Mother's pregnancy** – If a mother becomes pregnant, she has to stop breast-feeding immediately. This is because of the belief that the milk could become dangerous for the child. That is, a child that takes such milk could become sick and even die.
- e. **The cutting of the teeth** — When the child starts growing his teeth, he could use them to bite the mother. Therefore, in such cases, breast — feeding will have to stop to save the mother from being bitten by the child.

### Exercise 5.1

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

child.

Your answer should include:

- For proper physical growth
- To prevent the baby from diseases
- To make the baby good looking healthy and happy

## **3.2 Weaning**

### **3.2.1 Meaning of weaning**

You have just learnt in the section above that breast-feeding is important for the child. You also learnt that it can continue for as long as two or more years. As you know, the child cannot go on taking the breast milk forever. In fact, it will get to a stage when the breast milk alone will not be enough for the child. Therefore, as from a particular age, the mother will start to introduce some of the adult food in the area to the child. That is, the child will be taking the breast milk as well as the adult food. This will gradually reduce the number of times the child will take the mother's breast milk in a day. The age for weaning is not fixed.

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

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

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

### **3.2.2 Importance of weaning**

As you have just learnt in the last section, weaning is the gradual

process of reducing the number of times a child is given the breast milk in the day. Instead of taking just the mother's breast milk, the child now begins to eat some adult food.

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

The weaning period is also important because it is a period when the mother enjoys some freedom. That is, during the time, the rate of breast-feeding has reduced. Therefore, the mother can now leave the child for some time to do some other things. It is also the period when the child's parents need to be more careful about their personal hygiene. As we discussed in the last section, the child can easily eat up germs with unclean food. This may cause sickness for the child. Therefore, mothers, should always be very careful about what they give to their children to eat.

### **3.2.3 Problems of weaning**

Earlier on, we talked about some reasons that lead to the long and short period of breast-feeding for the child. If you can still remember them, we mentioned health of the mother, sex of the child, the growing of teeth by the child, the health of the child and the pregnancy of the mother.

Now, do you know that there are some children who do not want to stop breast-feeding at all? In such cases, mothers have to do something to stop the child from taking the breast milk. Some of such things have been identified by Uka (1973) as follows:

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

### **3.2.4 Weaning foods**

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

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

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

- ( a ) corn pap
- ( b ) yam porridge
- ( c ) mashed beans
- ( d ) amala with drawing soup
- ( e ) moimoi and akara (made from beans)
- ( f ) boiled yam'
- ( g ) banana and other Soft fruits

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

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

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

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

#### **5.0 Summary**

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

#### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments**

- (a) Why do mothers breast feed'?



- (b) Explain the meaning of weaning.
- (c) List five weaning foods that you know.

### **7.0 Further Reading and Other Resource**

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

**UNIT 6: TOILET TRAINING OF CHILDREN IN  
TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETIES**

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    - 3.1.2 Taboos associated with toilet training
  - 3.2 Problems of toilet training
    - 3.2.1 Bed wetting)
    - 3.2.2 Traditional methods of treating bed wetting
- 4.0 Conclusion
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- 7.0 Further Reading and other resources

### **1.0 Introduction**

In the last unit you learnt the breast-feeding and weaning practices in traditional African societies. In this unit you will learn the toilet training methods and how the problems of bed-wetting are solved. It is still part of the up-bringing of children.

### **2.0 Objectives**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of toilet training.
- discuss how the training is carried out
- identify the problems of toilet training
- enumerate three steps usually taken to correct bed wetting.

### **3.0 Toilet training in traditional societies**

#### **3.1 The meaning and purpose of toilet training**

Here, we are going to look at what we mean by toilet training in traditional societies. We shall also discuss why toilet training is part of the up-bringing process of children in traditional societies.

As you have learnt in the last unit, children are given good feeding right from birth. They are first given only the mother's breast milk. As time goes on, they are given solid adult food that people eat in their area. Therefore, since children eat and drink, everyday it has become necessary for them to release the waste products from their system. That is, the children will have to urinate and empty their bowel. If the children are allowed to urinate and empty their bowels (defecate)

anywhere anyhow, it will not be good. It will just be like the goats and chickens we see around us. Do you like the way the animals make the compound and even houses dirty? In the same way, our grandparents did not want their children to behave like the animals by just emptying their bowel anyhow. That is why they have to train them on how and where to empty their bowels or urinate.

The process of telling the children how and where to control their bladder (urinate) and bowels (defecate) is known as toilet training. You can now see why it is necessary to give children proper toilet training right from the early stages of development. For example, as we said earlier on, we need to keep our environment clean. Our grandparents liked clean environments. That is why they made sure that children did not just empty their bowels (defecate) anywhere. It is only animals that can behave like that. In order to prevent diseases, the environment is kept clean always.

### **3.1.1 The beginning of toilet training**

We have just learnt that toilet training is the process of telling children how and where to empty their bowels. Let us now see how the training begins. Uka (1973) in his study of some Nigerian communities has made some things known to us. For example, he said that among the Ibo, Yoruba and Ibibio people, toilet training begins soon after birth. Is that not so? Yes, that is the truth. As you have already learnt in the last unit, the mother is always with the baby. She either carries the baby on her back or she carries him on her palms or laps. So, the mother learns very easily to know the various signs the baby gives whenever he wants to empty the bowel. The mother will quickly place the child between her feet with a space for the child's bottom to rest. That is how the waste products from the baby will come out into a container. Sometimes, the child may do it on the floor and the mother cleans it up immediately.

In some cases, the child may not want to urinate or empty the bowel easily. In such a situation, the mother will hold the child up with the legs stretching downwards. Then the mother will make some 'hiss' sound for a few seconds. This is done to stimulate the child into urinating. In that situation, the child will urinate.

When the child starts crawling, he could urinate or empty his bowel anywhere. However, by the time the child starts walking he is not allowed to empty the bowel anywhere. There is usually a corner within the family compound where he can use: That is to say, the child is now gradually being trained to use a place. By that time the child is expected to tell the mother or whoever is around that he wants to urinate or empty the bowel. He could be punished in a little way to correct him if he

empties the bowel anywhere or on his dress. Generally speaking, mothers do not express too much anger when their children urinate or defecate on them when they are still very young. Even when a visitor is carrying the child and he urinates on the visitor, it is regarded as a sign of generosity for the child in future. In fact, people, Yoruba land for example pray for people when they have bought a new dress that their children will urinate and defecate on it. This type of prayer is particularly said for the childless women

You have so far learnt how children are given toilet training up till about the age of two or three years. You must also remember that children's carelessness in their toilet habits can be allowed up till about two years or so. Anything after that may bring about some minor corrective measures like light punishment or scolding.

It is also necessary for you to note that boys and girls are treated in the same way in their toilet training. That is to say, there is no separate training for boys and girls. They are both treated in the same way.

### **Exercise 6.1**

Why is toilet training given to children in the traditional societies?

Your answer should show that

- It helps the children to control their bowels
- It helps to promote good personal hygiene
- It helps keep the environment clean and tidy
- It helps to prevent the spread of diseases.

### **3.1.2 Taboos associated with toilet training**

You have just learnt in the section above that children are taught good toilet habits right from the time they are young. You also learnt that toilet training is given in order to promote good health habits among children. It also helps to keep the environment clean and free from diseases.

Now let us look at some taboos or what some people call superstition. What will you do if you are eating and your child urinates into your food? Yes, among the Yoruba and Ibo people, you are not expected to throw away the food. That is, you are expected to continue with your eating. Why is it so? It is because of the belief that to throw away the food is to tell the child you do not like him. Therefore, the child may even die and the woman may not have another child again. That is the belief.

We discussed in one of the earlier units that when a baby is born, many

visitors come to greet them. Everyone would always like to carry the baby to show that they love him. It sometimes happens that the baby may urinate on the visitor. There are many taboos about this. Do you know of any one?

One of the taboos is that such a person is going to have her own children. This is particularly so if the visitor is childless. Therefore, the visitor should not be angry. Rather she should be happy and even sing for the baby. Then people around will pray with her.

Another taboo is that if a child urinates on the visitor, it is a sign of generosity. That is, the child is going to-be a very kind person who will be willing to give freely in future. There are some other things which you will learn about toilet training in the next section of this unit. We shall discuss about the children who cannot control their bladder. That is, those who urinate when they sleep.

## **3.2 Problems of toilet training**

### **3.2.1 Bed-wetting**

In the section above, you have just learnt that children are taught to control bowels and bladder movement. That is, children are trained not to urinate or defecate just anyhow in the house. You have also learnt that children can be allowed to urinate or defecate anyhow even on their mother or beds up to a certain age. That is, as from a certain age, may be from above five years, such a situation is regarded as bad.

From your own experience, you will remember that it is easier for the child to keep the rules of where to urinate during the day. It is however more difficult during the night. In other words, there are some children who urinate in the right places during the day. However, when they sleep at night, they cannot get up and go to the right place to urinate. It may be as a result of the fact that they sleep too much and do not even remember to get up. In such a case the child urinates on his mat or bed. The situation where a child urinates on the mat or bed at night is what is called "Bed Wetting". As we discussed earlier, if a child is bed wetting up till the age of five or so, it is still allowed. That is, people do not generally see anything bad about it. But, when the child is six years and above and he or she is still bed-wetting, it then becomes a problem to the child and his parents. What do you think may cause it?

There are many reasons why a child can bed wet after six years. These include, eating and drinking water very late in the night. In other words, children who are allowed to have the supper late in the night may bed wet. There is also the fact that since children have to go out in the night,

they could be afraid. That is, since there are no toilets in the house as we now have them, some children who want to urinate at night may be too afraid to go out and urinate. In this case, the child may be bed-wetting.

Another very popular and common belief among some ethnic groups is that there are some supernatural causes which the ordinary person cannot understand. This means that a child that bed wets at the abnormal age of seven and above does so as a result of some evil forces. Do you know or have you heard about even big boys and girls bed wetting in the 'Boarding House'? There were many big boys and girls like that in the past. People like that are always ashamed and become worried.

### **Exercise 6.2**

What are the causes of bed wetting?

Your answer should include

- eating late at night
- fear
- sleeping too much
- supernatural causes

### **3.2.2 Traditional methods of treating bed-wetting**

In the above section, we discussed some of the reasons why children bed wet. We also discussed that when children above the age of seven years are still bed wetting, it becomes a problem. The child is worried and sometimes ashamed and the parents too are not always happy about it.

How then did our grandparents handle the situation? We may even ask ourselves how did we stop bed-wetting? Among the traditional people, there is always a solution to any problem they have. Since the causes of bed-wetting are known, they found some solutions. Some of the traditional methods of solving the problem of bed-wetting are:

The first one is to reduce or even stop the water and food intake of the child after about 7p.m. Remember that in traditional societies, the last meal of the day is in most places in Nigeria taken at about 7pm. That is shortly after sunset. Therefore, it is hoped by our people that if a child is not allowed to drink or eat late, there will be no reason for him to urinate at night.

Another solution is to always wake the child up at night to urinate. As we discussed earlier, we said some children may sleep too much or even be afraid to go out. Therefore, waking them up at night to urinate could help to reduce or even stop bed-wetting.

Among some ethnic groups like the Yoruba, the child according to Uka (1973) may be asked to urinate into fire before he goes to sleep. The belief is that each time the child will feel some pain that will wake him up at night when he wants to urinate. Similarly, among the Igbo people, Uka also said they sometimes roast and allow the child to eat the meat of wall gecko. The tail of the gecko must not cut off otherwise, the child will continue to urinate. These are superstitions. Do you think they can work?

There are many of such methods of controlling bed-wetting in different parts of Nigeria. Even, if such practices are regarded as superstitions by Many people as long as they work for them, they are good for them.

In many places particularly in Yorubaland, when most of the treatments discussed above have refused to work, they may take some special measures. One of them is to offer sacrifices. The sacrifices may include the child urinating in a container and emptying it at the road junction at a particular period of the day.

Other steps include the preparation of special medicines which the child could drink or eat like it is done in Ibo land. It is even said that most of the children who bed wet at a relatively old age, that is after seven years may have some diseases. This is why various treatments are usually given. Even if our grandparents had no scientific evidence 'to prove or support what they were doing, We should atleast praise their efforts. As we discussed in one of the earlier units, particularly under breast-feeding, some of the actions of our grandparents are now being proved right by medical science.

May be we just have to mention another way of treating bed-wetting, which I am very sure some of you will know very well. That is the socio-psychological treatment.

You will still remember either yourself or some other brothers, sisters or guides who are always ashamed to go and spread their wet mats and clothes outside in the open air. Our people also used this to treat bed-wetting. For example, some parents may call upon the child when all the children are around to go and spread his mat or clothes outside. I even remember our school days when we would organise special songs for those who were bed-wetting. As you may know, these measures were successful to a reasonable extent. Try and find out from people close to you how they control bed wetting in their children. You will be surprised about the various methods used.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Toilet training is an important aspect of the child rearing practices in traditional African societies. What you have learnt in this unit gives you a clear idea of what was done in the past, which is still being done in different parts of Africa now. Some of the methods may even be useful for your own personal use.

## **5.0 Summary**

In this unit, you have learnt the meaning and purpose of toilet training. You learnt how the child was trained right from infancy to control his bowel and bladder. You have also learnt in the unit the causes of bed-wetting and treatment in traditional societies. The next unit will teach you the specific roles of parents in the upbringing of children in traditional societies.

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments**

1. What is toilet training?
2. Enumerate two taboos associated with toilet training in traditional societies.
3. How was bed-wetting treated in traditional societies?

## **7.0 Further Reading and other resources**

Akinbote, O. (1999). Early Childhood Education in traditional societies in M. Ogunsanya (Ed.). *Basic Processes in Education* Oyo: Andrian Publications pp. 157 — 173.

Uka, N. (1973). *Growing tip in Nigerian Culture*. Occasional Publication 6, Ibadan: Institute of Education, University of Ibadan.

## **UNIT 7: THE ROLES OF PARENTS IN THE UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN IN AFRICAN SOCIETIES**



## **Contents**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

You have learnt in the past units that children in traditional societies are not only loved but also adequately looked after. This unit stresses on the specific roles of the parents in the upbringing of the child. You will learn how parents, particularly the mother influences the child's development.

### **2.0 Objectives**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- explain the parent-child relationship in African traditional societies
- identify the role of the parents in the Upbringing of the child
- give reasons why the child is more influenced by the mother.

### **3.0 The role of the mother**

#### **3.1 The mother-child relationship**

In every society, the child is closer to the mother at the early stages than the father or any other person. This is because it is the mother, more than any other person in the family that meets the daily needs of the child. For example, in the previous units, you learnt about how the mother breast-feeds the child regularly. You also learnt about how the mother takes good care of the child. When they sleep, the child sleeps besides the mother. When the baby is to be fed, the mother carries the baby in her arms. Even when the mother is going about, she carries

the baby on her back. Therefore, the mother and the baby are always together in the traditional society. This closeness of the child to the mother is more noticeable up to the age of four or five years. It may however vary from place to place or as a result of whether the child is a boy or a girl. For example in some places, boys may have to be taken away from the mother at about four or five to prevent him from becoming too woman like in his behaviors. In other words, the father likes the boy to take much after him than the mother.

You will remember that in one of the earlier units, we discussed about the extended family system. That is, a family system where the grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters as well as other relations live together. In such a family system, there are always other mothers around to look after the child. You learnt this in some of the earlier units. Even in such extended family system, with many other 'mothers', who by our culture take good care of the child, the real mother still gets closer to the child than any other person. It is this close relationship between the child and the mother that makes it very easy for the child to learn many things from the mother. We shall now look at the methods, which mothers use in the training and upbringing of their children.

### **3.1.1 The maternal teaching styles**

We have just discussed the close relationship that exists between the child and the mother. One of the reasons for this close relationship is because the mother is always with the child during the day or night. Thus, she knows what the child wants at any time and she tries to meet the needs.

Let us now look at how the mother teaches the child many things. We may first of all say that children acquire their first language from the mother. You may wish to find out whether this is why we often hear something like 'mother-tongue'. Have you ever heard about it? That is the first language that the child speaks. Since mothers are always with their children and always talking to them, they pick their first language from their mothers. You will learn more about the language development of the child in another unit.

Now, how does the child pick his first language from the mother? In the traditional society as we said earlier on, the mother- is always talking to the child. For example, when the mother is breast-feeding the child, she talks to the baby, sings for him and even makes some jokes with the baby. This is done at all times both day and night even when the child cannot talk. So, as time goes on, the child starts to imitate the mother and repeats what the mother says. Little by little, the child will be picking the language. Remember also that others within the family will

be talking to the child. But the greatest stimulation comes from the mother who is always with him. We can therefore say that the child learns from the mother through imitation. As the child grows up, he/she watches the way the mother behaves. The child starts to do things the way the mother does it. The child also behaves or talks the way the mother does it. By the time the child is about three to five years old, she must have learnt many things from the mother. For instance, the mother can direct the child to do or not to do certain things by her facial appearance. She can make some signs to the child without talking and the child will get the message. In other words, when the mother smiles or frowns her face, the child knows what it means. A child that is not able to read the mothers gestures, mood or appearance at any time is not considered to be properly educated. Since the child is too young to know how to behave well in public, the mother is always there to correct him through signs and gestures. It is only in some cases that require open or verbal correction that the mother will correct the child openly. This is particularly the situation where we have some visitors.

### **3.1.2 The responsibilities of the mother**

We have just discussed how children learn from their parents. That is, they learn through imitation and observation of their mothers' use of language, behaviour, attitude towards others and so on. Now, let us look at the specific responsibilities of women in the traditional set up.

In the traditional African societies like in most other parts of the world, women according to Uka (1973) and Fafunwa (1991) are child bearers, child carers, housekeepers and part-time workers. That is to say our tradition gives them roles to play only at home as mothers. The woman obeys her husband and respects him. Therefore, as a result of the important role a woman has to play at home in the upbringing of their children, she is not usually given other community responsibilities. We can now list the major responsibilities of the mother in the traditional societies as follows:

- a. **Child bearers:** – That is women are to give birth to children. This is their natural responsibility in order to increase the number of the family. This is also known as procreation.
- b. **Child carer:** - Women are to take good care of their children. Since the husbands will not always be around, it is the mothers that have the time to stay with the children and take care of them.
- c. **Housekeepers** — They are to keep the house clean, neat and tidy. They are to decorate the house and make it look beautiful. They are also to prepare good food for the family. A woman must cook good food to win the husband's heart.
- d. **Part-time workers:** - This means that mothers can only do some

little farming like growing vegetables, helping the husband to harvest crops, she can also do some petty trading and not a large scale trading or farming like men often do.

- e. **Obey and respect the husband:** — The husband is the head of the family. Therefore, the wife must respect the husband and obey him. She cannot do anything without the approval of the husband. Our culture does not recognise total freedom for the woman.

### **Exercise 7.1**

Why does the child learn more from the mother than any other person?

Your answer should include —

- the mother is always with the child day and night
- she is always at hand to correct the child when a mistake is made.
- she gives a practical example to the child in everything on daily basis.

## **3.2 The role of the father**

### **3.2.1 The father-child relationship**

In the last discussion, we said that the mother is always at home to look after the child. This we said is why children are usually very close to their mothers whom they see every time. On the other hand, the father is out most of the time for one thing or the other. Our culture does not even allow people to respect a man who is always at home. Therefore, the man is not always around for a very close relationship with the child as the case is with the mother. This however does not mean that the father does not like or love the child. As you have learnt in one of the earlier unit, the African man marries a wife mainly to have children. In this regard, he must naturally love the children. However, by the nature of our culture, he has to provide all the things the wife and the children need as the head of the family. This often gets him out of the house. At times, he leaves home very early and returns very late. By so doing the children may not be seeing much of their father. As we already mentioned, our culture does not expect him to sit at home like the woman. The only occasions when men are expected to remain at home during the day are on festivals, meetings, naming and other social occasions. In such situation the man may not always have the time to talk to the child, play with him and take care of him like the mother. As we said earlier, all these are part of the responsibilities of the wife. To stay at home and take care of the children. The father gets closer to the children, particularly the boys when they are about five years and above. This is the time the father starts taking the child out to the farm or other

places. This is done to give the child an opportunity to start learning certain sex roles. We shall talk more about that later in another unit.

### **3.2.2 Authority and discipline in the family**

You have just learnt that the father is out of the home most of the time. He is the head of the family but there are some things, which he shares with the wife. As the head of the family, he has authority over everybody in his family. In other words, he must give his approval before major decisions can be taken by the wife. This is as far as authority is concerned. There is only one head in the family and that person is the husband. Not the wife.

However, as regards discipline, the mother takes care of matters relating to minor misbehaviour of children. As you have already learnt, the man may not often be around at home. Therefore, the mother is allowed to deal with such minor cases of indiscipline or misbehaviour of the child. This is probably why mother discipline children more than the fathers. It is only in very serious situations that wives would wait for their husbands to take the decision. For example, where the mother has not been able to effectively deal with the situation, it is left for the father. In many cases, discipline matters relating to the boys are usually handled by the father. We must also remember that other members of the extended family can also discipline children. This happens particularly when the parents are not around. Even when the parents are around, steps can be taken on the spot to discipline a misbehaving child by an elderly person in the family. He or she may later report to the real parents. We shall discuss more on this in some other units.

### **3.2.3 Other responsibilities of the father**

As you have already known, the father is the head of the family. This gives him a lot of responsibilities in the family as a whole. As the husband and father, he is expected to do certain things in those two capacities.

First as a husband, he is expected to perform the following responsibilities

- (a) **Providing the needs of the family:** - This means he has to provide all the things needed in the family. This may include, shelter, food, money and other materials.
- (b) **Protection of the family:** - He protects his wife and children from danger. For example, in case of any danger from reptiles, animals or other intruders, the father is called upon to protect his family. This is why every child regards his father as the strongest person around. Therefore, the husband has to be a man of great

courage and one who is fearless.

- (c) **Asserting his authority:** - He must always be in control of the wife and children. His words should become orders. This is why in the traditional setting, the husband is always an authoritarian father. His words are final on any family matter. As a father, he performs the following roles:
- (d) **Training the children:** - This is particularly relevant to boys. The boy goes with the father to the farm or his place of work early in life. He learns the various techniques of the trade from the father. In cases where the child shows some special interest in a particular profession or trade outside the family, it is the duty of the father to take him there and make the necessary arrangements with the master. He also provides the necessary support for him and also monitors his progress from time to time.

Although, the girl takes much after the mother's trade, this does not mean that the father will not show interest in her. From time to time, the father asks the mother about the progress of the girl. On some occasions the mother could bring to the notice of the father some special needs or desires of the girl. Usually, girls are closer to their mothers hence they could easily make their feelings known to her. This is however, not the case with the father. As you learnt earlier on, he is not always at home like the mother. The only advantage which the boys have over the girls as far as training by the father is concerned is that the boys are expected to go to the farm with the father. This gives the boys the opportunity of interacting more with their father. You should note however that what the girls do not receive from the father, they receive from their mothers.

- (e) **Disciplining the family :** — As you have just learnt, the father is sometimes called to handle some difficult situations. Since he is not always seen around, children tend to 'respect' or 'fear' the father more than the mother. This is why even in present day societies, when the mother says she is going to report any misconduct of the child to the father, the child will beg the mother not to do so. This means that the father as the symbol of authority in the house can take any measure of discipline against any child. As you must have seen may be in your own family, when a child is reported and the father administers the usual punishment, who begs the father for mercy again? Yes, it is usually the mother. Has your mother ever threatened to report you to your father before? What was your reaction?

Generally, both parents cooperate in the effective management of the home. Each person knows his roles and nobody ever tries to take over

the roles of the other person. In fact, a family where the mother asserts too much authority on any issue is usually regarded as an unusual one. Therefore, while the wife could be working underground, it is the father's authority and actions that are recognized in the traditional societies.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Parents play an important role in the proper upbringing of the child. They both cooperate in order to ensure that their children are well behaved. The father who is the head has special roles to play. The wife too, who is at home with the children most of the time also plays some significant roles. This unit has made their individual roles clear to you.

#### **5.0 Summary**

You have learnt in this unit that the father is the head of the family. Since he has to look for whatever is required to take care of the family, he is not always at home like the mother. You also learnt that because the mother is always at home, she is the one that handles children's minor day to day problems. You must have noted it also that the father is always allowed to take major decisions on matters affecting the family generally. In the next unit, you are going to learn the roles of the community in the education of the child in traditional societies.

#### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments**

1. Which of the parents is closer to the child? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Classify the following responsibilities in the home into those assigned to the father and the mother in traditional societies — Providing the needs of the family, housekeeping, authority and discipline, protection, child bearing, part-time worker, training for specific skills, preparation of food.

#### **7.0 Further Reading and other resources**

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

Uka, N. (1973). *Growing up in Nigeria Culture*. Occasional Publications Ibadan: Institute of Education, University of Ibadan.

### **UNIT 8 THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

In the last unit, we discussed the specific roles of the parents in the upbringing of the child in traditional societies. Although, we did not discuss fully the roles other people could play in that unit. Therefore in this unit, you will learn the role of the community in the education of the African child. This unit will build on some of the important things you have already learnt in some of the earlier units.

### **2.0 Objectives**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- describe the nature of the traditional communities
- explain the methods of integrating the African child into his community
- critically assess the impact of the community on the African child.

### **3.0 The traditional African Community**

#### **3.1 Nature**

In unit three, we discussed the African family system. You learnt in that unit that the extended family system was popular among Africans. The reason for this as we discussed then was because the extended family system made it possible for them to relate very well with one another. We also said it gave members of the families a sense of belonging and encouraged cooperation among them.



You will still remember that the family is the foundation unit upon which all communities are built. This means that a community is made of families. There cannot be a community without families. In a way therefore, we can say that the type of families we have will determine the type of communities that we have in any place. So, if we have families that are loving, orderly, friendly and cooperative, we are also likely to get a community that will be loving, orderly, friendly and cooperative.

The traditional African communities could therefore be described as the type of communities where members have a sense of belonging. They are communities where there is love, friendship and cooperation among the members.

In one of the earlier unit, you learnt that whenever a member of the extended family is having a problem to solve, all other members of the family would come to his assistance in every way possible. You also learnt that whenever there was a ceremony such as naming, all members of the extended family as well as neighbours would join in the celebrations. This type of thing that happens at the family level is usually carried on into the larger community.

Therefore, we can also say that the traditional African communities are organized in such a way that everyone has a sense of belonging. Just as we saw in the extended family, there is always a collective desire to make every member socially, morally and locationally efficient. The arrangement of the community in sections or wards with a leader or head that will be responsible to the king or chief as the case may be, makes effective coordination and cooperation possible. From the family level to the ward or section level up to the village or community level, there is usually an order (hierarchy) of authority. This arrangement usually gives room for proper coordination of activities at all levels.

As we shall see later on, the upbringing of the child is a collective responsibility of the community. Although, the parents have their individual roles to play, yet the larger community serves as the umbrella for all the families within the community.

### **3.1.1 The place of the child in the community**

We said in one of the earlier units that Africans generally love children. , They marry because of having children. They can do anything humanly possible to make sure they have their own children. As children are important to the families, children are also important to the communities. Children are seen as those who will keep all the activities

of the communities going later when the elders are either too old or when they are no more. Therefore, children are given special attention due to them in the community.

Generally, we can say that children mean a lot to the traditional societies. First they see them as special gifts from God which nobody can buy with money. As a result of this, the various communities do all within their power to ensure the security and the well being of their children. In times of war, they take special care of them. In times of epidemics, they offer special sacrifices to the gods so as to spare the lives of their children.

In short, they take good care of their children because people in the traditional societies value them greatly.

Every community has a tendency to be regarded as large or big. They always want to be regarded as important and respected by other communities around. The only natural means of increasing their population which will bring them the necessary social prestige is through having children. They therefore see children as special assets that can bring them prestige among other communities.

Above all, in traditional societies, children are seen as those who will keep life going in their communities, that is, they see children as those who will allow the continuity of life in the community and all their cultural values and aspiration. By all means, all communities see children as a great necessity.

We must however remember that as much as children are loved, wanted and treasured, they are not allowed to become 'little gods' for the communities to worship. Every community has its own limitation or restrictions imposed on children generally. This they do so that children could be brought under proper control. We shall discuss more on this later.

### **3.1.2 The Community as a classroom**

One of the characteristics of traditional or informal education you learnt earlier on is that it has no fixed place and time for learning. Where does learning take place then? As you have already known, learning takes place anywhere and at any time within the community. In other words, the whole community is used as the classroom in traditional education. As you know, when you want to learn anything in the school, your teacher, who is specially asked to teach you a particular subject, will sit all of you in the classroom. Then he brings whatever he wants to teach you to the class. In many cases, he cannot bring the real specimen or the

original thing. The best he can often do is to bring pictures of such a thing. That makes learning in most classrooms not to be natural.

Things are not like that in the traditional societies. What you want to learn is already there in their natural or original form for the child to see and interact with if necessary. This is why learning in traditional education is always original and practical. This helps to promote better and quicker acquisition of the particular skill, attitude and values to be learnt by the child.

May be we need to remind you about what we said about teachers being employed to teach specific subject at specific places and specific times. Again, in traditional education, this is not so. All the adult members of the community are the teachers. They have no restrictions as regards, what to teach, where to teach and how to teach. In the same way, all the learning materials to be used are there in their natural environments for their use. There is also no shortage of accommodation or any problem of poor ventilation. In most cases, teaching and learning take place in the open air. So, where there is need for practical demonstration, there is usually no problem of lack of laboratory and other materials. They are always there for the teacher and the learners to use. The children, unlike the formal school children, always have the chance of revisiting a particular place or thing at their convenience since the things are always there.

You now can see why the whole community is the classroom for the child to learn under traditional education. The teachers are always around. They do not go on strike because of delay or non-payment of their salaries.

In fact, children in the traditional societies could be regarded as fortunate in the sense that learning is made easy for them. Many teachers often try to take their children to the community to see many things in their natural position or conditions. Did you go on any excursion when you were in school?

### **Exercise 8.1**

In what ways can the traditional communities be regarded as classrooms for traditional education.

Your answer should indicate the following

- the place where learning can take place anytime, the instructional and learning materials are there, every adult person is a teacher, learning is practical, all the teachers are friendly and know the children. (itemize).

## 3.2 Integration of the child

### 3.2.1 The age grades

We have just discussed how the child is loved and valued in the community. We also discussed how the whole community serves as the classroom with all the adult members serving as teachers for the child. That is, the child in the community is free and could learn the ways of life of his people without many problems. As you learnt in one of the units earlier on, the child is taught certain things at any time as the occasion demands. However, there are certain things, which the child may not easily be able to learn in the ordinary way. That is, he can only learn such things or ways of doing certain things through some other bodies. In other words the child is introduced into the particular social or religious group through which he is able to participate actively in all activities of the community. One of such association or groups is the 'Age Grade'

In Nigeria, the age grade is found among the different ethnic groups. The grouping of people, which is done according to age, varies from place to place. In many communities it is compulsory for individuals, both male and female to join the age grades. Parents in some cases may have to pay some money and provide some food and drinks for their children to be accepted or initiated into the group. In some others, it may be free. One thing that is the same all over is that no child would like to be left out. People graduate from one age grade to the other as they grow up. It is probably when you have reached an age limit, which is generally considered to be old age that you remain there for life.

The classification of people into the various age grades is given by Fafunwa (1991) as follows: -

5 — 9 years	36 — 39 years
10 — 14 years	40 — 43 years
15 — 19 years	44 — 47 years
20 — 23 years	48 — 51 years
24 — 27 years	52 — 56 years
28 — 31 years	57 — 60 years
32 — 35 years	61 years and above

Those in the first two or three stages may not be expected to do much in terms of community activities. They however, participate in various organized physical and mental developments. You learnt this in one of the earlier units where we discussed the goals of traditional education. Those in the other groups play important roles in the overall well being

of the community. Each group has a leader, which is respected by everybody. Some of the functions performed by the age groups depending on their stand on the seniority list include — provision of security to lives and property, community welfare and development, special advisers to traditional rulers, etc. In addition to these, special functions, the age grades also help in the proper orientation of individuals into some cultural practices. It is interesting to note that some communities in Nigeria still keep this age grade association which you have to join if you want to be recognized in the community. Is there anything like that in your village?

### **3.2.2 The religious groups or societies**

You have just learnt that the traditional societies do not allow any member of the community to be useless. That is, you have to be deeply involved in all social and cultural practices of the people. Another means of getting people involved is through the various religious groups. As you know the traditional people are very much involved in their religion. They worship various gods or deities, which all members of the communities join.

In some way there are some cults, which only a few are allowed to join. The cults are not open to everybody, as you have just learnt about the gods or deities. Among such cults are the different forms of fraternities and the masquerades. These cults always draw their membership either through hereditary processes or special selection procedures. For instance, in Yorubaland, there are some families in certain communities who are in charge of a particular masquerade. Which means, it is only members of that family that are responsible for bringing the masquerade out during the annual festivals or on some special occasions.

As regards the participation of the various age grades in religious activities, nobody is denied the right to participate in them. This is even expected of everybody including the young ones who may only accompany their parents into the ceremonies.

It is through this process that the young ones are introduced into the religious practices. As they grow older and graduate into other age grades they could be getting more involved in the religious rights. We must remember that as many Nigerians are so much involved in their Islamic or Christian faith, so were the traditional people. The only difference is that in the case of Islam and Christianity, one may decide not to become members. This is not so in the traditional societies where you have to be identified with everything that takes place in your community.

Up till now in some rural communities in Nigeria, occasions such as

new yam, masquerade and other festivals are community activities. That is, all categories of people from the traditional rulers down to the various age grades will be actively involved. Any visitor to such a village would really know that something is going on in the community at that time.

Therefore, children become integrated into their community life through their participation in the various religious festivals. The adults make sure that as much as possible, children and the youths generally are involved. There is even a popular saying in Yorubaland that any festival or religious worship where children are not involved will one day die out or go into extinction.

### **Exercise 8.1**

How are children brought into the community life and practices in traditional societies?

- Your answer must include the activities of the age grades and religious groups.

### **3.2.3 The impact of the environment on the African child**

You have just learnt that the child is always received with joy and given adequate care in the traditional societies. You also learnt in the other units that children have the whole community to use as the classroom. Now, let us look at the effects of the community life on the child as an individual.

Let us first look at how children learn. As you have already learnt, children in traditional societies learnt through observation and imitation of others. This makes learning very meaningful and practical. In fact, the African child is usually a master of his cultural practices including the use of language. He does not only learn in theory but everything is done practically. Therefore, you can see small boys of about seven or eight years playing some of the traditional musical instruments very well at that age or even lower.

In the same way, the child is always free to play around with other children. Parents always encourage this in traditional societies. By so doing, the children are always very familiar with their cultural environment. Thus, a boy of six or seven years of age can tell you almost all the important places or landmarks in his community.

However, there are certain things that appear to be a problem to children in the traditional societies. That is the fact that children must not talk where elders are. It is considered a sign of disrespect for children or the

young ones generally to question the authority of elders. Whatever the elders say must be accepted without question by the young ones. The elders are always right.

In the same way, children are not expected to ask questions particularly on some matters regarded as private or sensitive. In fact, when children ask too many questions, they are often asked to keep quiet or be given a knock on the head.

More importantly, the traditional people appear to be very rigid in their ways of life. They do not give room for new ideas since the elders are always right. Therefore, they expect things to be done the same way their grandparents have been doing it. There must be no changes at all. This is probably why there are many dos and don'ts in traditional societies. They create fears into the children by introducing some superstitions in form of taboos. Even when they mean to teach certain basic principles such as table manners, simple hygiene and so on, they still do so through taboos.

In the same way, certain things are kept secret from children for reasons best known to the elders. Therefore in a way, the children are restricted in their natural desire to know. The various taboos with the various fearful consequences for the violation have negative effects on the African child. As Fafunwa (1967) has rightly pointed out the various environmental restrictions have put the average African child below the age of six at a serious disadvantage when compared with his counterparts in Europe and North America. For example, the African child brought up in this way is always afraid of talking or doing certain things in the presence of elders or new faces. That is, they often lack self-confidence. However, we are happy the pre-school establishments have in some ways been correcting this among our children.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The community in the traditional societies are very loving, kind and friendly to the child. The spirit of belonging, which exists in the community, is often extended to the child. Some of the cultural practices in the various communities however have both good and bad effects on the child.

#### **5.0 Summary**

In this unit you have learnt the nature of the African traditional societies and the place of the child in the community. You also learnt how the child uses the whole community as the classroom and how he is introduced into the cultural practices of his people. The effects of all

these community activities were also learnt by you. In the next unit you are going to learn how the child acquires certain skills and attitudes in the traditional societies.

### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments**

1. What are the major characteristics of the traditional communities?
2. Identify and explain two good and two bad effects of traditional communities on the child.

### **7.0 Further Reading and Other Resources**

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

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### **1.0 Introduction**

In some of the various units, you have learnt the seven goals of traditional education and how they were achieved. You have also learnt that for a person to be a respected and acceptable member of his community, he has to combine skills in a particular occupation with good character. In this unit, you are going to learn specifically how children in the traditional societies acquire the skills and attitudes which make them good citizens.

### **2.0 Objectives**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Describe how individuals acquire the desired attitudes in their communities
- Identify the various vocational skills available in traditional societies
- Explain how the skills are acquired.

### **3.0 Attitude**

#### **3.1 Acquisition of attitudes in traditional education**

As we have discussed earlier on, an educated man in the African sense is the one who has acquired a skill with good character and ability to apply the skill well (Akinpelu, 1982). Therefore, in traditional education, there is much emphasis on the development of the right attitudes and values in every child.

What do we mean by attitude? We can refer to it as the way an

individual or a group of people behave or react to situations. In other words, the behaviours of people could be referred to as their attitudes. Now why do traditional African people place much emphasis on the development of positive attitudes or good behavior. This is an area which is very important in African traditional education. A good number of researchers in traditional education such as Majasan (1967), as well as Moumouni, (1968) have long discovered that the development of good character or behaviour is the central point in traditional education.

This is because, he who does not behave well in the society is of little or no significance no matter his material or vocational achievements. Therefore, whatever they do, teach or learn, there is always an aspect which relates to good behaviour.

If one is not well behaved, it can cost him much in the society. People have been denied their rights to become kings, important chiefs or community leaders because they have been found unsuitable in their character. Most families take this aspect of their children's training with all the seriousness and attention it deserves. They do so because they do not want their children to bring disgrace to the family in any form. As you learnt in one of the earlier chapters, children are trained to behave well right from their infancy. Families do not allow the children to grow up before they start character training. Many behaviours usually regarded as bad manners in the traditional societies are things which we now see daily in our big towns and cities. Can you mention some of them? How then do children acquire the right attitudes in their communities? This is what we shall discuss in the next section of this unit.

### **3.1.1 The family influence**

As noted by Akinbote, et al (2001), every adult member of the community is a teacher to the child. However, the immediate family plays the major role. This is so because, the child relates more to them than they do to outsiders. You have learnt earlier on that the child is closer to the mother in his early years than even the father. That is why the influence of the mother is always very great on children. How then do children acquire the right attitudes in the society? Some of the ways as identified by Akinbote et al (2001) are as follows:

The first one is by direct instruction from the parents, brothers and sisters and other adult members of the extended family. In other words, the child could be told what is expected of him at any particular situation. Sometimes, the child must have misbehaved and any of the people mentioned above will quickly correct him. He may even be punished for the misbehaviour before he is told the correct way of

behaving under such a situation. For example, a visitor might come into the compound and the child may fail to greet that person as culture demands. He is either verbally corrected or he is given a little knock on the head and then asked to kneel, down or prostrate as the case may be. This is very common among the Yorubas. Another example from the same Yoruba people is this. A child calls his elders, either siblings or cousins by name. He is immediately corrected if not by the person directly involved, it could be by an adult member of the family around. Any mistake on the part of the child in future on the same matter usually attracts serious punishment.

Another method is through the examples given by the members of the family. The child in his day to day interactions with the family members, in particular the parents, observes them and then tries to imitate them. Therefore, without any direct instruction, the child picks up the behaviours he or she is constantly exposed to. This is why parents and other relations often take it upon themselves to behave well in the presence of their children. For example, parents who are fond of using abusive language, often transfer such to their children. The children pick such attitude naturally through imitation thinking that what they are doing is good.

Remember that children generally think what adults say or do is the idea. They are too young to know what is not correct. By the time they grow up to realize it, it could have become their habit which may be difficult to break.

The third way by which children acquire attitude which Fafunwa (1974) also mentioned is through the saying of elders. There are many proverbs, songs or even poetry which teach good behaviour. Many of the 'moon light' stories which are told by grandparents also help in this regard. We all still remember the different stories of the tortoise. Even if they are not true life stories, children often take them to be true. Different behaviours are illustrated through such stories from which the children are expected to learn. Do you remember any of such stories?

### **Exercise 9.1**

In what ways does the family influence the attitudes of their children?

- Your answer should include direct instruction, observation and imitation of adults, indirect through proverbs, songs, poetry and stories (itemize).

### **3.1.2 The social and religious groups**

In the last unit, you learnt how children are introduced into the community, ways of life. You still remember the use of age grade and religion? These are very important means of not only introducing children into the ways of life of the people but also teaching the behaviour patterns in the community. We have just discussed how important to the traditional African communities, the attitudes of people are. You also learnt at the beginning of this unit that the proper upbringing of children in traditional communities is not the duty of just an individual family. It is the responsibility of all. In other words, the parents, the adult members of the community and other associations or groups have their own roles to play. We have seen how family influences the behaviour of the children. Let us look at the age -grades and the religious groups.

\_The age grades as you have learnt in the last unit are present in many parts of Nigeria. If you still remember, we said then that each age grade is made up of people of almost the same age grouped together. One of the important functions of the age grade is to introduce their members to certain culturally approved patterns of behaviour. You still remember that individuals sometimes have to pay a levy which may be high or low before they are admitted. It all depends on the status of the age grade in the Society. If they are for people below 15 years, it may not even attract any „levy or fee. But those in the upper grades where much social importance is attached, it could be very high fee. Not only that, it could also involve - eating and drinking.

Now, how do the age grades influence their members' attitude? First, each age grade has a leader. There are codes of conduct that must be kept by each member. The violation of such codes of conduct may attract sanctions ranging from payment of fines to expulsion from the group. For example in certain communities, members of the same age grade should not commit adultery with other members wives.

In some other cases, the age grade introduces a system of co-operative saving schemes to help members. Apart from encouraging members not to waste their money on minor things, they also promote co-operative efforts in helping members. For examples, members could move round to clear their farms, build their huts or houses and so on. All these attitudes are taught in the age grades.

The age grades also ensure that their members do not behave in any way that is against the norms of their community. They often correct such members with sanctions where necessary. They do this because the misconduct of just one of them could bring shame and disrespect to their group.

As regards the religious groups, their code of conduct is usually more strict than those of the age groups. Since their activities affect the spiritual aspect of the community, they are usually expected to behave in some more peculiar ways. From their mode of dressing to eating, the behavioural pattern expected differs from most of the other associations. For example, there are oaths usually taken to ensure that members keep to the expected ways of living. For example, the keeping of certain decisions or issues secret. Members of these religious groups often keep to their codes of conduct in order not to attract punishment from the gods.

As regards the very young children, the religious practices of their parents are introduced to them as early as they can hear and understand what they see. Even before then, the children could in a way have been initiated in particular where certain cults such as the masquerades are in the family.

Whatever the situation, the religious practices of parents always influence the attitudes of their children. The children are often advised to always be of good conduct so as to avoid the anger of the gods. Again there are some taboos which are often used to prevent children from behaving in ways contrary to the wishes of the community.

## **3.2 Skills acquisition**

### **3.2.1 The different types of skills**

We discussed in one of the earlier 'units that every child is introduced to a particular vocational training as early as possible. Now let us see the various vocational areas from which children can easily acquire a particular, skill.

As mentioned in one of the earlier units, Fafunwa, (1991) has classified such vocational skill areas into three. These are agriculture, trade and crafts and the profession.

In agriculture, there are areas of specialisation depending on the geographical location of the people. The one that appears to be available everywhere is farming. This is the planting of various foods and sometimes cash crops like groundnut, cotton, kolanut, etc. They also plant some fruits and vegetables. In most places, it is the man that engages in the planting of cash crops and food crops like yam. The woman on the other hand engages in the planting of vegetables. We must also remember that while men engage in having oil palm plantations, it is the women that usually prepare the oil from the

plantations.

In the field of agriculture, there is also fishing. This is mostly practiced in the riverine areas such as those living in the delta area, or along the coasts, those living near lakes and big rivers. While those living in the coastal areas or the big rivers and lakes take it as a full-time job, others may do it only during the rains. Give some examples of each group of fishermen.

There is also animal rearing. Here, we also have two categories. That is, those who take animal rearing as full time work like the Fulani cattle rearers in Northern Nigeria and those who keep a few domestic animals such as goats, sheep, pigs and some birds.

The next vocational area is the trade and crafts. There are many of such trades and crafts practised in different parts of Nigeria. Let us just take some examples here from the list provided by Fafunwa.

There is weaving - which may be clothing materials or baskets. Cloth weaving is done almost everywhere but some areas are noted for a particular type of clothing materials. Give some examples of such towns in Nigeria. Basket weaving is also popular particularly in areas where you have palm trees: Even in the far North, they still use some special materials to provide, some, kinds of cage for their domestic birds. Have you seen one before? Try to check one of the big lorries carrying food and other items from the North.

In the area of trade and crafts, we also have blacksmith, goldsmith and silversmith. While the blacksmith engages in the production of cutlasses, hoes, knives, etc, the gold smith produce rings, chains etc. The silversmith engages in the production of certain cooking materials like pots, spoons, etc. Again this category of trade and crafts cuts across the country.

Other categories of trade and crafts include hunting, carving, drumming, pottery, mat making, dyeing, wine tapping and trading among others. We cannot mention all of them but you can add to the list.

The last category of vocational areas is what Fafunwa (1991) has referred to as the professions. Is that strange to you? There are people in the additional societies who practised some of the modern day professions or careers such as medicine, priesthood, civil service, the policing, the warriors, etc.

Those in medicine are the native doctors who engage in the treatment of

various diseases among the people. This is found everywhere and efforts are even being made now to modernise their activities.

In the priesthood are the various priests of the gods and deities worshipped in different parts of Africa before the advent of Islam and Christianity. Are you surprised to find civil servants, police, etc? Yes, if you have read about great kingdoms and Empires in Nigeria for instance you will expect these categories of workers. Examples are Benin Kingdom, Oyo Empire, Bornu Empire, Opkobo Kingdom and so on.

### **Exercise 10.2**

Identify the three major vocational areas for skill acquisition in traditional societies.

Your answer should include the following —

- Agriculture — farming, animal rearing and fishing
- Trade and crafts — weaving, drumming, dyeing, smithing, etc.
- The professions — medicine, army, police, priesthood, civil servants, etc

Let us now see how these vocations are acquired.

#### **3.2.2 Skills Acquisition through the Family**

Some children acquire their specific vocational training from their family. As you learnt earlier on, there are families who are known for some vocations. In such cases, they train their children to acquire such skill right from infancy. All the three vocational areas above could be involved. Let us just illustrate with an example from each vocational area. Farming is one of the occupations that is general. For example a farmer has a son. As soon as the boy is considered old enough to walk a long distance, he starts going to the farm with the father. There are cases when the father often has to carry the boy for the greater part of the distance.

As the boy grows older, he begins to watch his father in action and later starts working with his own specially made cutlass or hoe as the case may be. This is how he continues until he masters the various techniques of farming. He continues to work with his father may be till he gets a wife. In some places, the young man may still work on his father's farm for a while after marriage until he is given his own farmland to cultivate.

The trade and crafts follow the same procedure as in farming. Let us take drumming as our example. A father who is a drummer gives his son a toy drum to play with first at home. Later he helps the father to carry

some of the musical instruments to wherever the father is invited. Little by little, the boy is given some roles to play. For example, he could be given a very simple instrument to make a single musical sound throughout.

He is corrected when he makes mistakes. Then the next time he is given the same instrument to play. Generally speaking by the time the child is about seven or eight years, he has already become a master of the instrument. He must even by then be trying some of the more complex musical instruments. By the time the boy is 12 or 13, he could be playing all the musical instruments.

As regards the professions such as medicine or native doctor, the father often gives the boy some materials to grind, boil or burn. At times the boy is asked to go and fetch some leaves or even go with the father. In the process, the boy is told a few things about herbs and their use. However, the secrets of some treatments may not be disclosed till the boy is seen to be old enough for such information

### **3.2.3 Skills Acquisition through Apprenticeship**

There are situations when a particular vocational skill the child is found to be interested in or good for him may not be available within the family. You know our people find out things from the oracle about which particular vocational training is good for the child. This is the type of thing the counsellor does in our schools today. As soon as this is known the father makes the necessary arrangement and the child is sent to the master. The child may even first stay with the master as a house boy for some time. His conduct during the period may then determine when he will be introduced to the particular craft or trade he wants to learn.

This often makes it difficult to determine the duration of the apprenticeship. In some cases, the child may start as early as eight or ten years only to remain there for ten or more years.

You must however note that all the examples given above should not mean that only the men are involved. It could be for girls and women. I have just used those examples may be because I am a man. Please, look for examples for girls in your locality.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

The acquisition of attitudes and skills is an important aspect of traditional education. No one is regarded as good enough to be a member of the community until he or she has received proper training in



both his attitude and skills. There are different vocational skills for the child to learn. The choice of what to learn and where to learn are things, which the child cannot take on his own. The parents often decide for him after making the necessary consultation.

## **5.0 Summary**

In this unit, you have learnt the various vocational areas such as agriculture, trades and crafts and the professions. The child's acquisition of a skill in any of the areas depends on some factors. He could acquire the skill from the family if it is available there or from outside the family. You also learnt that the duration of training is not fixed as it may take many years. In the next unit, you will learn the language development process in the child.

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments**

1. Enumerate three skills a child could acquire from each of the major vocational areas available in traditional societies.
2. Explain the two ways by which a child could acquire the skills in traditional societies.

## **7.0 Further Reading and Other Resources**

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

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## **UNIT 10: LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

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2.0	Objectives
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### **1.0 Introduction**

In this unit you are going to learn one of the most important aspects of the child's development under the traditional system of education. We may even say that, language which is the means of communication that differentiates us from other animals, is the key to the successful achievement of all the goals of traditional education which you have studied.

### **2.0 Objectives**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- explain why language development is important to human beings.
- identify the factors responsible for the early development of language by the African child.

### **3.0 The importance of language**

#### **3.1 Languages means of communication**

The development and use of symbolic speech is regarded as man's most outstanding and most complex achievement. Without the use of language, human beings and the other animals could have been the same. What for example do you think could happen if you get to a village and nobody in that village can talk or speak any human language? There will be no difference between that village and a group of monkeys or dogs put together in a large open space.

As once observed by Mussen et al (1974), language enables us to

communicate a countless number of messages, meanings, ideas, thoughts, requests, and many other things. The use of language is a necessity in any human relationship at all levels. It affects all aspects of human behaviour. In the traditional societies where the system of education does not involve reading and writing, all the teaching and learning that take place are done through the spoken language. As you have learnt in one of the earlier units, most of the history that we know about Africans before the coming of Islam and Christianity were passed on from generation to generation through the spoken words. Language is also important in the personality of the individual. For example, the way you treat a person who can speak, may be different from the way you treat a deaf or dumb person. Even among children, those of them that cannot speak well are often subjected to some humiliation by making fun of them.

Modern research findings in psychology have shown that language is in a way involved in thinking, memory, reasoning and problem solving (Akinbote, et al 2001). That is to say we think in a language that we understand. We also remember events or things and even reason through our language. Therefore, we can say that language is the rope that binds all human activities or interactions together. Without it human achievement will probably not be possible. As we discussed in one of the earlier units, even if our ancestors could not read and write, yet many of them who came in contact with the Europeans were found to be very great men and women in their own rights. How did they do it even as illiterates? It was because they used human language. They could not have been so great without the use of the spoken language.

### **3.1.1 The child's first language**

The development of language among children all over the world follows the same pattern. That is, children in Africa do not have different patterns of language development from children in Europe, America and Asia.

As you must have observed among children around you or your own children, those that are normal should have by the age of three to four years, been speaking very well. The time the child speaks well differs from the time he could not speak well. That is, he relates or interacts better with people when he can speak than when he could not. With his power of spoken language, he could now say what he wants and what he does not want. He could say when he wants to eat or when he wants to urinate or defecate. If you have been observing children very well, during the time he could use language to express himself, the child usually looks more friendly, cheerful and happy.

Now, how does the child pick his first language? Which language does he pick first? These are the questions we shall now try to answer. However, before we go on to that, let me quickly ask you this question. Who taught you to speak your mother tongue? Can you remember any time anywhere in your house when your mother or father sat you down and taught you how to speak your language? If your answer is no, then you are like all other children throughout the world. Nobody ever teaches a child directly to speak his first language.

Children, boys or girls, rural or urban, African or American naturally pick their first language. That is, the language that is most frequently spoken to them by the people around them is the language they will pick naturally. Nobody teaches them as you are being taught now. Therefore, it does not matter whether it is your own language or a 'foreign' language. For example, there are many Yoruba families whom I know in one of the big cities in the Southwest. Because of reasons best known to them, as a rule, they do not speak Yoruba to their children at home. The private day care/Nursery schools, which the children attend, do not speak Yoruba also. Do you think the children will be able to speak Yoruba? As you have just been told, children pick the language that is most frequently spoken to them. Let us remember one important point as far as the child's acquisition of language is concerned. This is the fact that children can pick different languages at the same time. Do you know your own children will pick the language of a new community where you have just come to settle even before you can say a few words in that language? That is the nature of children and their ability to acquire a language easily. It is natural with them.

### **Exercise 10.1**

Why is the use of language the most important achievement of man?

Your answer should include: -

- It differentiates us from other animals
- It helps to communicate ideas, meanings, etc
- It helps us to think, reason, remember, etc.

## **3.2 The process of language development**

### **3.2.1 The home factor**

You have just learnt that language is very important in our lives. You have also learnt that without language we will not be able to communicate our ideas, thoughts and feelings very well. Then, we said language is the most important achievement of men. It makes us different from the lower animals.

In this section, we want to see how children develop their language. In doing this we should remember once again that children are the same all over the world. So there is no difference in the process of language development among children of different countries or continents. What role does the home or family play in the development of language?

We said in the section above that children pick the language that is most frequently spoken to them. You remember also that in the traditional societies, the children are always at home with their mothers in the first three or four years of life.

Research findings have shown that babbling and other vocal sounds are the beginning of speech in infancy. This is the same for children all over the world. Therefore, babbling in children starts when the child is happy about something he sees or hears. Later, when he hears a sound, he keeps quiet and listens to the sound. When the sound stops, he will begin to babble (Mussen et al 1974).

The difference between babbling and meaningful speech is that babbling is just a sign of general feeling of joy in children. But speech is used to communicate ideas or our thought. This means that when children babble they merely show that something they see or hear is interesting to them.

Have you ever touched a baby's tummy when he is not sleeping or crying? What does he do? He usually babbles.

As the child develops, he starts to pick consonants. Such as p m b i. The early words spoken by children is usually monosyllables such as ma-ma, ba-ba, da-da, bye bye (Mussen et al 1974). This is the way children generally begin to pick their first words. It does not matter whether they are from literate or illiterate societies.

By the time the child is a year plus, he begins to use a single word for a sentence usually as a request. For example he could say `jeje' to mean give me food (that is for those in Yoruba speaking areas). As we mentioned earlier, by the time the child is three years, under normal conditions, he must have been using the mother tongue or the language most frequently spoken to him, to communicate his feelings and thoughts.

One important factor that affects the language development of the child is environment. Therefore, the presence of children and other people with the family goes a long way in the acquisition of language by

children. This is where the extended family system in Africa is quite helpful to the child. The more people you have the more stimulation the child receives. With many children and other adult members usually found in traditional African families, we can say therefore that the child is always given every encouragement to acquire his language.

The African woman who is always at home with the child helps the language acquisition of the child better than even the father. As you learnt in one of the earlier units, the father is not always around. You also learnt then that the mother speaks to the child even when the child is still too young to understand verbal communications. You must have seen a traditional woman who when a child is crying calls his pet names, sings for him and asks him some questions as if the child can understand. In this way, the child starts to pick his first words from the mother.

Other children in the extended family also help the child. For example, when he starts walking and playing with other children, they usually correct his mistakes either in pronunciation or the wrong use of words or wrong identity of some people or objects.

As we discussed in the earlier section of the unit, we said nobody directly teaches the child his first language. However, the number of people you have around him at home contributes to his fast acquisition of language. If there are very few people who do not even have much time to play with or talk to the child like you find in motherless babies homes, the rate of language acquisition will be slower.

All we have been saying so far is that the environment plays an important role in the language acquisition of children. In this regard, the African extended family system provides the kind of environment that helps language development in children.

### **3.2.2 The Community Factor**

You have just learnt that the environment plays a major role in the language development of children. In the section above, you learnt how the extended family system has been very helpful to the child. In other words, the number of people, particularly children that are usually many in the extended family system promotes the opportunity needed by the child to develop or pick the language quickly. You know an African family is usually blessed with many children. Therefore, in an extended family, it is possible to have twenty or even more children in the same compound. Although, they could not all be of the same age, yet they are there to provide the necessary encouragement to the child in the acquisition of language.

The next thing to look at now is to see the particular roles those in larger community play in the language development of children.

The traditional African community is one that we once described as the extension of the extended family system. This is because the kind of love, co-operation and the feeling of belonging or togetherness found in the families also go into the communities. In other words, the African traditional communities are very co-operative in everything. The child belongs to all of them and as we said earlier on, the whole community is classroom or a place of learning for the child. How does this help the language development of the child?

You will still remember we said there are social and religious groups and activities in the communities. In some ways, such activities help the language development of the children.

In the first place, children from various families often come together to play in the streets particularly towards evenings. Here, a lot of activities that require the use of spoken language take place. They sing, they tell stories and even organise plays and games which bring a lot of interaction among the children. We shall have to talk about the social aspect later. From these plays and games, the vocabulary of the children increase. They get new words and they get new expressions. One thing about parents in the traditional society is that they always encourage their children to go out and play with other children in their area. If you visit a village particularly in the evenings, you will see children moving from one place to the other. They know each other names and even help one another in identifying places and objects in the locality.

As regards the elders in the community, they also play some roles, for example in the evening, when they are back home from work, they often sit the children in the neighbourhood together and tell them stories. The very young ones are sometimes carried by the elders or sit very close to him. With the stories and songs or poems, taught by the elders, the language development and also the socialization of the children are promoted.

The traditional communities therefore provide the kind of social environment where people can freely play together, talk and exchange ideas. All these go a long way in helping the children to develop or acquire language very easily. Therefore, in any African traditional community, if you see a child of between seven and eight years, he can use his or her language perfectly well so that all the grammatical details which takes years to learn in the formal school system must have been

mastered by the child. This is the natural pattern of language development in children generally.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The use of human language is one of the most important factors that make the difference between us and the lower animals. Language helps man to communicate ideas, thoughts and needs to others. Without language, we could not have achieved much in the field of science and technology. Therefore the acquisition and use of language follow the same process all over the world. However, the environment plays an important role in its acquisition and use.

#### **5.0 Summary**

In this unit, you have learnt the importance of language in the life of man. You learnt that without language, we would all be like the other animals. You have also learnt in this unit the influence of the home and community in the process of language development. In the next unit, you will learn the social and emotional development of children in traditional societies.

#### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments**

1. Enumerate the usefulness of language to human beings.
2. How does the environment in traditional societies help the early development of language in children?

#### **7.0 Further Reading and other resources**

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

Mussen P.H.; Conger, J. N. and Kagen, J. (1974). . *Child Development and Personality*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.

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## **UNIT 11: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Contents**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Social Development
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- 4.0 Conclusion
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### **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 take place in traditional societies.

### **2.0 Objectives**

After carefully studying 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 Social Development**

#### **3.1 The Meaning and Process of Socialisation**

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 socialisation of the child.

However, it should be emphasised 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 socialisation of the child. The foundation for the socialisation 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 for the socialization of the child in traditional societies.

### **3.1.1 Agents of Socialisation 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 socialisation. 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 socialisation. 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.

### **Exercise 11.1**

- (a) What is socialization?
- (b) Who is responsible for the socialisation of the child in traditional societies?
  - Your answer should be in two parts. The first part should define socialisation i.e. the general process by which the child learns the ways of life of the people or any other appropriate definition.
  - The Second part of the question should list all the agents of socialisation e.g. the home/family, the peer groups, the age grades and the community.

## 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 behaviours 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.

### a) 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 bring 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.

### b) 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 grand mother, 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 socialisation 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 socialisation of children in the traditional societies. The agents of socialisation 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 Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA)**

1. What are the differences between the peer groups and the age groups as agents of socialisation?
2. (a) What are emotions?  
(b) Explain how the following emotions are expressed by children-(i) anger (ii) fear (iii) love

## **7.0 Further Reading and Other Resources**

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* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

## **UNIT 12: MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

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- 2.0 Objectives
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  - 3.2 Morality and Character Development
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- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marking Assignment
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### **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**

After studying this unit very carefully, 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 The Concept of Morality and Moral Values**

#### **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 is 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.

### **Exercise 12.1**

- (a) Explain the meaning of the word moral.
- (b) Why do parents and other relations play active roles in the moral training of the child?

Your answers for (a) should include, acceptable behaviours, deals with bad or good behaviours, etc  
(a) should include,

- not to bring shame and dishonour to the family
- to ensure that the child becomes an accepted and respected member of the community.

## **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 persons 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 not 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 recognised, 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 the 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 Tutor Marked Assignments**

1. Who are the people responsible for the moral training of the child in traditional African societies?
2.
  - (a) List five areas of emphasis in the moral training of the African child
  - (b) Explain why chastity is encouraged among African

## **7.0 Further Reading and Other Resources**

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

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### **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**

After studying this unit carefully, 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 The Special Techniques**

#### **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 modern 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.

### **Exercise 13.1**

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

\* Your answer should include stories, proverbs, taboos, riddles and folklores (itemize).

## **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 a light punishment 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 be 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 boy grows older, he learns to do some of the things his father does every day. He learns 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 modern 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 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)**

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 Further Reading and Other Sources**

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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# EDUCATION

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## 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

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

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

## 3.0 Name and Processes of Traditional Education

### 3.1 Rigidity of content and process

In some of the units in this course, you have learnt the major characteristics and goals of traditional 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 be 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 knowledge 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 pick 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.

### **Exercise 14.1**

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

- Your answer should include the following: not allowing new

ideas, doing things in the same old ways, the system does not allow change in the way of doing things, things must be done in the way it was done before, no departure from the old ways.

## **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 not 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 Tutor Marked Assignments**

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 Further Reading and Other Resources**

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

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

### **UNIT 15: INTEGRATION' OF TRADITIONAL AFRICAN**

# EDUCATION INTO FORMAL SCHOOL SYSTEM

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    - 3.2.3 Moral Development
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- 5.0 Summary
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## **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**

After studying this unit carefully, 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 The Major Differences between Traditional African Education and Western System of Education**

### **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.

### **Exercise 15.1**

What are the negative consequences of illiteracy on traditional education

Your answer should include the following important points.

- People are not able to read and write
- People are not open to new ideas
- It leads to the rigid ways of doing things
- It is the major reason for most of the superstitious beliefs.
- It gives room to the idea that only the elders are wise or right all the time.

### **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 everyday. 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 memorise 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 way 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 and Creative Art periods etc.

### **Exercise 15.2**

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

Your answer should include the following —

- the use of manual labour as punishment in schools; the attitude of some parents towards manual labour in schools, the societal values as regards wealth etc.

### **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 socio-economic 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 the western (formal) education. You also learnt that there are some aspects of 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 Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA)**

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

#### **7.0 Further Reading and Other Resource**

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



# NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

## Form QST1

### Questionnaire

Dear Student,

While studying the units of this course, you may have found certain portions of the text difficult to comprehend. We wish to know your difficulties and suggestions, in order to improve the course. Therefore, we request you to fill out and send us the following questionnaire, which pertains to this course. If you find the space provided insufficient, kindly use additional sheet.

Course Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many hours did you need for studying each of these units?

Unit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
No. of hours															
Unit	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
No. of hours															

2. Which of these units do you find most difficult to understand?

3. Please give specific problem you find difficult with the unit.

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4. How would you like the unit improved?

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**Please Mail to**  
**The Course Coordinator.....THROUGH the Study Centre Manager**  
**National Open University of Nigeria**  
**Victoria Island,**  
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# NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

In the questions below, we ask you to reflect on your experience of the course as a whole.

## Form QST 2 Questionnaire

1	Course Code and Title.....																																										
2	Mother tongue .....																																										
3	I am registered for a ..... Degree/Programme																																										
4	Why did I choose to take this course? .....																																										
5	Which study unit did I enjoy the most and why?.....																																										
6	Which study unit did I enjoy the least and why?.....																																										
7	Was the course material easy to understand or difficult?.....																																										
8	Which particular topic do I understand better than before and how?.....																																										
9	Does the course have any practical applications in the real world, e.g. for the work I currently do?... YES/NO? EXPLAIN.....																																										
10	What aspects would I like to know more about or study further?.....																																										
11	How could the course be improved?.....																																										
	Other comments about the course ( <i>Please Tick</i> ).....																																										
12	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Items</th> <th>Excellent</th> <th>Very Good</th> <th>Good</th> <th>Poor</th> <th>Give specific examples, if poor</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Presentation Quality</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Language and Style</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Illustrations Used (diagrams, tables, etc.)</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Conceptual Clarity</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Self Assessment Questions</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Facilitators response to TMA Questions</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>_____</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Items	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Poor	Give specific examples, if poor	Presentation Quality					_____	Language and Style					_____	Illustrations Used (diagrams, tables, etc.)					_____	Conceptual Clarity					_____	Self Assessment Questions					_____	Facilitators response to TMA Questions					_____
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