Value Creating Education in the African Traditional Context: Lessons for Modern-Day Society

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Abstract: **The main purpose of value creating education in the African traditional societies was to inculcate into young children moral values and norms that were acceptable within the given society. The education system was also geared towards promoting other values like respect for self and others, peaceful co-existence, love for another, integrity, tolerance and social cohesion. This paper highlights aspects of value creating education in the African context and explore lessons that the current generation can borrow from the African Traditional Education.**

I. INTRODUCTION

During the pre-colonial era, Africans used an indigenous form of education to preserve both family and cultural heritage before the submission of the western education in the 15th century by the Europeans (Major & Mulvihill, 2009). Indigenous education is the passing down of information, skills, knowledge, or norms and cultural traditions amongst members of the tribe or community from one generation to another (Boateng, 1983). The adults are responsible for developing and guiding infants and young children into the cultural ways of the society. This form of education emphasized more on practical learning as both the children and the youth watched, participated, and executed what they learned. Some of the educational practices used in Traditional African Society are still used in the modern world and are relevant to the socio-economic activities of individuals (Boateng, 1983). This chapter discusses African traditional education. Various forms of traditional teaching methods and philosophical basis are highlighted and discussed. The section further discusses functions, strengths, and weaknesses of African Traditional Education in the society, and concludes by explaining its significance to modern day parent as a lesson.

II. FEATURES OF EDUCATION IN AFRICAN TRADITION

There were various teaching methods used in the African tradition, which all fell under the category of the indigenous form of education (Cioti, 2018). This form of learning was condemned by western people who termed Africans as un-educated hence introducing new religions and teaching methods. The introduction of the western form of education in Africa means that African culture has passed through the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. The main objective of indigenous education was to shape the children into a responsible adult who will take over the responsibilities left in society. The skills passed to the young generation were meant to equip them with the rightful character, expertise, and values that were relevant to the community.

Traditional education in Africa relied majorly on learning from home, as there were no formal schools, organizations, or classrooms. Learning in conventional Africa took place from anywhere (Boateng, 1983). These places included bushes, under trees, grazing fields, and even hunting grounds. The learning place depended on the kind of skill being taught and the gender of the learner. Both males and females had their specific. Youths were purposely trained to undertake basic life chores such as hunting, cooking, pot-making, weaving, and farming. The training they underwent enabled them to worthy members of the society.

Furthermore, every effort was put to ensure that failure was non-existence as both moral and mental training was provided by the elders (Cioti, 2018). Most of the guidance and moral support were based on traditional norms accepted by society, such as hospitality, generosity, and diligence. The education offered would enable the youth to adjust and adapt to the environment effectively. The more adaptive the child became to the society, it meant that learning was taking place, and the elders were ready to entrust more significant tasks to them.

Additionally, art such as folk tales and stories were used by elders to teach the young about matters of the society in a direct or coded message (Semali, 1999). The stories usually narrated happenings of the past that had a relation to society. The stories and tales aimed to teach ideal morals and behavior to the young and to teach both cultural and philosophical values of the community to them. Using art as a way of showing the young ensured that cultural morals and practices were passed to the next generation.

Moreover, African Traditional Education emphasized more on the strengths of the learner and the area of interest, such as hunting or wrestling. This practice helped the young to grow and develop their skills, and no person was excluded in society. With strict obedience and right skills, the youth grew into responsible adults who had the sense of belonging to the community hence promoting peace.

III. FORMS AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

African Traditional education relied on various philosophical foundations which enabled the running of things smoothly in the society (Adeyemi & Adeyinka 2002). The principle of

preparations was an education practice that involved both formal and informal means to pass the skills to the young. The policy majorly insisted on equipping both girls and boys with the rightful abilities based on their gender to prepare them for their distinctive roles in the community (Cioti, 2018). The preparation and division of responsibility based on one's gender was to give chores that required more masculinity to the boys and the rest to girls which was socially defined. The culturally defined roles prohibited females from indulging in masculinity activities such as participating in wars or hunting, and vice versa.

The second principle was the principle of functionalism (Adeyemi & Adeyinka 2002). Before the introduction of formal education by the Europeans, Africans were predominantly utilitarian hence the practiced participatory kind of education. Participatory education depended on observation, imitation, oral-literature, initiation ceremonies, and work. This process of teaching facilitated the graduation of competent youths who were well skilled since they were integrated smoothly into the community.

Additionally, communalism was the third principle in African Traditional Education (Adeyemi & Adeyinka 2002). The African traditional education advocated for a communal spirit to both work and life; hence the community at large owned all the possessions. Not only the material possessions but also children belonged to all members of the community who had a role to play in their upbringing. All elderly members of the society had authority over all young ones and were allowed to punish them for misconduct even if they were not their birth parents. The use of communal upbringing of children brought about unity where chores were done orderly in groups by taking shifts. This system also encouraged credit and thrift where a particular tax was to be collected by selected elders for savings which would be used for worthwhile venture (Boateng, 1983).

The fourth form of the principle of African traditional education was perennialism which mainly perceived education as an instrument of preserving and maintaining status quo and cultural heritage (Adeyemi & Adeyinka 2002). African traditional teachers majorly discouraged venturing and experimenting with the unknown which was punishable to preserve the cultural heritage. This kind of indigenous education did not have any significant influence on the development of children's minds (Major & Mulvihill 2009). The structure of this indigenous education was conservative. The things the young people were being taught were recurrent as nothing from the ordinary were taught.

Furthermore, holistic, which was also known as multiple learning, was the fifth foundation of philosophy in African customary education. The indigenous system of education may have given little or no room for the specialization but on the other hand, allowed the young ones to undertake a multitude of tasks and occupations by obtaining the required skills. The elders who did the teaching made sure that the

capabilities passed to the learners correlated the various fields they would indulge in (Cioti, 2018). If young persons were learning the art of house construction, they had to learn other skills such as geography, topography, and location of neighboring communities (Cioti, 2018). The learners also had to learn about different types of trees and grasses for use during construction.

IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

African Traditional Education had both advantages and shortcomings. Lack of open-mindedness and preparations for contact with the outside world was one of the disadvantages of indigenous education. Indigenous education prepared the young ones for tribal or clan handling of responsibilities but never made them for the incoming of visitors. The learners were therefore limited to deal with common issues hence were unable to cope with visitors which they learned with time.

On the other hand, it was advantageous in maintaining cultural norms and practices. Through indigenous education, all traditional methods were passed down the lineage without allowing room for infiltration by visitors. This practice helped in preserving the cultural norms and African conventional way of life.

Furthermore, African traditional education had no proper means of preserving education as they were illiterates (Semali, 1999). The significant way of maintaining information in African tradition was through memorizing and sharing with the young generation. This mode of information preservation and sharing brought about the distortion of messages as compared to current written information. This method of information preservation was, on the other hand,' beneficial as the young generation learned practically hence being more competent in specified fields.

In indigenous education, learners lacked exposure and interaction with other communities or those of the opposite gender unless they are married. This limited the knowledge of the learners to the locality leading to stagnant growth both socially and economically. However, this form of education ensured that all children were brought up in the legitimate ways with the guidance of all community members; hence, there were reduced cases of misconducts.

V. PARENTING TODAY

Today's parents play a very crucial role in the upbringing of their children (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). How children are brought up and the environment they grow up in determines the feelings and expressions they develop at a certain point of their life. Some behaviors expressed by confident children are a great reflection of the nature of their upbringing (Cioti, 2018). These behaviors vary from good ones to bad ones such as anti-socialism which is a significant sign of poor upbringing.

Cop-operative parenting is another role played by modern parent in today's world (Boateng, 1983). Parents play a crucial part in guiding their children to achieve the best by helping them to discover their talents and share it with other members of society. The members of the community are also allowed to correct, guide, and advice all the children even though they were not related to uphold good morals. The high levels of co-operative parenting enabled the children to grow up in a sober environment hence good discipline. However, the parents of today have delegated their parenting role to the teachers and house helps. The use of social media has complicated the parenting matrix with parents rarely on the scene when the child needs help.

Making suggestions and giving advice is another significant role played by today's parent in the upbringing of their children (Cioti, 2018). The advice and suggestions made by parents to their children determine much the type of social behavior they are going to portray. Children are most likely to act accordingly depending on the advice and suggestions made to them by close adults like a guardian (Cioti, 2018). However, the absence of a role model at the family level has promoted a wait and see situation with children simply listening to their parents but glaringly ignoring parent's advice.

Additionally, a parent in the modern world is responsible for making their children feel safe and taken care of for them to identify themselves with that family or society. The treatment children receive from their parents, such as teaching them the local language helps the children to identify themselves with the community (Boateng, 1983). According to Lewis and Mutinda (2019) when the children identify themselves with a given society, they tend to act according to the rules hence creating communal peace. Moreover, parents play an essential role during the initiation of their children which is a fundamental factor in socialization. Initiation helps in learning more about children and most importantly, to teach them the proper ways of life and how to handle changes in their bodies as they enter the adolescent stage.

To add on to that, today's parent has the responsibility of rewarding and punishing their children for whatever kind of activities they are indulged in (Semali, 1999; Ngesu & Gichohi, 2018). Depending on the act of a child, their parent should let them know if it is good or bad. If the children have done something commendable, they deserve to be rewarded for boosting their morale, while punishment should be administered to those who misbehave to correct them. The discipline instilled to a child by its parents is crucial in the child's social life as ethical behavior is a measure of your upbringing in society.

VI. RELEVANCE OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

African traditional education can be relevant to modern parents in their children's upbringing by borrowing the positive virtues. Being the first teachers to their children is one of the attributes that can be emulated by the modern parent from indigenous education. According to Ngesu & Gichohi, (2018) today's parents tend to place the burden of children upbringing on teachers and house helps. The parents spend limited time with their children hence playing a minimal role in their moral and spiritual growth. By getting more concerned with the learning of the child, a parent can correct any mistakes done and give guidance reducing the alarming issue of depression and low self esteem.

Unlike the modern day, in African traditional societies, there was no issue of unemployment since jobs were communal and all children and youths were equipped with applicable skills. Today's society uses formal education which emphasizes more of theoretical work instead of practical work. The informal education has led to an increasing in unemployment due to flooding of job markets by learned people looking for white-collar jobs. If the modern day parent would put more emphasis on practical work, it could equip the learners with skills to start their businesses and become self-employed.

To add on to that, traditional parents took direct charge in teaching their children on adult related issues. Their mothers and other women taught girls in the society whereas boys were taught by their fathers and other male elders of the community. These teachings reduced immorality, such as unwanted pregnancies in society. The learners were also trained on how to become future responsible parents hence promoting strong family relations. The modern parent can adapt this concept and educate their children concerning adult matters which can help to improve the deteriorating morality, especially amongst the young generation.

VII. CONCLUSION

Indigenous education majorly relied on skill development and training, to enable every member of the society to be self-reliant and sufficient for the betterment of the community. Apart from the above-listed shortcomings listed above, indigenous education followed an organized system which facilitated the running of the society. It is therefore necessary for modern parents to embrace some of the beneficial indigenous teachings in order to promote values and a feeling of accomplishment appropriate to the needs of young children.

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