

CHILD BEARING AND REARING

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ABSTRACT

It is generally agreed that child rearing practices and the relationship between parent and child are important aspect of the Education and Socialization of the child. Before formal Education was widely spread in various parts of Africa, there existed traditional ways of child rearing and patterns of interaction between parents and their children which were well known to all the people in a Community. In Nigeria, the normal expectation is that a couple should be able to produce a child within a year of their marriage and a great emphasis is place on children. A couple without children is looked upon as an unhappy family. This paper look into the educational problems arising from child rearing practices in African Urban communities, the educational values of the Traditional and Modern Africa approach to child rearing.

INTRODUCTION

It is agreed that child rearing practice and the relationship between parents and children are important aspect of the education socialization of the child. Sattler (1952) was of the opinion that before formal education was widely spread in various parts of Africa, there existed traditional ways of child rearing patterns of interaction between parents and their children which were well known to all people in the community. Clear-cut roles, obligations rights, expectations and sanctions were prescribed. Whatever the merits or demerits of such child bearing practices, the parents and their children were in no doubt of the 'correct' forms.

With the advent of formal education and influence of different foreign cultures, our traditional child bearing and rearing practices have been overthrown. Few traditional Communities still retain these practices intact and many have them diluted; some no longer clearly recognize what the form should be. More seriously, however, it would appear that some of the adjustments involved in a changing society have not taken place.

According to Lambo (1969), in Africa today, scarcely a year passes in which the social conditions of life, the mode of conducts, and every habits and amusements are not subtly and yet surely altered. In many Unban Centre and Towns undergoing:

Rapid social-economic change, the pattern of Mother-Child relationship is neither traditional nor Western and cannot be clearly defined: It is in fact, Transitional Lambo (1969).

Evidence from both East and West Africa shows that there are no clear-cut patterns in this "transitional" phase. Therefore, it is important that the teacher knows the current child-rearing practices in his school environment, what goals are set and what adjustments are required. Only then can the teacher select these aspects of child-rearing practices which He may wish to strengthen and those He may which to discourage through a sensitive programme of parent education.

CHILD BEARING

One of the important factors that tends to foster marriage stability is the ability of the couple to have a child preferably during the first year of their wedding. Olayinka,(1990). In Nigeria, the normal expectation is that a married couple should be able to produce a child within a year of their marriage and great emphasis is placed on children. A couple without children in the family generates a lot of anxiety among the married partners and the embarrassment is even more if years elapse without an issue .In a situation where husband wife regard lack of a child as a cross which they wish to bear without complaining, pressure from the man's parent and relations may induce him to consider marrying another wife. On the other hand, if the woman remains without conception for years for her husband, her parents may suggest to her to try another man who may be capable of putting her in the family way. In other words, a married couple may face social pressures from their parents, relations and friends for the dissolution of the marriage if they remain childless up to seven years after their wedding. The husband, in particular, may be urged to marry another wife so as to have some children. If this happens, the first wife has been hurt emotionally because she is now forced to share her husband's love and affection with another woman. She may either divorce or stay put in the hope that she may also have some children later on. Though, there is no guarantee that the second wife will conceived immediately after her marriage. If the second wife also remains childless for years after marriage, the man may be suspected of inability to be a father.

Failure of woman to conceive after marriage may be her fault. The man may be able to have sexual intercourse but his sperm count may be very low to effect pregnancy. To avoid unnecessary doubts, both wife and husband should go for medical checkup. An otherwise stable marriage may be threatened if there are only girls in the family .Olayinka,(1990).Nigeria culture put a slightly higher premium on a male child over a female child. If they are all females, pressure may be put on the husband to marry another wife who may produce a son and so perpetuate the family name. To reiterate this, the woman should not be blamed for inability to produce male children.

It should be noted that if boys and girls are given equal educational opportunities, one sex is not superior to the other intellectually. Nowadays, we have female children who later become Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, Teachers, and Bank manager to mention just a few. That all children in a family are all girls is not valid excuse for marrying another wife. Before the man contracts another marriage, the first wife should be duly informed to prepare her mind for it. Durojaye(1975).

EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS ARISING FROM CHILD-BEARING PRACTICES IN AFRICAN URBAN COMMUNITIES.

There had been expressed views that have implications for education from pattern of mother-child relationship in African Urban Communities. Lambo (1990), was of the opinion that the traditional pattern has change because in many cities in Africa, the housemaid has replaced the mother. This is apparently and inadequately prepared for the task for mothering, and usually emotionally immature. Many

mothers in African cities need a mother substitute because they go out for work. However they have not gotten and material resources to adequately compensate for their being away from home. They have inadequate housing facilities and maintain tenuous and peripheral social relationships with neighbors. Their children receive only limited physical attention from them, with little personal or emotional interaction. The mother themselves are prone to emotional difficulties after the exhaustion of along day's work. Housing problems and migration to cities from towns and villages mean that children are devoid the social orbit and access to the 'multiple mothering' of the extended family of the rural child rural child or the child brought up in traditional African homes is therefore absent. For many urban children, frequent changes of house servants mean rapid changes in the way children are handled. These children often have to learn how to adjust to different housemaids. The effect on their school education is harmful and such children and such are often unable to receive encouragement and support for their educational efforts.

The employment of housemaids to look after the children of educated urban dwellers may bring other educational problems. Since socialization of a child in a society often come through acculturation, therefore, there is danger in having children from one social group been brought up by parent substitutes from another social groups.

In this case, the children of the working elites or semi-elites urban African mothers being brought up by illiterate or semi-literate .traditional or semi-traditional housemaids.

If this happens, the effect on their education may be disastrous. Housemaids who are themselves uneducated cannot be good models for children receiving formal education .It could also be noted that these practices can lead to gradual erosion of the traditional system and the acquisition of part of western system. The fragments of western education become mosaic and sometimes contradict traditional cultural traits.

Related to this is the point that African societies going through acculturation which could lead to 'fragmented information'. This means that the imported western patterns of education are not properly understood. These misunderstand creates series of distortions, distortions which would presumably not arise if the traditional approach was maintained.

THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN APPROACH TO CHILD-REARING.

An educationally valuable of the traditional approach to child-rearing in Africa is the attitude to babies. A child is born into warm, affectionate and welcoming culture where he is completely accepted regardless of the economic or domestic strains in the family at the time of his arrival. In the early months of life, the child receives the constant attention of his mother, grandmother and other members of the extended family. As the child grows, he is sustained by the multiplicity that comes from all his relatives. Thus, the infant enjoys the warmth of the mother's body and the nearness of all the members of the extended family. This situation impressed Carothers (1953) when he said;

The African infant's experience seems to be ideal. His needs are better cared for than usually obtained in Western Europe. It would seem that there is much to be said from adopting African practice in dealing with babies for the first few months of life. The African extended family makes the child several people's relative. The traditional extended family is also often a polygamous one. As a result; the child has many mothers, aunt, cousins, grandfathers etc.

Since the values in the community are represented in the values obtained in the extended family, socialization of the child along the lines acceptable to the community is simple and group membership is easily attained. Through his peers, many of whom are his cousins and half-siblings. The child comes in contact with and assimilates the various attitudes, values and preferences of the community. Thus the way is prepared for successful formal education at school. At about the age of five years, free communication and interruption of adult conversations are actively controlled in the African child. Social roles become fairly well defined. Sanctions and ridicules are employed as a means of effecting control.

Games are often designed to imitate adult life, and the traditional system of apprenticeship in the father's occupation constitutes an aspect of future orientation training. This in itself is valuable education for those children who may not receive formal schooling. The traditional system of child-bearing and family life promotes strong bonds of loyalty between family members and the child grows into adulthood with a strong feeling of security.

Cooperation and mutual help are inculcated from infancy and extended family members have confidence that help, support and protection will always be forthcoming from other member of the family whenever needed. The child thus develops an apparently healthy and secure personality which is protected against the rough tumble of deprivation and wants. He is well adjusted, both to his environment and within himself. An individual in the Traditional African society consider himself fulfilled only if he is in symbolic relationship with his extended family. If he is rich, many of his extended family may be dependent on for food, shelter, clothing, apprenticeship and formal education. Such an individual may as a result, be unable to make further progress but he will consider himself far more successful for being responsive to the needs of his extended family.

CONCLUSION

It should be noted that mother's love is important in the emotional development of her child, especially during the first two years of child's life. Infants who are deprived of their mother's love tend to become nervous and insecure adults.

Nevertheless, discipline is very necessary for the social development of the child. By the time the child reaches school age, he is expected to be able to distinguish good behavior from bad ones. It is therefore the parent who has the responsibility of teaching their children how to behave properly. Children who grow up without parental discipline either from their own parents or from foster parents tend not to develop socially and so find it difficult to fit into the community.

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