CHAPTER 3

East African Indigenous Education Before the Era of Islam

Daniel N. Sifuna

Introduction

Education is often defined as a whole process by which one generation transmits its culture to the succeeding generation or a process by which people are prepared to live effectively and efficiently in their environment. In other words, Indigenous education in East Africa before the era of Islam was a process which went on throughout life and not limited to time, place, or to any particular group of people. As a society-wide system, it was for every member and the environment as well as the socioeconomic and political institutions were as the sources of its content. It was an education that was not only work-oriented but stressed the aspect of service as an individual was urged and expected as part of group loyalty to have a strong sense of obligation of service for the benefit of the community. Indigenous education had also a strong social dimension whose ultimate goal was to integrate an individual into society for its survival. Above all, it did not only inculcate practical skills for living, but also to enable one to achieve awareness and understanding of one's place in society, roles and what the environment offered for personal and community utilization. This chapter explores the concept and meaning of Indigenous education, institutional organization, educational goals and content, teachers and learning strategies, and assessment. It discusses the permanence and decline of Indigenous education. On some of these aspects, the chapter draws examples from major East African communities that include: Baganda and Acholi of Uganda; Chagga and Ngoni of Tanzania; and Gikuyu of Kenya among others.

D. N. Sifuna (✉)
Department of Educational Foundations, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya

J. M. Abidogun and T. Falola (eds.),
The Palgrave Handbook of African Education and Indigenous Knowledge,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38277-3_3

Concept and Meaning of Indigenous Education

In order to properly understand and appreciate the function of African Indigenous education, it is important to know its meaning, as conceptual ambiguity leads to inaccurate understanding of reality. This therefore calls for an elaborate review of its concept as Indigenous education in East Africa before the era of Islam which has generally been misunderstood and misinterpreted. For instance, anthropologists have most often perceived Indigenous education in terms of culturalization. It is noted that every society has a culture which is transmitted from generation to generation through the means of its education (Ocitti 1994).

For sociologists on their part, Indigenous education is considered as a cultural action which is viewed as a process of becoming a member of society and therefore it is a process whereby group values are inducted into the individual. The cultural action prepares each individual for the roles one has to play in the family, community, and society in general. The socialization of members of the family, clan, lineage, age-group, and others deals with the integration of society as a whole. To become assimilated, the individual needs to be encultured in a large measure, and in this way, socialization, like enculturation, means cultural internalization. That is the acquisition of culture by the individual in order to become an acceptable member of the group or society (Ocitti 1973).

The significance of socialization like Indigenous education in the life of the individual is vividly reflected in the fact that children are born ignorant of the social worlds in which they find themselves. To survive and become acceptable members of their society, they must learn all about social knowledge and social skills, such as talking, proper ways of normal behavior in different situations, and role expectations within their society. In this regard, they are assisted by parents, relatives, and members of the community through the medium of communication. In as far as such contacts enable the individual to acquire acceptable codes of behavior in real situations for example, in the homes, on the farms, during ceremonial functions and others, this kind of socialization is akin to Indigenous education (Erny 1981; Sifuna and Oanda 2014).

Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of Indigenous education was conceptualized in accordance with the educational development of the individual from infancy to old age. In a vertical context, therefore, Indigenous education was organized to meet the learning needs of individuals in a life-long perspective from the cradle to the grave. In most communities, the lifespan of each individual was divided into life cycle stages which considerably facilitated the process of learning, especially the basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for successful living as an individual and as a member of the community. During each of the several life cycle stages, every individual was made to know his

or her station in life. This, in turn, meant that one learnt what was expected of his or her sex and status, since each life cycle stage had its own behavior system which had to be acquired by individuals in order to live a normal and acceptable life. The division process of living and hence learning within an organizational framework of life cycle stages helped to bring some order in the process of life-long learning. Among some traditional communities in which there was a well-developed age-set system, like that of the Maasai, it was usually characterized by rites of passage. It was normal for individuals to pass through stages of childhood by emotionally charged rituals and pedagogy such as ear-lobbing and circumcision into the period of childhood and later into adulthood. However, many communities as characterized by the Chagga, Ngoni, Baganda, Acholi, and Gikuyu, as well as most East African communities had three distinct vertical and horizontal dimensions of structural organization that included: childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (Ocitti 1994).

Childhood

The first vertical and horizontal cycle of education was represented by the stage of childhood when individuals were made to learn and live as children, largely under the control of the womenfolk. However, childhood was preceded by birth of the child. In most communities, the general attitude people had towards the newborn was one of interest, encouragement, and well-wishing. Parents and close relatives especially took a keen interest in the welfare of a newborn and how he or she developed. The arrival of a new baby always brightened the family atmosphere and tended to strengthen the marriage and ensured its continuity. In some communities, the birth of a child was marked with celebrations. The first cycle was represented by the organizational framework of the home and the neighborhood during infancy and early childhood, with the parents and other members of the household constituting important elements of education. Initially, educational activities centered on breast-feeding, baby care, weaning, and acquisition of movement and speech. At the time, education was left in the hands of mothers and other female family members and friends. Various ways and means were used to encourage the child to sit, crawl, and walk by himself or herself through opportunities to master these development tasks (Castle 1966).

A child was given considerable assistance in other areas of development. Right from the stage when a child could display some vocalization through the next stage when he or she could indicate his or her needs, feelings, and ideas by means of reflex sounds and feeble gestures and on to the stage of babbling and developing word usage, a child was encouraged by adults to speak. Among the Chagga, for example, when a child uttered words, they tended to draw the attention of either the mother or father to the child, who encouraged and reinforced the child's speech development (Raum 1965). As a child advanced in age, training centered on etiquette, social habits, and

family activities, as well as the cultivation of values. Through the media of playing, folklore, and participation in the everyday social and economic activities of the family and community, the child acquired knowledge and skills. Morally, a child was made to conform to mores, customs, and standards of behavior inherent in the clan into which she or he was born or lived right from the time she or he was able to walk. Bad habits and undesirable or disruptive behavior were not tolerated in any child. To inculcate good habits and character in their young, many parents normally used incentive methods which included encouragement, rewards, approval, praise, and the like as well as deterrent methods which included various forms of punishment (Brown and Hiskett 1975; Hake 1975). Children were protected against dangers and all sorts of harm. In this regard, there were many precautionary measures against such dangerous situations as fire, suffocation, accidents, and malignant glances. Infants and toddlers were rarely left alone in the kitchens; children playing with dangerous objects such as knives, spears, or axes were directed away from them and warned against them (Ocitti 1973).

In general, the educational development until late childhood of the child was mainly conducted within the family and primarily by the mother on whom the child depended both physiologically and materially. Of course, other members of the family interacted with the child in many ways. The father played a complementary role to the mother. During this period, games occupied an important place in the education of children in conformity with their awakening of intense mental and physical activities. Listening to stories, legends, folktales, myths, historical narratives, proverbs, riddles, music, and songs helped children not only to build up and feed their powerful imagination and a solid basis for clarifying their ideas, but also taught them much about the accumulated experience and wisdom of their communities associated with certain events, occasions, or persons (Florence 2005). There was also the spiritual environment which provided many learning activities, especially in the areas of religion and its associated beliefs that helped to explain several mysteries of life to older children, for example, the relationship between life and death (Erny 1981).

With the increasing development of the child's ability for abstract thought and reasoning and the development of her or his personality, their educational development from late childhood into adolescence is associated closely with their social life. During this period, they learned both actively through productive work and passively as a spectator of social relationships and public affairs progressively adding experience and knowledge. At this time, she or he is given a certain amount of independence in the family, along with increased responsibilities. Among the Acholi and Sukuma, for example, the child was increasingly associated with the economic organization of the society which became the educational setting for much of their learning of necessary skills and associated values and attitudes needed to live a normal life as acceptable members of the society. Examples of economic activities that provided much learning included: agriculture, herding or animal husbandry, fishing, as well

as numerous craftworks. Craftworks, such as pottery, woodwork, basketry, blacksmithing, tanning, bark cloth making, weaving, house construction, and others, gradually became a major focus of older children's education within these civilizations (Ocitti 1994; Varkevisser 1969).

Adolescence

At around fourteen to sixteen years, the child underwent puberty and became an adolescent with the anxieties this change entailed. This third vertical cycle began, in the case of girls, with the discharge of the menses. This was characterized by intensified training for family life. For the boy, he became increasingly identified with his father and the menfolk, while a girl with her mother and the womenfolk. This cycle culminated into married life. In some communities, this cycle marked a period for initiation especially circumcision for boys in many communities. Its content in educational value, fully responded to the existing circumstances, with an emphasis placed on physical exercises, sexual education, an awareness of responsibilities, and the harmonious acceptance of the initiate into the community being given strong emphasis. The ritual ceremonies and impressive activities indicated the intense interest shown by the entire community in this event in the life of the adolescent (Sifuna and Otiende 1994; Prazak 2016).

The Ngoni of Southern Tanzania portrayed a rare feature of training for boys in their seclusion hut or dormitory. In the traditional community, the art of engaging in warfare was said to be their main occupation. The dormitory was a place where the boys slept and lived together and where they learnt to defend themselves and obey authority. It was a preparatory school for participation in the regiment, and the rearing of cattle as the major economic activity was the basis of the curriculum. In the dormitory, they learnt and acquired skills pertaining to the bush and its wildlife. They were taught about their forefathers and the qualities required in self-defense and mutual aid which they would need when recruited into the regiment. The dormitory also served as the means of mixing all the boys in the village so that they could lead a common life and share things among themselves. It was primarily a learning and sleeping place, though it served as a place where juvenile activities were organized. It was generally rough and tough, following a "Spartan Greek" way of life where individual feelings and preferences were subordinated and where they were all kept busy most of the time. Taking a cold bath was, for instance, part of the normal dormitory life. The "barrack" was expected to inculcate toughness, good leadership, a sense of responsibility, and respect for authority (Read 1968).

Adulthood

The fourth cycle covered life after initiation, during which the adolescent was prepared for life and completed training with elders. He or she perfected the craft of livelihood, accumulated experience and participated more

fully in social life and assumed more responsibilities as an adult toward other adults. After marriage, a person passed through the final door to complete adulthood. During this long period, education was for successful married life with the married couples getting instructions mainly from the in-laws and the elders of the community. In matrilineal societies, the couples received more instructions from the wife's relatives, while in patrilineal societies; the instructors came mainly from the husband's lineage and clan. Education for parenthood or bringing up a family was not the only subject learned. As junior adults, married couples were also guided by the elders to learn a lot through active participation in the many joint social, religious, judicial, and economic activities of the community. Men were also required to acquire the skills and techniques of warfare and the defense of the homes, the clan, and the entire society (Ocitti 1994).

Elderhood

The final vertical cycle of Indigenous education especially with strong patrilineal kinship system covered the period of elderhood which began with married couples becoming parents-in-law and subsequently grandparents. Education for elderhood was achieved through participation in village and court affairs, as well as in festivities which included: playing leading roles in rituals associated with important activities such as birth, marriage, death, sickness, religion, and governing councils. Above all, the richness of educational experiences which elders went through undoubtedly elevated them to the level of wise men and women or sages of the community and the wider society. Such a status bestowed upon them the prestige of being arbitrators, advisors, and counselors until they passed on to become invisible guardians of the society as ancestors, thus as the "living dead" (Raum 1965; Ocitti 1994).

Educational Goals and Content in Indigenous Education

Although Indigenous education systems varied from one community to another, the goals of these systems were often strikingly similar. The purpose of Indigenous education was essentially an education for living, to train the youth for adulthood within the society. Emphasis was placed on normative and expressive goals. Normative goals were concerned with inculcating the accepted standards and beliefs governing correct behavior and expressive goals with creating unity and consensus. There were, however, competitive elements within the system which encouraged competitiveness in intellectual and practical matters, but these were controlled and subordinated to normative and expressive aims (Sifuna and Otiende 1994). The basic goals of Indigenous education included; to inculcate the ***acquisition of knowledge*** which meant the learning of important or essential knowledge about all aspects of the culture including knowledge of the society's environmental evaluation, mechanisms of survival,

the origin of the clan and society, governing and religious roles and order, and related aspects to these areas. There was also the ***acquisition of practical skills*** which implied learning through being useful within the environmental setting, namely; learning productive and maintenance knowledge and skills in the home, garden, herding within the community in performing joint activities. There was the wholesome development which meant an achievement of the fullest development of the individual as an acceptable man and woman, namely to become a fully functioning individual and a creative person for self-reliance, self-fulfillment, and self-acceptance and as such acquire knowledge and skills to contribute to the governance, religious life, and well-being of the community (Ocitti 1994; Sifuna and Oanda 2014; Prazak 2016).

The physical environment determined the nature of economic activities which could be carried out, so the dominant activities might embrace cultivation, fishing, gathering, or pastoralism. From their earliest years, elders aimed to adapt children to their physical surrounding and to teach them how to use it. Within the homestead and its environs, parents and older relatives were responsible for the training in economic activities. Closely related to the basic economic needs was the production of objects which had both practical and cultural value. Many societies had craftsmen in pottery, basket-making, weaving, and iron-smithing for making articles such as spears, axes, hoes, machetes, arrows, and other tools. In most communities, such crafts were specialities of certain families and clans which became famous for their skills (Sifuna and Otiende 1994; Sifuna and Oanda 2014).

The social environment also played a very important role in shaping the content of Indigenous education. A dominant value or principle which guided it was that of communalism, which meant that people highly valued living closely together as they cherished each other and at times suffered together, while depending upon one another (Ocitti 1994). Among the Gikuyu for example, the social environment offered a wide range of areas of knowledge. It involved the study of the history of the family, clan lineage, and ethno-national group especially the heroes who were recalled in songs and stories. These stories focused not so much on their individual feats as they did their contributions to the general life of the people, the aim being to discourage individualism. Children learnt oral literature (Kenyatta 1938) as most communities were rich in stories, riddles, proverbs, poems, songs, and lullabies. These were part of the oral literature, reflecting every aspect of life and culture and teaching a wealth of information about community beliefs, customs, and taboos (Florence 2011).

Teachers and Learning Strategies in Traditional Education

The educational setting stressed personal involvement as a means of learning and the practice of what was to be learnt. Learning arose and grew out of the active participant of the learner in the everyday activities of the family, clan,

and the entire community. Emphasis was put more on practice rather than theory; on what was learnt than on how it was learnt; and on learning generally than on teaching. However, if teaching is conceived as that process initiated by an individual or group with the intention of influencing or promoting the learning of another individual or group of individuals, then it was quite true to say that teachers of many kinds existed within the Indigenous East African education. What did not exist, therefore, was professional teachers as they currently exist in modern schools. It also needs to be pointed out that besides, being a teacher or facilitator of learning for others, an individual was equally taught by other people, invariably by those who were older or more experienced and who formed part of the social space. Among those who played teaching roles during childhood and adolescence were one's mother, father, aunts, siblings, and grandparents (Florence 2011).

In most East African societies, parents played a very important role in the education of their children. There was often a marked division of labor. The mother educated all children in the early years, but later the father took over the education of the male children, while the mother remained in control of the female children. After learning to walk, speak, and count, the male child went to his father and male older siblings to be trained in male chores. The female child on the other hand continued to be taught by her mother assisted by other women in the community and began to learn how to live and work as a woman in that community. Although there was an overlap in the simple tasks of training for both boys and girls in the early years, especially around six to eight years of age, the general rule was that of establishing sexual dichotomy in most work activities. In apprenticeship centers as well as institutionalized formal "schools" and initiation camps, and in secret learning associations and seclusion schools, there were groups of learners who were taught formally by carefully selected instructors with the necessary expertise and practical experiences (Ocitti 1994; Sifuna and Oanda 2014; Prazak 2016).

Informal learning was a common strategy. Among the informal initiated methods of learning, was learning through play. In most communities, the importance of play was generally realized. A child who did not participate actively in play after "work" was normally suspected of being ill or even abnormal as play was a very popular activity with children due to their physical and emotional impulses. Children were left to take their own initiative to make toys for play from their rich environment. They made toys of animals, houses, people, and objects which interested them from local materials of their own choices and interests. Baganda children, for example, molded items from mud and clay and made use of articles which they knew or thought were of little use to adults such as old and discarded banana trees for sliding on muddy and sloping surfaces in agricultural communities. They also engaged in make-believe play activities which were imitative, imaginative, and symbolic based on the day-to-day activities of the community (Wandira 1973).

In many ethnic communities, a popular form of play was wrestling, which was staged by children inciting each other for a wrestling fight. In some

communities, such children would be imitating a wrestling game or competition often staged by adults, especially by men. Acholi children, for example, did not just wrestle for its own sake or for fun; they did so in order to become more proficient in the game so they might become better competitors as young men, and to compare their physical strength. The child who was often defeated in the game or on a number of occasions by most of his age mates invariably became a laughingstock of the group and was even shunned or despised as a weakling. On the other hand, one who distinguished himself out of the group as the strongest usually assumed the position of leadership in their peer group (Ocitti 1973; Sifuna and Oanda 2014).

Folktales were also closely related to myths and legends and were based primarily on the day-to-day occurrences or happenings within the society. Hence, much of the ethical teaching which was given to children was though folktales and conveyed moral lessons. For example, these tales highlighted triumph over difficulties, virtues of wisdom, dangers of conceit and arrogance and others. Virtues such as communal unity, hard work, conformity, honesty, and uprightness were reflected in many of the folktales. Similarly, by listening to folktales, children learned a lot about human problems, faults, and weaknesses which were calculated to instill moral lessons in a didactic form (Florence 2011).

Proverbs which were widely used in ordinary conversation were also calculated to convey important lessons to the youth. Proverbs were condensed wisdom of the great ancestors and therefore a judicious use of proverbs in ordinary conversations was regarded as a sign of wit. In a given proverb, for example, one or two moral ideas were contained in a single sentence. Most of them referred to different aspects of the socioeconomic as well as the political life. Among the Chagga, for example, old people and parents used them in their dealings with children to convey precise moral lessons, warnings, and advice since they made a greater impact on the mind than the use of ordinary words. Children also learned through dance and folksongs. Music formed an integral part of community daily lives. Many of the rites and ceremonies, feasts, and festivals were usually performed to the accompaniment of melodious music and dancing (Raum 1965).

Traditional teaching and learning also involved the use of deterrence or inculcating fear in the children. Right from early childhood, whenever appropriate, children were made to conform to the morals, customs, and standard behavior inherent in the family and clan into whom they were born or lived. Bad habits and undesirable behavior such as disobedience, cruelty, selfishness, bullying, aggressiveness, temper tantrums, theft, telling lies, and other forms of misbehavior were not tolerated. Among the Acholi and Ngoni, for example, usually, verbal warnings were used and more often followed by some form of punishment. Children who committed offenses would be rebuked or smacked or be assigned some piece of work, which they were expected to complete before being allowed to eat. Serious offenses, however, resulted in severe beating or some form of inflicting pain on the body.

Part of the informal methods of instruction included children learning through productive work. Among the Baganda, learning through the medium of work enabled children to acquire the right type of masculine or feminine roles. Children learned by being useful to the adults through assisting them or working hand in hand with adults on tasks. A child was expected to learn largely through observing and imitating. He or she would be given formal review or instruction of the process, usually after an error or a mistake occurred or when the outcome of the work was found unsatisfactory (Apter 1961). Children were usually given a gradual process of training according to their age and sex. First, the tasks which they performed normally increased in amount and complexity as they grew up. Second, the physical ability of the children was also taken into consideration in the allocation of tasks. Rarely, would a child be assigned a task which was beyond his or her physical strength, even if the assignment was a form of punishment (Hake 1975).

Apart from informal learning practices, formal learning often involved theoretical and practical acquisition of knowledge and practical inculcation of skills. Formal instruction was given in the form of constant warnings and corrections to children, such as in some aspects of domestic work like herding of livestock before embarking on the task; cultivation and tending to certain crops; fishing and other occupations. There was also formal instruction, such as making known to children, the wealth of folklore; teaching them some everyday customs and manners of eating; greeting and how to behave with relatives and important people. In preparing girls for marriage, emphasis was placed on training in home management and on learning parental and marital obligations (Sifuna and Oanda 2014; Prazak 2016).

Formal instructional strategies overall were reflected in organized and continuous learning under the guidance of recognized and accepted instructors in usually fixed places. Formal instruction was also quite common in the institutionalized Indigenous schools and secret societies of some communities in East Africa as well as the training of pages at royal courts such as those of the ***Kabaka*** or king among the Baganda. Learning through apprenticeship was also formal and direct method in Indigenous education. Parents, who wanted their children to acquire some occupational training, normally sent them to work with craftsmen, such as potters, blacksmiths, basket makers, and others, who would formally instruct them. This too applied to the acquisition of hereditary occupations. For example, an herbalist in handing over the secrets about medicine and its use would instruct the apprentice until she or he became knowledgeable and proficient in the practice (Apter 1961).

Among some ethnic groups, formal education took the form of succeeding stages of initiation from one status to another. This was most pronounced among the Maasai of Southern Kenya and Northern Tanzania. At the age of five for example the outer edges of a child's ears were pierced. At about the age of ten or so, the lobes of the ears were also pierced, a visible indication that the child has advanced from childhood to boyhood or girlhood (Ole Sankan 1971). However, the most prominent of initiation practices were

those associated with puberty which took the form of male or female circumcision, although some ethnic communities practiced male circumcision only. This test was regarded as the point of passage into full membership of the community. It was deliberately made an emotional and painful experience, sometimes covering a period of many months which was engraved forever on the personality of the initiates (Wagner 1948; Prazak 2016). Within ethnic communities which undertook circumcision such as the Chagga and Gikuyu without it, a man or woman could not be regarded as a full member of the group or have rights of property (Kenyatta 1938; Raum 1965; Prazak 2016). Circumcision was normally accompanied with formal lessons. The teaching took the form of formal lessons, songs, and efforts made by the instructor to test or assess whether the initiate understood such lessons.

Assessment in Indigenous Education

Unlike modern schooling, Indigenous education was not an education geared toward passing specific public or private examinations. Instead, it was an education for life adjustment and for acceptable living. This meant that the stigma of failure was not part of the learning process. This of course does not imply that there was no assessment. Every mother, for example, through education and training, always wanted her daughter to gain and master the knowledge and skills for home management. Similarly, every father wanted his son to become at least a competent farmer or hunter, fisherman and herdsman, or any other relevant occupation, in addition to a successful management of his home. Hence, of all the different aspects of educational training to which children were subjected, the one to which most attention was paid was probably that which prepared them as prospective wives and husbands.

With the ultimate goal of education and training to produce functional members of the society, as well as competent husbands and wives, there was a range of assessment. Most of the assessment was informal and on an individual basis. Group assessments were rare and largely confined to military and performing arts or to certain activities in initiation camps. Almost all forms of testing were diagnostic and prescriptive and usually gave rise to some type of remedial teaching or further practice for perfection (Ocitti 1994). Among some examples of testing in Indigenous education included assigning an individual a particular job to do and closely watch the results to then verbally assess the outcomes. An adolescent girl for example was often sent to take care of the running of domestic affairs of an elderly or sick couple, partly to find out if she was accomplished enough to manage a home alone, which was an important qualification for marriage.

Among pastoralists, testing sometimes took the form of asking boys to identify lost cattle, goats, and sheep or strange ones without counting them. Often, a boy's power of observation and identification was tested by being called upon to separate his father's goats from the village herd or identify

each animal by some name or any distinguishing mark on its body or others. In societies with strong kinship relationship, a common form of testing demanded that each individual be able to recall his or her genealogy by the names of relatives both on the father's and mother's sides by name and in correct order transcending certain age groups. In some societies, customs required the bridegroom to work for his mother-in-law for an entire agricultural season single handedly as a form of comprehensive testing which could influence the decision as to whether the marriage would finally be endorsed. In many traditional communities, especially at courts, assessments were made by headmen and women or the most senior members as to how junior adults were able to display their wits in cross-examinations as well as wisdom and ability to quote and utilize precedents and procedures regarding the conduct of specific cases (Ocitti 1994).

Permanence and Decline of Indigenous Education

In considering the East African environment today, it is noted that it is no longer possible to observe Indigenous education anywhere in its pure form, free from foreign influences. But the modifications which it has undergone have affected it to very different degrees and at different levels depending on ethnic groups, regions, families, and individuals. However, nowhere has it completely disappeared to give way to Islamic and Western education systems. Even in the most Islamized and Westernized communities, it is always possible to find some elements of traditional or Indigenous education, and very often, it continues to form the backbone of the educational contribution that children receive from their families and environments.

One key factor which has adversely affected the permanence of Indigenous education is school attendance. Indigenous education has often found itself competing with modern schools which spread new ideas and skills. Attending school has become the main criterion for differentiating between the traditionalist and modern segments of the population, which in some communities are sometimes divided by deep antagonism. In comparison, the modern school is said to open the way for new professions and a way of life based on individual remuneration.

Islamic and Western civilizations in general and their education systems in particular have had a very significant impact on the precolonial socioeconomic and political systems. Through transformation, different categories of people have had to assume new functions and roles. For example, women have had to assume functions and roles, which traditionally were not theirs due to radical changes in the socioeconomic structures. New cultural elements are increasingly being introduced into the remotest parts of the rural countryside in the East African region that often severely undermine Indigenous cultural values. The gradual acceptance of new ideas and ways of life and the corresponding disenchantment with old ways have led the youth to aspire to the education provided by Islamic and Western school systems.

The motivations by both children and parents are based on the observation that the old culture is falling apart or falling behind and that only these formal schools are in a position to prepare them for entry into the new system which is taking shape (Sifuna and Otiende 1994; Florence 2011).

However, the Indigenous education system is not disintegrating uniformly, but rather in stages and or by institutions. Among them, the initiation institutions seem to have been the most fragile, although they are classically presented as the cornerstone of traditional or Indigenous education. The onslaught on initiation institutions such as traditional circumcision systems was started by the Christian missionaries who unanimously fought the initiation practices during the colonial period. They strictly forbade their faithful and catechumens from participating in Traditional schools or camps and went ahead to expel from their schools those who had undergone Traditional initiations. The term "Traditional" here refers to the African religion as practiced by these groups. The missionaries considered initiation as the most important pedagogical institution of the Traditional societies which would lead a person to embrace a definite pagan mentality and thus prevent any other form of learning. The circumcision practice itself was tolerated, but more as an isolated practice removed from its ritualistic setting which included Traditional rites.

Consequently, what has become of initiation in many societies reflects significant cultural changes such that these initiations are merely isolated practices stripped of rituals and educational underpinnings. In some East African communities, the kind of circumcision currently done during the school holidays is in a hospital or dispensary without even a family ceremony so that it no longer resembles a Traditional ritual act. Even among some ethnic groups who insist on executing circumcision ceremonies in the homes using Traditional circumcisers, long-established rituals are deliberately omitted. However, from the perspective of such communities, circumcision is still considered indispensable for the membership of the ethnic group. It also remains a requirement as preparation for marriage as any young man who has not gone through it, often feels inferior and ashamed before his peers and elders.

Generally, the school calendar makes children less available for Traditional initiations as they leave to attend formal school. The seclusion in the bush schools or camps is considered outdated and is no longer accepted. Even in situations where nobody openly attacks initiation institutions, they are weakened by the fact that their sociological supports are breaking down gradually. Eventually, no one is left to keep them alive, so in many cases, they may disappear altogether (Sifuna and Otiende 1994; Florence 2011).

The urban setting in East Africa poses one of the greatest threats to Indigenous education. In towns, one witnesses the decline in the role of the family unit in sustaining cultural values. For instance, it is more within some of the family circles than anywhere else that the use of the mother tongue is maintained. In the urban setting, the use of English language or Kiswahili is now much more common than previously practiced, and it tends

to reflect the general transformation of society. The rural areas, on the other hand, still maintain stronger attachment to the traditional values. In the rural context, such features as evening conversations around the fire and beliefs in Traditional healers and cultural values continue to hold ground in some communities. Practices of child rearing in Traditional structures have hardly changed and parental education has continued to follow Indigenous models (Sifuna and Otiende 1994; Florence 2011).

It can therefore be concluded that, while a number of socioeconomic forces have greatly contributed to the decline of Indigenous education in East Africa, it, however, continues to play a very important role in modern societies. Not only in those areas largely untouched by the Islamic and Western ways of life, but also in the early and in the later years of many rural children who enter schools. In this respect, rural schoolboys and schoolgirls usually learn in two education systems, that is their Indigenous education and the imported one.

Summary Conclusion

Indigenous education in East Africa was a process which went on throughout life and not limited to time, place, or to any class or specific group of people within a given ethno-national civilization. Pedagogically, it encompassed both instructional and non-instructional modes of learning which were termed as formal and informal. As a society-wide system, it was for every member and the environment as well as the socioeconomic and political institutions was the sources of its content. It was an education that was not only work-oriented, but it also stressed the aspect of service as an individual was urged and expected to demonstrate as part of group loyalty. Such service reflected a strong sense of obligation to the benefit of the community. The organizational structure of Indigenous education was conceptualized in accordance with the physical development of the individual from infancy to old age. In a vertical context, it was organized to meet the learning needs of individuals in a life-long perspective from the cradle to the grave.

Although Indigenous education systems varied from one community to another, the goals of these systems were often strikingly similar. The purpose of Indigenous education was essentially an education for living; thus, it trained the youth for adulthood within the society. Emphasis was placed on normative and expressive goals. Normative goals were concerned with inculcating the accepted standards and beliefs governing correct behavior and expressive goals with creating unity and consensus. Its content grew out of the immediate environment which was physical as well as social and even imaginary. From the physical environment, for example, children learned about weather, types of landscapes, as well as their associated numerous types of animal and insect life. It is noted that teachers of many kinds existed within the Indigenous East African education systems. In this regard, besides one was a teacher or facilitator of learning for others and, as an individual, was

equally taught by other people, invariably by those who were older or more experienced and who formed part of the social space. With the ultimate goal of education and training to produce functional members of the society, there was a lot of assessment, most of which was informal and on an individual basis to ensure that the learner gained and mastered the knowledge and skills for life. While it is no longer possible to observe Indigenous education anywhere in its pure form, free from foreign influences, nowhere has it completely disappeared to give way to Islamized and Western education. Even in the most Islamized and Westernized communities, it is always possible to find some elements of traditional Indigenous education as it continues to form the backbone of the educational experience that each child receives from his or her family and environment.

References

Apter, D. 1961. *The Political Kingdom in Buganda*. London: Longmans.

Brown, G. N., and M. Hiskett, eds. 1975. *Conflict and Harmony in Education in Tropical Africa*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Castle, E. B. 1966. *Growing Up in East Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.

Erny, P. 1981. *The Child and His Environment in Black Africa: An Essay on Traditional Education*. Translated by G. J. Wanjohi. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.

Florence, N. 2005. *From Our Mothers' Hearts: Bukusu Folktales and Proverbs*. Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press Inc.

Florence, N. 2011. *The Bukusu of Kenya: Folktales, Culture and Social Identities*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.

Hake, C. 1975. *Child Rearing Practices in Northern Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

Kenyatta, J. 1938. *Facing Mount Kenya*. London: Secker and Warburg.

Ocitti, P. J. 1973. *African Indigenous Education: As Practised by the Acholi of Uganda*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.

Ocitti, P. J. 1994. *An Introduction to Indigenous Education in East Africa*. Bonn: Institut fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit.

Ole Sankan, S. S. 1971. *The Maasai*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.

Prazak, M. 2016. *Making the Mark: Gender, Identity and Genital Cutting*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Raum, C. F. 1965. *Chagga Childhood*. London: Oxford University Press.

Read, M. 1968. *Children of Their Fathers*. New York: Rinehart and Winston.

Sifuna, D. N., and I. O. Oanda. 2014. *Historical and Contemporary Trends in the Development of Education in Kenya: Government Policy, Gender and Regional Dimensions*. Nairobi: The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.

Sifuna, D. N., and J. E. Otiende. 1994. *An Introductory History of Education*. Nairobi: Nairobi University Press.

Varkevisser, C. 1969. "Growing Up in Sukumaland." In *Primary Education in Sukumaland*, 42–82. Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff.

Wagner, G. 1948. *The Bantu of Kavirondo*. London: Oxford University Press.

Wandira, A. 1973. *Indigenous Education in Uganda*. Kampala: Makerere University.