

MODULE 1 THE CHILD'S ENVIRONMENT

- Unit 1 The Concept of Environment
- Unit 2 Historical and Cultural Environment
- Unit 3 Who Is a Child?
- Unit 4 Relationship between the Child and His Immediate Environment

UNIT 1 THE CONCEPT OF ENVIRONMENT

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 How to Study
- 4.0 Word Study
- 5.0 Main Content
 - 5.1 Definitions of Environment
 - 5.2 Types of Environment
 - 5.2.1 Physical Environment
 - 5.2.2 Social Environment
 - 5.2.3 Bio-Physical Environment
 - 5.2.4 Child's Immediate Environment
- 6.0 Activities
- 7.0 Assignment
- 8.0 Summary
- 8.0 References

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The concept of environment can be defined in a number of ways depending on which discipline is looking at it and for what purpose. Seeking the definition of the concept can therefore be likened to the old story of an elephant and the six blind men, where each of them characterised the elephant according to the part of the body he was touching. This establishes the fact that a universally acceptable definition of the concept is difficult to arrive at.

However, attempts will be made in this unit to identify and discuss various definitions of the concept of environment and their characteristic features. This will provide ample opportunity for a better understanding of what makes up a child's immediate environment.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- give a minimum of four definitions of the concept of environment;
- describe the characteristic features of the various definitions of the concept of environment;
- cite examples of the different types of environment; and
- explain in simple terms what a child's immediate environment is made of.

3.0 HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

- Read through this unit with care.
- Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

NOTE: ALL ANSWERS TO ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS ARE AT THE OF END THIS BOOK. THIS APPLIES TO EVERY OTHER UNIT IN THIS BOOK.

4.0 WORD STUDY

Lithosphere: - Refers to physical features in the environment such as solid, rocky crust covering the earth. It also includes mineral deposits in the ocean floor.

Hydrosphere: - Means a combination of water bodies which includes oceans, rivers, lakes and even moisture in the air.

Atmosphere: - Consists of the body of air which surrounds the planet earth. It is subdivided into five layers, that is the troposphere, stratosphere the mesosphere, and the exosphere.

Biosphere: - is composed of all living organism, plants, animals and one-celled organism. The location is from three meters below the ground to thirty meters above the oceans and seas.

5.0 MAIN CONTENT

5.1 Definitions of Environment

Basically, environment can be described as all the external conditions which influence the development or existence of an organism such as man. The environment of an individual subsumes not only the physical, climatic and physiological structures of the land area but also the settlement patterns, the peoples and animals that inhabit an area as well as their ways of life (Lawal, 2002).

This definition is related to McKechine's (1983) view which says environment includes immediate surroundings, all conditions, circumstances and influences surrounding and affecting an organism or a group of organisms. It is a collective term in which an organism lives in terms of temperature, light, water and other living things.

For simplicity, Okidi (2003) defines environment as the "totality of the nature and natural resources as well as the context within which they exist and interact. This includes the infrastructures which support socio-economic activities and which become part of our natural and cultural heritage.

The implication of this is that the environment does not only include the physical phenomenon but people, culture and ideas as well. In the words of Mays (1985) it is everything that is outside us including in a subtle way the individuals themselves. It subsumes the cultures of the peoples in their normal habitat.

Okello-Oleng (1989) defined environment as the total outer physical system within which human beings, animals and other organisms live. Sabaya in DSE (1993) further describes environment as the area and surrounding which greatly determine the viability and extent of human life. It encompasses the physical and natural heritage of an area as well as the man-made physical inputs or deficiencies and defects.

An environment may also be considered to include the political, economic, social, cultural and technological features of a society. It is the aggregate of external conditions which determine and influence the patterns of life and behaviour of man. It is a whole and complicated system with many interacting components, of which the child is a major one.

It will therefore be correct to say that our environment is something we are very familiar with. It is everything that makes up our surroundings and affects our ability to live on the earth- the air we breathe, the water that covers most of the earth's surface, the plants and animals around us, and much more.

5.2 Types of Environment

An environment may be endowed with forests, fertile soils; it may be rich in general flora and fauna; it may be rich with water and water resources and may also be punctuated by human inputs in terms of buildings, farming systems, roads and railway systems. It can also be seen from the human-initiated angle.

These variety of forms through which our environment have been viewed in the preceding sections of this Unit have greatly influenced the classification or categorisation of the concept. Thus, environment can be physical, social, bio-physical (natural and built). It can equally be classified from the ecological view point (abiotic and biotic).

5.2.1 Physical Environment

This is characterised by all phenomena apart from man and the things he creates. It consists of four major interactive components which are the lithosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere and the biosphere.

The Lithosphere

The lithosphere is the solid, rocky crust covering entire planet. This crust is inorganic and is composed of minerals. The lithosphere includes the crust (the rocks of the continents and the ocean floor) and the uppermost part of the mantle beneath the crust. These two layers are different in mineralogy but very similar mechanically, so for the most part they act as one plate.

The lithosphere is not totally rigid, but slightly elastic. It flexes when loads are placed on it or removed from it. Ice-age glaciers are one type of load It covers the entire surface of the earth from the top of Mount Everest to the bottom of the Mariana Trench.

The Hydrosphere: A hydrosphere (from Greek *ὑδωρ* - *hydor*, “water” + *σφαίρα* - *sphaira*, “sphere”) describes the combined mass of water found on, under, and over the surface of a planet. The hydrosphere is composed of all of the water on or near the earth. This includes the oceans, rivers, lakes, and even the moisture in the air. Ninety-seven percent of the earth's water is in the oceans. The remaining three percent is fresh water; three-quarters of the fresh water is solid and exists in ice sheets.

The Atmosphere

The atmosphere is the body of air which surrounds our planet. Most of our atmosphere is located close to the earth's surface where it is most dense. The air of our planet is 79% nitrogen and just under 21% oxygen; the small amount remaining is composed of carbon

dioxide and other gasses. It is thickest near the surface and thins out with height until it eventually merges with space.

The atmosphere is divided into five layers:

- The troposphere is the first layer above the surface and contains half of the Earth's atmosphere. Weather occurs in this layer.
- There is also the stratosphere. Many jet aircrafts fly in the stratosphere because it is very stable. Also, the ozone layer absorbs harmful rays from the Sun.
- The mesosphere is where meteors or rock fragments burn up.
- The thermosphere is a layer with auroras. It is also where the space shuttle orbits.
- Another layer is the extremely thin exosphere. The atmosphere merges into space in this layer. It is the upper limit of our atmosphere.

The Biosphere

The biosphere is composed of all living organisms. Plants, animals, and one-celled organisms are all part of the biosphere. Most of the planet's life is found from three meters below the ground to thirty meters above it and in the top 200 meters of the oceans and seas. Ecosystems, of which there are numerous types and are a defined part of the biosphere, collectively make up the whole of the biosphere. Within an ecosystem there are habitats in which an organism (including humans) exists.

From the ecological viewpoint, the environment can also be categorised as **abiotic** and **biotic**. The **abiotic environment** comprises of everything that is not associated directly with the presence of other organisms. It consists of all those physical and non-living chemical aspects of our surroundings that exert influence on living organisms. These include climatic factors such as rainfall, relative humidity, sunlight, atmospheric pressure, wind. Other factors include slopes, hills, valleys, rivers, and river basins, mountains soils in terms of texture, structure and organic matter.

The **biotic environment** consists of living organisms, the flora (plants) and fauna (animals) which interact with each other and are inseparably interrelated with their abiotic environment. This environment includes timber, birds, insects, amphibious vertebrates (toads, sea turtles, frogs, crocodiles and hippopotamus), tree and ground dwelling animals (monkeys, chimpanzees, leopards, elephants, rodents, antelopes and reptiles).

5.2.2 Social Environment

The social environment is that environment developed by humans. It is the identical or similar social positions and social roles as a whole that influence the individuals of a group.

The social environment of an individual is the culture that he or she was educated and/or lives in, and the people and institutions with whom the person interacts. A given social environment is likely to create a feeling of solidarity amongst its members, who are more likely to keep together, trust and help one another. Members of the same social environment will often think in similar styles and patterns even when their conclusions differ (Wikipedia, 2009).

It is the aggregate of social and cultural conditions such as customs, laws, language and religion, economic and political organisations that influence the life of an individual or community.

It involves interpersonal relationships at four basic levels of the human society which are:

- The family level- here, interpersonal relations are at the basis of love, hard work, mutual understanding, progress and happiness.
- The inter-family level-which builds and promotes neighbourhood inter personal relationships.
- The intercommunity level- relationships here, could be in various forms, that is, inter-town, inter-local government, inter-state or through cooperative associations or competition in sports, and interactions on religious, socio-economic, political and cultural matters.
- The international level- This involves relationships among nations in terms of the ways different nations relate to one another in political, economic, scientific, and technical matters.

A good social environment is characterised by high levels of support, order and organisation as well as low level of anger and aggression

5.2.3 Bio-Physical Environment

The **biophysical environment** is the symbiosis between the physical environment and the biological life forms within the environment, and include all variables that comprise the Earth's biosphere (Wikipedia, 2009). The biophysical environment can vary in scale from microscopic to global in extent.

They can also be subdivided according to their attributes. The biophysical environment can be divided into two categories: the natural environment and the built environment, with some overlap between the two.

The Natural Environment

The concept of the natural environment can be broken down into a few key components:

- Complete ecological units that function as natural systems without massive human intervention, including all vegetation, animals, microorganisms, soil, rocks, atmosphere and natural phenomena that occur within their boundaries.
- Universal natural resources and physical phenomena that lack clear-cut boundaries, such as air, water, and climate, as well as energy, radiation, electric charge, and magnetism, not originating from human activity.

A geographical area can be regarded as a natural environment, if the human impact on it is kept under a certain limited level. This level depends on the specific context, and changes in different areas and contexts. Some examples may be the Marine environment, the atmospheric environment and the terrestrial environment.

The Built Environment

The built environment comprises the areas and components that are strongly influenced by humans. It is the designed environment as reflected in any modification by humans of the face of the earth.

Hence, built environments include such human modifications as the planting or clearing of forests, the diversion of rivers and clearing of fields in certain patterns, the placement of roads, highways and dams, of cities; roadside stands, markets and are as much designed environments as glamorous office blocks and cultural centers; camps or villages and architects' or planners' activities of dreaming up ideal cities or creating high-style buildings.

Following the industrial revolution, the built environment has become an increasingly significant part of the Earth's environment.

5.2.4 Child's Immediate Environment

This is characterised by all these types of environment and the particular location he/she finds himself or herself at a given time. For instance, the child normally lives, grows, develops and operates within an environment that is made of several other environments. Essentially, the child's immediate environment starts from the family. This is the child's non-shared environment. It serves as the nucleus of every other environment that is the shared environment, he/she interacts with.

Depending on where he or she finds him/herself, the child becomes the nucleus of such environment with every other feature revolving around him/her from both simple and complex environments. His or her immediate environment could therefore be an environment that is disciplined; an environment of neglect; an environment that is rich in abundant natural resources, an environment of poverty; an environment that may not be supportive of the boy child or girl child; an environment of abundant or average wealth; an environment of socio-cultural bankruptcy; an environment of moral uprightness, an environment of political stability or instability and an environment of opportunities to acquire tangible knowledge and skills or one that does not even provide for such.

The child therefore finds himself or herself operating in multiple environments at any given time. Just as he or she is establishing social relationships with his/her parents, peers and community members, he or she is also located and functional within the bio-physical and built environments. For example, he/she lives on land which contains soil and which of course will have mineral materials from the lithosphere. Additionally, there will be elements of the hydrosphere present as moisture within the soil, the biosphere as insects and plants, and even the atmosphere as pockets of air between soil pieces. All these make his/her survival less stressful as he/she conducts his/her daily affairs.

6.0 ACTIVITY

1. Define environment.
2. What are the categories of environment?
3. Describe the social environment of a child.

7.0 ASSIGNMENT

1. Define the concept environment.
2. How can you describe the natural environment?
3. Compare and contrast the physical environment with social environment

8.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that our environment can be physical, social, bio-physical (natural or built), biotic and abiotic. The unit has also discussed the fact that settlements and people, the child inclusive, are essential components of our environment. Hence, the child's immediate environment could be a combination of a variety of environments.

9.0 REFERENCES

Akinbode, A. (2002). *Introduction to Environmental Resource Management*. Ibadan: Daystar Ltd.

Fact, Monster (2007).*Information Please Database*. London: Pearson Education Inc.

Lawal, M.B. (2004).*Our Environment Our Future*.Lagos: A- Triad Associates.

Yen, I.H. & Kaplan, G. A. (2000).*American Journal of Epidemiology* Jan 151(11) 1132-3.

Wikipedia (2009).*Environment (biophysical)*. The Free Encyclopedia www.wikipedia.com Retrieved on the 13th February 2009.

UNIT 2 CULTURE, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 How to Study this Unit
- 4.0 Word Study
- 5.0 Main Content
 - 5.1 Definitions of Culture
 - 5.2 Types of Culture
 - 5.2.1 Material Culture
 - 5.2.2 Social Culture
 - 5.2.3 Ideological Culture
 - 5.2.4 Art
 - 5.3 Influence of Different Types of Culture on Evolution of Cultural and Historical Background
- 6.0 Activities
- 7.0 Assignments
- 8.0 Summary
- 9.0 References

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In unit 1 of this module, we have learnt that our environment is made up of different components and characteristics. These varieties of components influence the categorisation of the environment. In addition to these, our cultural traits and historical

experiences also play very vital roles in the characterisation of the environment we find ourselves as human beings.

It is therefore pertinent to have a clear understanding of the concepts of culture as well as historical and cultural background.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the concept of culture;
- describe the different types of culture; and
- explain how the different types of culture influence the evolution of cultural and historical background.

3.0 HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

- Read through this unit carefully.
- Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

NOTE: ALL ANSWERS TO ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS ARE AT THE OF END THIS BOOK. THIS APPLIES TO EVERY OTHER UNIT IN THIS BOOK.

4.0 WORD STUDY

Material Culture: This includes products of human manufacture, such as concrete acquisition of human beings in the form of bridges, houses, clothing etc.

Social Culture: This refers to the interactions between individuals and groups of peoples and organizations. It covers bonds on the basis kinship and family relations

Ideological Culture: This relates to how people think, value, believes and hold as ideals. It is part of non – material aspect of culture.

5.0 MAIN CONTENT

5.1 Definitions of Culture

ulture is a dynamic phenomenon. The dynamism that characterises its nature has over time reflected in the numerous views and perspectives about the concept. Culture represents a people's unique and commonly shared ways of life. It is the total way of life a people. It is in one sense, an inter-connected set of attitudes, feelings and actions which have been learnt and shared by a group of people within an identifiable geographical entity. Culture distinguishes one human group from others.

Culture has also been defined as the knowledge, language, values, customs, and material objects that are passed from person to person and from one generation to the next in a human group or society. While a society is made up of people, a culture is made up of ideas, behaviors, and material possessions. Culture exists in society and organisations and can be a supportive force providing a sense of continuity - it can also be a force that generates discord, conflict and even violence (Lausanne Institute, 2009).

How people view culture depends on their location in society with regard to their race/ethnicity, class, sex, and age. We learn culture through interaction, observation, and imitation in order to participate as members of the group. Day-to-day interactions are simplified when you share a common culture with others.

Culture can equally be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group. It includes not only arts, letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs. It is also an adaptive mechanism, a set of human attributes which are interposed between groups and their environments in order to ensure collective security and communal survival.

Culture anywhere in the world can be better understood with the following characteristics:

- It is learned
- It is symbolic
- It is shared
- It provides acceptable patterns for meeting needs
- It depends on the society for its existence
- It is relative to time and place
- It is cumulative
- It rises and declines gradually

- It is both implicit and explicit
- It is the aggregate of people's development (Ajetunmobi, 2000).

Culture helps us understand how things are created, developed, managed and changed. Each culture is unique. Hence, it will be difficult to find any culture that is exactly like another culture but it is possible to find many similarities among different cultures. This makes for cultural diversity among the different social or cultural groups across the world. Whilst on the surface most countries of the world demonstrate cultural similarities, there are many differences, hidden below the surface. One can talk about "the West", but Italians and English, both belonging to the so called "West", are very different in outlook when one looks below the surface. We can also talk of the Yoruba people and their different dialects and peculiar cultural traits, just as we can say the same thing of the Hausa or the Ibo of Nigeria.

Differences between cultures seem to almost outweigh the similarities. Some differences other than the obvious language barriers would normally include personal and family values. For instance, what is considered polite in one family may not be so in another. Likewise, what is taken as food by a cultural group may not be the same by another group? More of these will be discussed when we get to the module on child rearing practices.

5.2 Types of Culture

The basic elements of culture are quite useful tools for promoting a better understanding of the different types of culture. These elements include language, norms, values, beliefs and ideologies, social collectives, statuses and roles as well as cultural integration. Hundreds of distinctive cultural variations can therefore be categorised using these basic elements.

Contemporary anthropologists have in recent time categorized culture into four broad categories. These are **material, social, ideological** and **arts** (Microsoft Encarta Premium, 2009).

5.2.1 Material Culture

This includes products of human manufacture, such as technology as well as concrete acquisitions of human beings in the form of bridges, pots, buckets, cooking utensils and products of handicraft. They are objects which people have learned to produce and use to satisfy their needs in the society.

In small societies people usually build shelters and make clothing out of readily available plant and animal materials. The Ilaje of South Western Nigeria and the Ijaw of the Niger Delta are known to make use of wood to build stilt houses on rivers as people who live on

rivers. In primarily agricultural societies, many of which still exist today in countries throughout Africa and Asia, the people build sturdy houses of sun-dried mud brick and thatch, wooden beams, or quarried stones. People in agrarian societies also have many methods of cooking using pots and ovens of mud-brick or stone.

In large industrial and commerce-based societies, most people live in cement block or brick houses and apartment buildings with plumbing, supplies of electricity and natural gas, and telephone service. Much of the material culture in these societies consists of mass-produced goods created through industrial production. The variety of common household technologies includes television sets, microwave ovens and computers.

The use of automobile, train, ship, airplane and ship for moving humans, goods and services are also examples of material culture.

5.2.2 Social Culture

This is related to people's forms of social organization in terms of how they interact and organise themselves in groups. People in all types of societies organise themselves in relation to each other for work and other duties, and to structure their interactions. The common ways through which they organise themselves include, through bonds by kinship (blood relation) and marriage; work duties and economic positions; and political positions. Hence, we have people who share ties by blood and marriage living together in families.

Through the kinship system, people define the appropriate types of behaviours expected between kin. Kinship and family relations are both important in agricultural societies. But for many people today living in large societies, kinship and family relations have become less important. People now live alone or in small families and also depend on organisations, workplaces, and government institutions to provide support which people in smaller societies enjoy through their kin and family.

People in small societies often live in extended families, in which several generations of kin and relatives by marriage live in the same household. In industrial societies few households are self-sufficient. So we find people in such societies depending on technologies such cars, computers and refrigerators that no one could produce alone from raw materials.

So the social culture of the people in the industrialised world is quite different from that of the smaller and less industrialised. For instance, in the area of gender roles, we find out that the patterns in the two societies are different. We talk of equal roles for both men and women in the industrialised society while it is not so in the other society. People in most modern industrial and commerce-based societies identify strongly with groups of people

united by work, such as professional organisations and labour unions and these groups are entirely separate from family and kinship ties.

5.2.3 Ideological Culture

This relates to what people think, value, believe, and hold as ideals. It is part of the non-material aspect of culture. People's beliefs give them an understanding of how the world works and how they should respond to the actions of others and their environments. These beliefs often tie in closely with the daily concerns of domestic life, such as making a living, health and sickness, happiness and sadness, interpersonal relationships, and death.

Again, people's values are fundamental tools for guiding them to understand the differences between what is right and what is wrong, or good from bad. The ideals complement this cultural pattern by serving as models for what people hope to achieve in life.

The ideological culture therefore plays a major role in shaping people's values, ideals and behaviours within any social group they find themselves. This is reflected in their religious beliefs and practices or the way they observe and relate with the natural world.

5.2.4 Art

Art has been described by Microsoft Encarta Premium (2009) as a distinctly human production which many people consider as the ultimate form of culture because it can have the quality of pure expression, entirely separate from basic human needs.

Art as a category of culture comes in form of music or acting which resides in the mind and body and takes expression as performance.

Some art however take the form of material production while others are nonmaterial. The material arts include pottery, painting, sculpture, textiles and clothing and cookery. The nonmaterial arts on the other hand include music, dance, drama and dramatic arts, storytelling and written narratives.

It is this category of culture that people find most convenient to use for establishing their personal and group identity through such forms of artistic expression as patterns of dress and body adornment, ceremonial costumes and dances, or group symbols. Other people use art as a primary form of storing and reproducing their culture. Many people also use art as a vehicle for spiritual expression or to ask for help from the spiritual world.

In the contemporary modern day societies, art is used for commercial and political purposes. Politicians are known to commission artists to produce songs for their campaigns and advertisement of their manifestoes.

Each of these categories of culture plays one role or another in the evolution of the cultural and historical background of people in any society; small or large, traditional or modern.

5.3 Influence of Different Types of Culture on Evolution of Cultural and Historical Background

Background

Culture is the essence of any society. Culture is essential for our individual survival and our communication with other people. We rely on culture because we are not born with the information we need to survive such as taking care of ourselves, how to behave, how to dress, what to eat, what religion to worship, or how to make or spend money. This implies that a social group without a past might find it difficult to have a present.

Culture is therefore a factor of historical experiences as well as the type of life already lived. The existence of culture provides people with opportunity to learn how to live their life. Such learning process is usually greatly influenced by their cultural and historical background, which gives them a reference point.

The different types of culture avail people with the chances of acquiring some virtues and experiences usually through assimilation, acculturation, and a climate of pluralism which all facilitate the molding of people's identity in relation to their cultural and historical background.

Often different cultures exist side by side within countries, especially in Africa. It is not uncommon to have a European culture, alongside an indigenous culture. Culture also reveals itself in many ways and in preferences for colours, styles, religion, family ties and so on. The colour red is very popular in the west, but not popular in Islamic countries, where sober colours like black are preferred. So when we are talking about aesthetics as a component of culture, we can therefore expect people to rely on their cultural and historical background as it relates to the traditional colour preference of that particular social group. Thus, it would be culturally inappropriate for people from an Islamic country to be seen glorifying colour red.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasise the fact that every one of us is born into a culture and this serves as the nucleus of cultural and historical background. This is because we inherit our culture from our parents and grandparents and we in turn pass on our culture to our children. Based on our cultural and historical background, we are taught from birth, how to think, believe and behave in ways that are acceptable in our

culture and as supported by the cultural and historical background of the social group to which we belong.

Hence, a child's cultural and historical background is expected to be a reflection of his or her cultural beliefs and practices which determine his or her immediate environment and how he or she functions within it.

The traits of his or her cultural and historical background can be described as a compendium of those norms, values, beliefs and ideologies of the social group which he or she belongs to. Through these, members of such social group acquire new and additional knowledge, information, as well as skills that further shape social interactions within their immediate and wider environment.

6.0 ACTIVITY

1. What is culture? Why do we study the culture of any society?
2. Identify three components of culture
3. Highlight the influence of culture on the cultural or historical background of an individual in any given society.

7.0 ASSIGNMENT

1. Give three definitions of culture.
2. List and discuss six characteristics of culture
3. What are the importance and contributions of culture to the development of the individual and society?

8.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have learnt about the concept of culture and its different types. The roles which different types of culture play in shaping different spheres of human life have also been presented. The centrality of culture in the understanding people's past and present, both as individuals and members of the society has been discussed. It is therefore important to conclude that an attempt to understand the rate and processes of development in a given community or among any social group demands that the culture of such social group or community must be understood from its historical perspective.

9.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Ahmad, I.; *et.al.* (1993). *World Cultures: A Global Mosaic*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.

Ajetunmobi, R.O. (2000). 'Nigerian Social life and Culture' In *Themes in Social Studies Education and Culture*.R.O.Ajetunmobi& Z.A. Omolade Lagos: Raytel Communications Ltd.

Lausanne Institute (2009). *What Is Culture?*www.lausanneinstitute.com .

Microsoft Encarta Premium (2009).*Culture*.Compact Disc.

UNIT 3 WHO IS A CHILD?

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 How to Study this Unit
- 4.0 Word Study
- 5.0 Main Content
 - 5.1 The Child
 - 5.2 Childhood Traits and Characteristics
 - 5.3 Extracts from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Nigeria Child Rights Act 2003
 - 5.3.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - 5.3.2 Nigeria Child Rights Act (2003)
- 6.0 Activities
- 7.0 Assignments
- 8.0 Summary
- 9.0 References

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In order to understand fully the relationship between the child and his/her environment we need a view of what it means to be a child and what childhood ought to be. This will be facilitated with an analysis of the emerging global consensus about the meaning of childhood as well as other views on the definition of a child.

A description of childhood traits and characteristics in this unit will supply a large part of the perspective on the child which is needed to promote a better understanding of what kind of childhood to expect in a particular environment and how best we can make children enjoy their environment, bearing in mind his/her traits and the peculiar environmental characteristics.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- state United Nations' definition of a child;
- give biological and legal definitions of a child;
- describe the traits and characteristics of childhood and
- highlight some of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Rights Act 2003 of Nigeria.

3.0 HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

- Read through this unit care.
- Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

NOTE: ALL ANSWERS TO ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENT ARE AT THE OF END THIS BOOK. THIS APPLIES TO EVERY OTHER UNIT IN THIS BOOK.

4.0 WORD STUDY

Childhood Traits and Characteristics: Childhood traits and characteristics and refer to different personality, destructive cultural and historical background as well as experience of every child. These traits and characteristics are reflected in the different stages of their development and socialization process.

Right of the Child:This refers to the privileges and rights that every child is expected to enjoy under the convention of the right of the child at the international level. In the case of Nigeria, the Child Rights Act 2003 (CRA, 2003) contains a number of laudable provisions which, if implemented, would go a long way to ensure the protection and welfare of the Nigerian child.

5.0 MAIN CONTENT

5.1 The Child

Describing who a child is could seem the simplest of any educational task. However, the cultural differences and societal perception of the concept have contributed significantly to the different but related definitions and descriptions of who actually is a child. While some have differed on the age bracket for categorising who a child is others have used other characteristics to describe the concept as we shall see in the next few paragraphs.

Wikipedia (2009) defines a child as a human being between the stages of birth and puberty. This definition is quite related to that of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which in its own case is age-specific. It defines a child as “every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier (Article 1). In line with this internationally initiated definition, Nigeria’s Child Rights Act 2003 (CRA, 2003) defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years, which will thus include adolescents.

Biologically, a child can also be described as anyone in the developmental stage of childhood, between infancy and adulthood. He or she could therefore be seen as a person between birth and full growth; a boy or girl.

Socially, a child is thus a son or daughter in relation to the father or mother. He or she is a human offspring a descendant of somebody, or a member of a people with a common ancestor or geographic origin, usually person who has not attained maturity or the age of legal majority. Child may also describe a relationship with a parent or authority figure, or signify group membership in a clan, tribe, or religion; it can also signify being strongly affected by a specific time, place, or circumstance, as in “a child of nature” or “a child of the Sixties.

Legally, a child is generally referred to as a minor, otherwise known as a person younger than the age of majority.

5.2 Childhood Traits and Characteristics

Each child in every society is unique both as a member and a learner, with each possessing singular personality, distinctive cultural and historical background and experience. They however share some characteristics with their fellow children which very often affect their mode of interaction within the environment they find themselves at a particular time.

Some of these traits and characteristics are reflected both in their stages of development and in the process of socialisation. Let us take a look at some examples of these as we shall be discussing the relationship between the child and his\her immediate environment in the next unit of this module.

These childhood characteristics include:

- Seeking out things that are fun to do
- Jumping from one interest to another
- Curious, eager to try new things
- Smile and laugh a lot
- Experience and express emotions freely
- Creative and innovative
- Physically active
- Constantly growing mentally and physically
- Risk often - are not afraid to keep trying something that they are not initially good at and are not afraid to fail
- Rest when their body tells them to
- Learn enthusiastically

- Dream and imagine
- Believe in the impossible
- Generally don't worry about things
- Passionate.

The nature of their temperament (a set of in-born traits that organise the child's approach to the world) is also unique. They are instrumental in the development of the child's distinct personality. These traits also determine how the child goes about learning about the world around him/her. These traits appear to be relatively stable from birth. They are enduring characteristics that are actually never "good" or "bad." How they are received determines whether they are perceived by the child as being a bad or good thing. The child's immediate environment and its components therefore becomes a key role player in this case.

Children's learning styles at this stage of development put them in the position of a set of "incredible sponges constantly soaking up new knowledge and information". The child here is struggling to understand the world in terms of how it works, what the rules are, how to cope and how to exist. The implication of this is that he/she has to be encouraged to remain curious, aware and interested as he/she relates with his/her environment.

5.3 Extracts from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Nigeria Child Rights Act 2003

The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the international level and the domestication of this Convention at both the national and state levels in a country like Nigeria is a reflection of the great value placed on the child across the world. Some of the Articles of the Convention, the provisions in the relevant National Assembly Act and State Edict clearly specify how issues relating to the child in any environment; immediate or wider should be handled with less stress on the child.

Examples of some of these are extracted and presented in the next few paragraphs.

5.3.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

- Recalling one of the provisions in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance
- Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community

- Recognising that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding
- Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity
- Bearing in mind that the need to extend particular care to the child has been stated in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 and in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1959 and recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (in particular in articles 23 and 24), in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in particular in article 10) and in the statutes and relevant instruments of specialized agencies and international organisations concerned with the welfare of children, ‘
- Bearing in mind that, as indicated in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, “the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth”
- Recognising that, in all countries in the world, there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions, and that such children need special consideration
- Taking due account of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child
- Recognising the importance of international co-operation for improving the living conditions of children in every country, in particular in the developing countries have agreed among others to ensure:
 - a. That in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration
 - b. To the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child
 - c. That States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognised by law without unlawful interference
 - d. That States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child
 - e. That the child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds,

regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice

- f. That States Parties recognise the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

5.3.2 Nigeria Child Rights Act (2003)

The Child's Rights Act 2003 (CRA 2003) contains a number of laudable provisions which, if implemented, would go a long way to ensure the protection and welfare of the Nigerian Child.

The Act outlines certain basic rights of the child and goes further to provide criminal sanctions for the violation of some of these rights in a bid to ensure that these rights are upheld. Some of these rights which are recognized by the CRA 2003 include the following:

- Right to life, survival and development.
- Right to a name, nationality, privacy and family life.
- Freedom of association and peaceful assembly (in conformity with the law and in accordance with the directions of his/her parents).
- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion – which in essence means the right to express his or her opinions – subject to parental direction especially when adoption, fostering, guardianship or custody is in issue.
- Freedom of movement subject to parental control.
- Freedom from discrimination merely by reason of his belonging to a particular community, ethnic group, sex, religion, circumstances of birth.
- Respect for dignity of person which implies that the child shall not be subjected to physical mental/emotional injury, abuse, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, servitude, slavery or other debasing acts.
- Right to leisure, recreation and cultural activities.
- Right to health and health services, parental care, free compulsory and universal primary education, amongst others.

The current Nigeria Child Rights Act 2003 defines a new child protective system and allows opportunities for the participation of children in matters that concern their rights and welfare.

Some of the instances prohibited as provided by the Act include the following:

- Buying and selling of children for the purpose of begging, prostitution, guiding beggars, domestic or sexual labour, slavery, child trafficking, debt bondage, etc attract 10 years imprisonment.
- Unlawful sexual intercourse with a child is rape and attracts a penalty of life imprisonment regardless of the fact that the offender believed the child to be above 18 or whether the child agreed to it.
- No child can be validly married or betrothed and anything contrary to this will attract a penalty of 5 years imprisonment or N50,000 fine.
- Tattooing the skin or making any mark on any part of the body of a child attracts a penalty of N5,000 or 7 months imprisonment.
- Using a child for drug trafficking attracts life imprisonment.
- Using of children to commit criminal activities attracts a penalty of 14 years in imprisonment.

The implication of the provisions of both documents for child rearing practices and development in a country like Nigeria is quite germane. This is particularly so when we remember that the child's immediate and wider environment encompass a variety of actors and actresses who are expected to play key roles on regular basis in order to ensure that the child has an all-round development devoid of stress and poor quality of life.

6.0 ACTIVITY

1. Who is child? Use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to define who a child is.
2. Identify five traits and characteristics of a child.
3. Outline how the Nigerian government domesticated the Child Rights Act in 2003.

7.0 ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the traits and characteristics of a child in your community.
2. Outline the core issues of the United Nations convention on Child's Rights.
3. To what extent has Nigeria domesticated the Child Rights Act of 2003?

8.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, attempt has been made to examine who a child is with special focus placed on the definition of the child according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The biological, social and legal definitions of a child have also been discussed. Extracts of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Nigeria's Child Rights Act 2003 were highlighted for the purpose of promoting a better understanding of the concept and its significance in the society.

9.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

CDI (2008). *Temperament and Your Child's Personality*. <http://www.cdi.com> Retrieved on the 3rd March 2009.

Chukwu, T. (2008). *Implementing Child Rights Act 2003 with Children in Mind*. <http://www.nigerianvillagesquare.com> Retrieved on the 3rd March 2009.

Mills, J. & Mills, R. (2000). *Childhood Studies: A Reader in Perspectives of Childhood*. London: Routledge.

Mytidbits (2009). *Childhood Characteristics*. <http://www.mytidbits.us> Retrieved on the 22nd February 2009

The Nigerian Child Rights Act (2003)

Vanguard Newspaper (2009). 'Whipping the Child'. 28th February. <http://www.vanguardngr.com> Retrieved on the 5th March 2009.

Wikipedia (2009). *Childhood*. *The Free Encyclopedia*. www.wikipedia.com Retrieved on the 20th February 2009.

UNIT 4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHILD AND HIS IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 How to Study this Unit
- 4.0 Study Word
- 5.0 Main Content
 - 5.1 The Child and His Environment
 - 5.1.1 Language
 - 5.1.2 Physiological Characteristics/Health Status
 - 5.1.3 Social Behaviour and Interactions
 - 5.1.4 Emotional and Psychological Status
 - 5.2 Effects of the Relationship between the Child and His Environment
- 6.0 Activities
- 7.0 Assignments
- 8.0 Summary
- 9.0 References

1.0 INTRODUCTION

What happens or doesn't happen to a child in the earliest years of his/her life is of critical importance and it depends on the nature of the environment he/she finds him/herself growing. This is premised on the fact that every child observes, learns and depends on his or her environment for survival. A growing child's family life has a great influence on his or her development. Parent and family features as well as socio-economic background are strongly linked to the child's development than any other factor one can imagine at this period. It is therefore not out of place to reiterate the fact that a relationship exists between a child's environment and his/her physical, physiological and psycho-social development.

This however does not imply that a child's genes do not play a key role in his/her development, rather we need to accept the fact that children are a product of their genes and their environment. Nevertheless, our concern in this unit is to discuss the relationship between the child and his/her environment.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- establish that a relationship exist between the child and his/her environment; and
- describesome of the effects of such relationship.

3.0 HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

- Read through this unit care.
- Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

NOTE: ALL ANSWERS TO ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENT ARE AT THE OF END THIS BOOK. THIS APPLIES TO EVERY OTHER UNIT IN THIS BOOK.

4.0 WORD STUDY

Health Status: This refers to the conditions of health of an individual. It consists of good food supply, provision of basic needs for the welfare of the individual.

Psychological Status: It consists of emotional attachments of an individual. The social environment contributes a lot to the emotional well-being of the child. The attitudes and behaviours of the parents and those in the neighbourhood can create a positive or negative personality formation of any child.

5.0 MAIN CONTENT

5.1 The Child and His Environment

You will recall that in unit 1 of this module, we discussed what a child`s immediate environment is made up. For emphasis sake, we need to remind ourselves of the characteristics of such environment so that we could become better prepared to identify the nature of relationship it has with the child as an individual. This environment is made up of the different types of environment revolving around the child who is located within a particular place at a given time. Being the nucleus of this environment, he/she is found establishing a variety of relationships which have multiple effects on his/her survival (see Fig. 3.1 for an illustration of the child`s relationship with his/her environment).

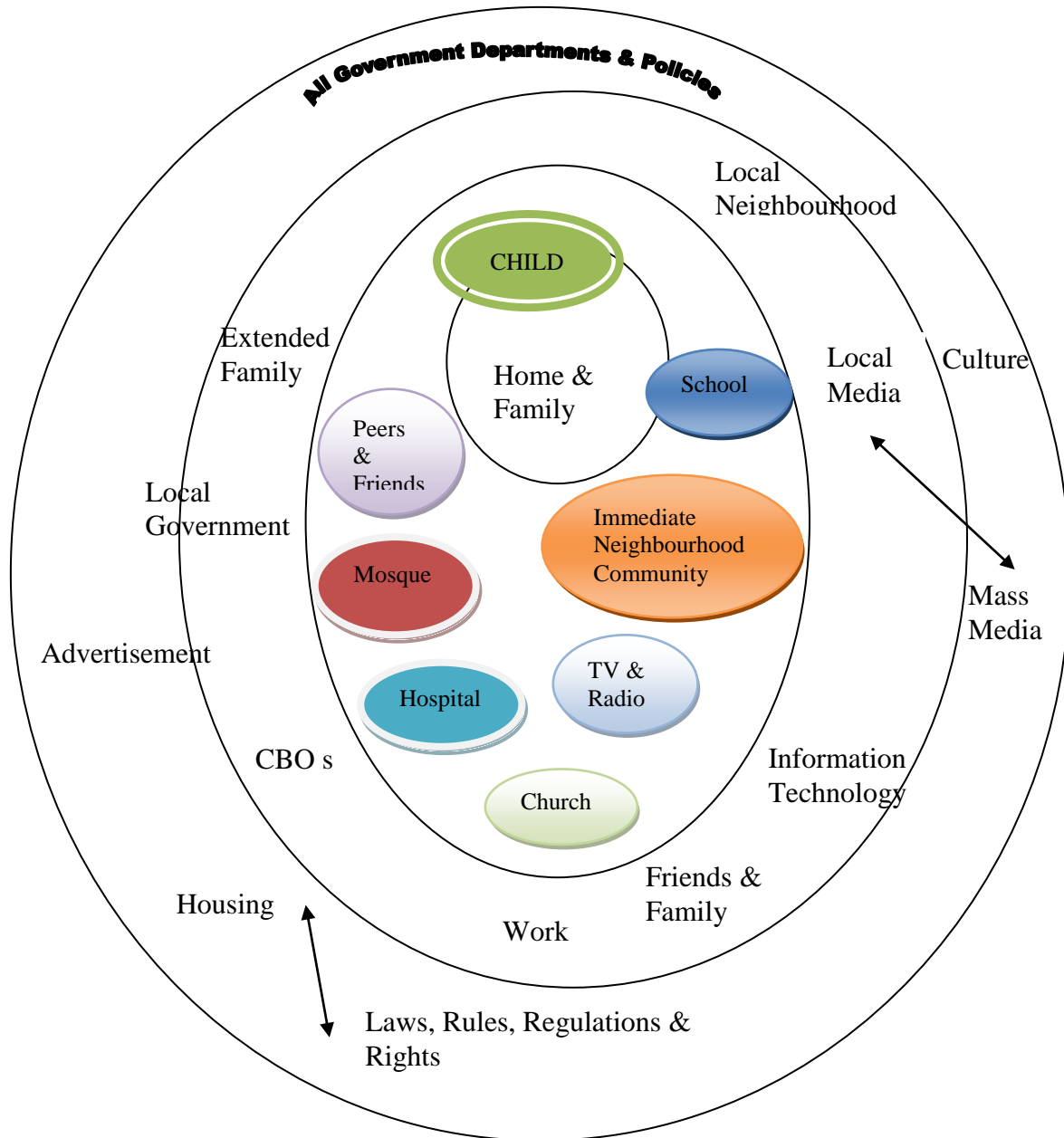


Fig. 3.1: The Child as a Nucleus of his/her Environment as Adapted from Whole Child and Family Support in Northern Ireland Children's Services Planning- A Model adapted from C. Kopp/Krakow, Child Development in the Social Context Fig.12.1, 1982 Addison-Wesley Pub.Co.

Of the many different relationships people form over the course of lifespan, the relationship between the family (which is the child's immediate environment) and the child him/herself, is among the most important. The child is born into an environment where he/she is expected to learn the rudiments of living and surviving. Every child's later personality in adult life is shaped by biological and social influences. The social influences are experienced in the social system through social interactions within their environment. Children act in the environment taking initiatives. They are not passive inhabitants but are inquisitive, explorative and out to control. They do not see the environment solely from their own point of view, but are capable of looking at it from someone else's as well. Hence, it is impossible to separate the environment from the person acting in it.

The structure, characteristics and quality of such environment can make or mar his or her development, growth and social interaction. The child's environment helps young children to develop intellectual and cognitive skills. It is a product of many factors; physical, mental, social and cultural, and this greatly affect the child's development and growth.

Let us look at some of the components of the environment and their relationship with the child.

5.1.1 Language

The environment of language is the environment of human relationships. The child's family environment provides him/her with opportunity to acquire language skills (listening and speaking) which form the basis of relationships with other people and brings about socialisation.

Language as one of the components of the child's environment constitutes a cognitive tool of great power. It truly transforms the child in his/her environment. It relieves the child of the need to see, hear or feel everything at first hand and enormously expanding his/her field of thought.

The growing child in the course of language acquisition at home may experience the need to learn the language of his/her immediate locality which might be different from that of his/her home. This is needed because of his/her desire to want to relate and communicate with his/her peers who might not be speaking the same home language with him/her. Baron (1992) remarks that by the time he or she gets to a particular level of schooling, the environment would have so influenced him/her to the extent that he/she will be a competent speaker of two languages, using one language at home and the other outside the home. This process he referred to as code switching.

This process is an indication of the role which the child's external environment can play in stimulating young children to acquire speech. The language that a young child hears by virtue of those around him/her influences him/her in various ways. It enables him/her to learn what is going on; it helps him/her to interpret these events; it is selective and draws his/her attention to those aspects of experience that are held to be significant; and enables him/her to attain concepts (Mays 1988).

These are all premised on the fact that language is rooted in human environment and there is no child who does not use speech as a means of satisfying their needs. So the child's environment plays a very key role in language development. Hence, an environment with defective language acquisition process and patterns will adversely affect the quality of language to be acquired by the child. On the other hand, the one with high quality accessories and personnel (parents, wards, relations and peers) will enhance acquisition of high quality language skills in the child.

5.1.2 Physiological Characteristics/Health Status

There is a relationship between a child's residential/neighbourhood characteristics and his/her physiological characteristics and health status. Neighbourhoods provide a social and physical context which structures opportunities for children to engage in behaviours that promote or inhibit weight gain. Residing in a disadvantaged neighbourhood may promote weight gain through access to a less healthy food supply, limited access to recreation facilities and increased safety concerns. Neighbourhood factors may be more influential as children age and have more freedom to access the neighbourhood.

Also it is not out of place to report research findings on the relationship between a child's home environment in terms of intact family or broken or foster home and the health status of the child. In a study conducted by Hayes & Oliver (2008), a variable indicated that children living in an 'intact family' with both biological parents are more likely to have higher levels of health and well-being.

5.1.3 Social Behaviour and Interactions

The type of environment in which a child finds him/herself matters a lot when it comes to development of social skills needed for interactions. Through adult-child relationships a child is nurtured and taught basic social skills. These skills include those of inter-personal communication, friendship, negotiation, bargaining and compromising.

Again, through peer relationships he/she is taught cooperation, competition, and intimacy. On the other hand, he/she could be taught negative social values where he/she comes in contact with an environment characterised by peer groups or family members with defective and anti-social behavioural traits. A socially contaminated environment

characterised by trauma, depression, despair and alienation can therefore affect the social behaviour of a growing child and subsequently make him/her maladjusted.

There is also, a child's non-shared environment. The family environment plays vital roles in the development of a child's social behaviours and subsequent social interactions. For instance, in the area of birth order effect, parents are known to tend to treat first children differently from the way they treat subsequent children and this affects how siblings interact, with the oldest child tending to be more authoritative.

5.1.4 Emotional and Psychological Status

Positive emotional and psychological development of the child is based on the active and creative exploration of his/her environment which is a world that gradually expands from first steps in the family, to early years in the neighbourhood, to school, and beyond.

The emotional attachments of young children to their parents other adults remain a cornerstone of psychological well-being in early childhood. But as young children develop their sense of self and learn to negotiate, compromise, resist, and assert their own preferences, they are likely to come into conflict with their parents and these adults in their environment who increasingly set limits and expect compliance, based on the child's developing capacities for self-control.

The approach to discipline and to conflict resolution in such environment has important effects on the quality of the parent-child relationship and the child's early personality growth. Generally, developmental scientists have found that when parents frequently exercise power and authority to overcome their children's assertiveness, the children comply but are also likely to become angry and frustrated—and to be defiant when the parent is not present.

Often, children who live in environments where parents use physical punishment act aggressively toward others. Parental strategies that emphasise communicating firm and consistent expectations and their rationale, as well as listening receptively to the child's views, foster the child's cooperation and a more harmonious parent-child relationship in such typical environment. An environment characterised by affectionate parent-child relationship, in turn, enhances the child's compliance and cooperation.

5.2 Effects of the Relationship between the Child and His Environment

Children who are denied permission to explore themselves and their environment can spend their lives with a damaged or incomplete understanding of who they are. They may end living not being able to:

- ask questions;
- risk things, try new things, learn new information, seek out a different or better way of doing things;
- have a positive and hopeful view of the world and their future in it;
- talk about tough or personal issues;
- disagree and voice their own thoughts;
- trust their own emotions;
- trust self to make decisions;
- forgive self for making mistakes; and
- be proud of an accomplishment, be proud of self, feel worthy on own merits.

Furthermore, a child's environment adds to his/her genetic personality factors. Some children are genetically predisposed to violence but as long as they are in a good home or socially stable environment they will probably overcome the weakness. But if they are born in a family and live in an environment that has poor communication or is abusive they are more likely to engage in criminal activity.

Equally, when a child operates within an emotionally imbalance environment, where parents and other adults exercise power and authority to overcome their children's assertiveness, the children may comply but they are also likely to become angry and frustrated. This state of frustration could lead to exhibition of deviant behaviours particularly in the absence of their parents or other adults in their immediate environment.

However, living in an environment filled with warm relationships can motivate young children to want to comply with an adult's expectations and maintain strong positive links with such environment. This is also expected when they are exposed to new experiences and given chances to safely explore their physical environment.

It is also not impossible that children who come from home environments where parents are more educated, with higher income, well organised routines and where mothers have fewer or no symptoms of depression, will be more intellectually developed than those from environments where a combination of these factors are missing.

The implications of the foregoing discussion is that every society should accept the promotion of a conducive environment (immediate and wider) as a responsibility and task essential for an all-round positive development of the child as a key member of any society.

6.0 ACTIVITY

1. Identify and discuss any three component of a child's environment.
2. Outline any five things that could influence a child in any given environment.

3. What are the likely effects of a child's environment in terms of his or her social behaviour and interactions.

6.0 ASSIGNMENT

1. Identify four agents of socialization of a growing child. Discuss any two of them with relevant examples.
2. What role has the environment in the child's personality development?
3. Identify three factors that can influence the child's interaction in the society or community. Discuss their roles in the development of the child.

7.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we recalled the features of a child's immediate environment and moved on to learn about the relationship between the child and his/her environment. The relationships between components of the environment such as language, physiological and health status, social behaviour and interactions, emotional and psychological status on one hand and the child were examined. The effects of these relationships could be both positive or negative depending on the nature and characteristics of the child's environment.

8.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Garbarino, J. (1998). 'Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment'. *Family Matters*. No. 50 Winter.
- Harris, J.R. (1995). 'Where Is the Child's Environment? A Group Socialisation Theory of Development'. *Psychological Review July* 102 (3) 458-489.
- Hayes, M. V. & Oliver, L. N. (2008). Effects of Neighbourhood Income on Reported Body Mass Index: An Eight-Year Longitudinal Study of Canadian Children. *BMC Public Health*8:16.
- Kairen, C. (2009). Child Development: Social Skills. www.videojug.com Retrieved on the 13th March 2009.
- Kopp/Krakov, C. (1982). *Child Development in the Social Context*. USA: Addison-Wesley.
- Safer Child Inc. (2009). *Safer Child Thoughts on Child Rearing*. www.saferchildinc.org Retrieved on 6th March 2009.

Shriver, E.K. (2006). Family and Characteristics Have More Influence on Child Development. *NHI News*. US Dept. of Health and Human Services.

Ross, A. (2009). Child Development. *Microsoft Encarta*. Microsoft Corp. 1993-2008.

The Cute Kid (2009). *Children: A Product of Nature and Nurture*. www.thecutekid.com
Retrieved on 11th March 2009.