

Abstract

Education per excellence is not a unique knowledge in our daily life. Education has a great impact on family and it is obvious that family life education should be encouraged at all levels of our education industries. Some theories of conflicts, social exchange, symbolic interaction, system and their implications to family life education were discussed in this paper.

Introduction

The development of any society depends on the family set up. This is to say that for any family to develop and maintain the status of move-forward, there must be peace, cooperation and self-understanding. (Riley, 1997; Alade, 1995). Therefore a planned society is a happy society. By the same token a planned nation is a happy nation and a planned family is a happy family. In this regard, family is a group of biologically related people living together such as married couple with or without children or a single parent plus children. However, family life can be understood to refer to the experiences, functions and activities of that primary unit of society (the family) and the supply source of population. In Nigeria, the major function of the family is reproduction (i.e. population increase) and child-rearing which is commonly and widely known. In this context it has been deduced to family life education which is aimed at helping individuals acquire appropriate behaviours in the family setting throughout the family life stages. It has a component of population that is concerned with the "Study of attitudes and skills related to dating, marriage, parenthood, family as a socio-cultural, and economic unit in the society"(NF,RIX', 1995)

The educational process is designed to assist people in their physical, social, emotional and moral development as they prepare for adulthood and marriage. It involves the relationship between family members and their respective roles and functions and extends to patterns of production.

Family life education is concerned with the increasing number of family instability and disintegration which can be linked to the changing family structure and composition. And which have severe consequences on the members of the family (Yisa, 1989). Thus learning experiences are to be provided which will help individuals make right decisions in the family to which they are committed. Joyce (1988) opined that there are many pressures confronting the family. These include the effect of social mobility on the family, economic depression and the general complexity of the society. These have helped to promote instability in the family.

Since family is a sub set of population and family crisis is an obvious and natural phenomenon because the history is as old as mankind. Based on the challenges of the changing society and high rate of family conflicts, it is obvious to subject some theories. This paper aims at looking at some theories and their uniqueness as relates to family life education and their implication to our education system.

Social Exchange Theory

This theory is basically on decision-making process in any family styles. The theory postulates that every human being is expected to have tentacles of his life either ostentatious or poverty level. Joyce (1988) opined that people's behaviour, attitude to things that they agree to do and what they do are all based consciously or unconsciously on cost/rewards. They look at human beings as very decisive and profit oriented, thus any alternative action taken by an individual is based on maximizing profit and minimizing losses. So individuals consider alternatives through the analysis of costs and rewards. The avoidance of costly situation is obvious when the outcome of a relationship falls below expected standard.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

The postulation of this theory is not far from human expectation. The theory concerns with the individual and his roles in (the family and the society in general. There should be good family relationship in areas of good communication, mutual interaction and role enactment. The exponents of

this approach, view the family as a system of roles and believe in high quality role enactment. The theorists are of the view that if roles are conscientiously performed, and good communication and interaction are established, then there will be satisfaction, clarity role expectation in the family.

Conflict Theory

This theory concerns that human beings are self-oriented and will in most cases give priority to their own interests at the expense of others. Conflict is natural and is inevitable in any family system. It should not be considered a "deviant behaviour" in the family system although it varies depending on the degree and intensity. Causes of conflict are numerous but it is assumed that, in dyadic relationships unequal circumstances often result in conflict.

System Theory

This theory operates on the basis of input-transformation output system. The main concern of the theory, is what happens in the transformation stage. The input has significant rules and expectations to perform.

That is what happens to the input as it passes through the system before coming out. Joyce (1988) indicated that family rules are important because rules normally determine how a family responds to the use of any inputs. The expectation is that every family has its rules depending on how a system deals with its input.

This theory advocates boundary maintenance. It deals with the importance of establishing a boundary to demarcate elements of the system from its environment and family's attitude to input in the process stage and how this attitude affects the openness or closeness of a family.

Uniqueness of the Theories and Educational Implications

Basically, education is aimed at transforming individual, society and the general community for better life crisis in family which is inevitable and is a natural phenomenon. An appropriate education is needed for sustainable development.

The basic principle behind this social exchange theory implies that decision-making in any family set up depends on the cost/benefit. An individual cannot live ostentatious life while his economy has not improved. Every family household should be decisive in minimizing cost of living and this can be done when the family comes to genuine consensus. The theory further explains where family cannot compromise to improve their social well-being. This may bring about conflict behaviour resulting to divorce, separation and perhaps mistrust of each other.

Education brings family into real life contact, enabling them to share modes of life with other people and so strengthen relationship.

System theory is deduced from input-transformation output. It implies that family life style depends on the input. If the input is good the resulting factor is that the output will be good and vice-versa. The family refers to father, mother and children. For instance if the children (input) are given proper moral training and good behaviour, (the output-graduated stage) the society will progress and move forward.

The emphasis is that there should be set down rules and regulations governing the conduct of every society when these behaviour attitude and modes of interaction pass through transformation stage. An example through school, mosque/church as agents of socialization will change ugly nature of the system.

Symbolic interaction theory. It implies that there is a relationship between symbolic interaction and social exchange theory. They all portray family relationship in a democratic society where good communication and interaction resulting to family decision on what, how and where. A family that does not practice symbolic interaction will have severe problems.

The theory instituted that there should be public awareness in order to have good relationship and that if family are educated, they will be able to analyse the economic base of their existence and the patterns of social interaction and the power structure. However, education strengthens the relationship of people, makes people committed to their decision in a democratic environment.

Conflict theory portrays that human beings are self centred and unequal situation may result to conflict. Since we have to believe that it is a natural and inevitable phenomenon, when it comes we

should be able to resolve it quickly. In an ideal society we should learn to tolerate cooperation and be patriotic in all our doings which will lead to equity and good justice.

Conclusion

Family life education is an effective tool for national development. The value of the knowledge of the theories reviewed is that it provides the teacher with more in-depth hidden reasons of human behaviour. It is not enough to list causes pay packet/money childlessness, religion etc. The teacher should be able to explain each cause of these theories so that class discussion can be meaningful.

By this trend, the education acquired will improve adolescent morality, knowledge and well-being, it will improve the quality of life within households; it will improve infant and child health and promote their survival; it will improve maternal health and ultimately the nation.

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