

MODULE ONE: EDUCATION IN THE CLASSICAL ERA**Objectives for the whole module:**

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

1. state how children were educated during the classical (Greek and Roman) period;
2. analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the type of education during those periods;
3. discuss the contributions of the great educators of those periods;
4. discuss what we in the present era can learn from the educational systems and from the great educators of those periods.

The plan of this module

This module is made up of four units. In each unit, you will learn about the education practices of a specific place and time during the classical period and/or the educational ideas of great educators during that period. Each unit tries to spell out in as comprehensive a manner as possible ‘the what’ as well as ‘the how’ of the system being discussed or of the specific educator being presented. By ‘the what’ ‘the how’ we refer to how the system is operated.

However, the whole essence of our looking far back into these distant periods is to enable us deduce how the past has influenced or shaped the present, and indeed what we can still learn from the past. Thus, in each unit, we examine closely what we owe to these ancient periods and what we can still learn from them. We do this by leading you, mostly through questions and suggestions, to identify from both ‘the what’ and ‘the how’ those lessons we can learn.

UNIT ONE: EARLY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

OBJECTIVES

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

1. discuss the significant characteristics of early educational systems;
2. analyse their influences on later educational systems;
3. discuss what our own system has inherited from these early systems.

BACKGROUND

History as an academic discipline, is interested in looking to the back, not just for its sake, but so that we can learn from the past, and how the past has influenced the present. In looking to the past, history likes to dig to the very origin, to the earliest period that is relevant to the issue at hand. In the present circumstances, we can say that education really started as soon as man was created. This is because the business of bringing up a young person involves his progressive education. Indeed, when we look at what we call education, we might not be wrong in describing it as the system by which one generation imparts the ideals and cultural practices of its society to the next generation in an unending process. In this first unit of our module on history of education, we try to examine the very origin of what we have and cherish today.

Characteristics of the earliest educational systems

The oldest known educational systems in history shared two characteristics in common: they taught religion, and they promoted the traditions of the people. In ancient Egypt, there were temple schools, which taught both religion and the principles of writing, the sciences, mathematics, and architecture. Similarly, in India, the business of education was carried out mostly by the priests. India was the source and fountain of the Buddhist doctrines that were taught in its institutions to Chinese scholars. In turn, they spread the teachings of Buddha to the various Asian countries in the Far East. Ancient Chinese education emphasized philosophy, poetry, and religion, in accordance with the teachings of their great ancestors and philosophers like Confucius and Laozi. Indeed, the Chinese invented a system of civil-service examination, more than 2,000 years ago and which was found to be effective up till the present era. It was used to select the best scholars for important positions in the government.

ACTIVITY 1

1. What would you say is the purpose of this first unit?
2. What are the two major characteristics of the earliest systems of education?
3. In what ways are these characteristics applicable to Nigerian traditional systems?
4. What can we learn today from these earliest periods?

EDUCATION IN ANCIENT EGYPT

In Egypt, the culture and education were preserved and controlled chiefly by the priests who formed powerful intellectual elite in the Egyptian theocracy and occupied vital political positions. The priests taught the humanities as well as such practical subjects as science, medicine, mathematics, and geometry in formal schools. However, the professionals taught vocational skills relating to such fields as architecture, engineering, and sculpture outside the context of formal schooling.

Egyptians developed two types of formal schools for privileged youth under the supervision of government officials and priests: one for scribes and the other for priests' trainees. At the age of five, pupils entered the writing school and continued their studies in reading and writing until the age of 16 or 17. At the age of 13 or 14, the school boys were also given practical training in offices for which they were being prepared. Training of priests began in temple colleges, which boys entered at the age of 17. The length of training depends upon the requirements for various priestly offices. It is not clear whether or not the practical sciences constituted a part of the systematically organized curriculum of the temple college. Method of teaching was rigid, and discipline was severe, the aim in most cases was to achieve uniformity in cultural transmission – deviation from the traditional pattern of thought was forbidden. Drill and memorization were the typical methods employed.

Education in Mesopotamia

The civilization in Mesopotamia developed at about the same time as that in Egypt. So, Mesopotamia developed education quite similar to that of Egypt with regard to its purpose and training. It was practical and aimed to train scribes and priests. It was extended from basic reading, writing and religion to higher learning in law, medicine and astrology. Generally, youth of the nobles were trained to become scribes, who later functioned either as copyists, librarians or teachers. Schools for priests were said to be as numerous as temples, indicating the thoroughness and the supremacy of priestly education. Very little is known about higher education, but the advancement of the priestly work sheds light upon the extensive nature of intellectual pursuit.

As with Egypt, the priests in Mesopotamia dominated the intellectual and educational domain as well as the applied. The library formed the centre of intellectual activity, which usually operated in a temple under the supervision of renowned priests. Teachers employed memorization, oral repetition, copying of models, and individual instruction. The period of education was long and rigorous and discipline was harsh.

ACTIVITY II

1. What similarities can you identify in the educational systems of Egypt and Mesopotamia? What dissimilarities can you recognize?
2. Why do you think these educational systems were dominated by the priests?
3. Discipline was rigid or harsh in both systems. How would you compare this with the systems today?

Civilization in North China began with the emergence of the Shang era. Thus, complex educational practices began from a very early date. In fact, virtually every character (or letter) of the Chinese orthography was already formed more than 3,000 years ago. Ancient Chinese education was mainly secular in nature, although it at the same time, aimed to improve the morals of the youth to develop a sense of moral sensitivity and duty toward people and the state. Even in the early stages of civilization, harmonious human relations, rituals, and music formed the curriculum. Formal colleges and schools probably existed by 1000 BC. Apart from the major centres in the provinces, there were less-organized institutions, such as halls of study, village schools, and district schools. As for the methods of education, ancient Chinese learned from bamboo books and obtained moral training and practice in rituals by word of mouth and example. Rigid rote learning, which became the norm in later Chinese education, did not seem to be used then. Education was regarded as the process of individual development from within.

The Hindu tradition

India is the site of one of the most ancient civilizations in the world. From about 2000 BC the Aryans entered, captured the land, and founded powerful kingdoms. Before long, the Brahmans who were the intellectuals became priests and men of learning; the nobles and soldiers constituted the next class, the agricultural and trading class was called Vaisyas; and finally the dasas were absorbed as domestic servants. Such was the origin of the division of the Hindus into four classes. By about 500 BC, the classes became hardened into castes.

Religion was the mainspring of all activities in ancient India. It comprised of both prayer and worship as well as philosophy, morality, law, and government. Religion dominated educational ideals, too and the study of Vedic literature was very important in higher classes. There were clearly demarcated stages of instruction. During the first period, the child received elementary education at home. The beginning of secondary education and formal schooling was marked by a ritual, which was restricted to and compulsory for boys of the three higher castes: at age 8 years for the Brahman boys, age 11 for boys of the next higher class, and age 12 for the boys of the third higher class. The boy then left his father's house for his preceptor's home. The preceptor would treat him as his own child, give him free education, and not charge anything for his boarding and lodging. The pupil had to tend the sacrificial fires, do the household work of his preceptor, and look after his cattle.

The study at this stage consisted of the recitation of the Vedic mantras, or "hymns," and the auxiliary sciences-phonetics, the rules for the performance of the sacrifices, grammar astronomy, prosody, and etymology. The characteristic of education, however, differed according to the needs of the caste. For a child of the priestly class, there was a definite syllabus of studies. It was compulsory for him to have knowledge of the most ancient of Hindu scriptures. During the whole course at school, or at college, the student had to wear a simple dress, live on plain food, use a hard bed, and lead a celibate life. Learning normally lasted for 12 years, but for those who wanted to go further, there was no age limit. After finishing their education at an asrama, they went to a higher centre of learning or a university. Advanced students also improved their knowledge by taking part in philosophical discussions at an "academy". Women were not denied education, but normally girls were taught at home. The method differed according to the nature of the subject. Parables were employed in the

personal spiritual teaching. In higher learning, such as in the teaching of “righteousness science”, the most popular and useful method was catechism, with the pupil asking questions and the teacher discussing at length on the topics referred to him. Memorization, however, played the greatest role.

ACTIVITY III

1. What major similarities would you recognise between the Chinese and Hindu systems?
2. Some that appears to be peculiar to the Hindu system is the class system. How do you think this affected the system of education there?
3. How much of the education in each of the two systems was utilitarian and how much of it was not.

THE JEWISH EDUCATION

As in virtually all traditional societies, education in ancient Israel was predominantly familiar, that is, it is based on the family, with the mother playing a very significant role in the education of the very young. In most cases, girls followed their mothers’ vocations while boys followed their fathers’ professions. Thus, farmers brought up their sons invariably as farmers, shepherds as shepherds, fishermen as fishermen (realise that the brother Simon and Andrew were working as fishermen with their father when Jesus called them).

A very important aspect of the Jewish education involved providing moral and religious education. Consider what God commanded Moses to tell the people: ‘These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.’ (Deut. 6:6-7) In this task of bringing up children in the fear of God, parents were to regard their duty as never ending as they are to teach ‘their children and the children of their children’ (Deut. 4:9).

Education was rigid and exacting, as teaching was usually accompanied with corporal punishment. The book of Proverbs (13:24) indeed recommends this: ‘He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.’ This does not make the parent or teacher a wicked person, rather discipline is out of love for the child, (notice the wording of the last part of the quoted passage. The word ‘rod’ is the same used by the psalmist (Psalm 23) where the sheep is supposed to say that the rod of the Lord comforts it. Thus the rod is as much an instrument of discipline as it is of guidance and comfort.

Throughout this period, the discipline system was the norm. Each great master had a number of disciples who learnt from him. Thus, Elisha learnt from and modeled his ministry on, Elijah; Jesus Christ had his 12 disciples, each of whom later had his own followers etc. In most cases, these groups were not stationary in a formal institution, rather they moved from place to place, much like the Sophists, the itinerant teachers. The difference here was that this time they peddled religious morals rather than abstract philosophy.

ACTIVITY IV

1. From what has been presented here, do you think there was a formal school system as in the previously discussed systems?
2. Corporal punishment was the norm during the period discussed. To what extent did this differ from, or conform to earlier discussed system?

UNIT TWO: EDUCATION IN SPARTA**OBJECTIVES**

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

1. state clearly who the Spartans were and the era in which they lived;
2. discuss the type of education they gave their children;
3. analyse factors that made them adopt this type of education;
4. discuss what lessons we can learn from the Spartans.

THE BACKGROUND**Who were the Spartans?**

Sparta was one of the ancient Greek city states. By 'ancient' we are referring to the era before the present epoch, especially the period before the birth of Christ some two thousand years ago. During the periods we are referring to, Greece as it exists today as a country did not really exist. Rather, there were several city states, most of them rising to cultural and/or military prominence. Among them were Sparta and Athens, two contiguous cities, but vastly different from each other in several ways as we shall see from this and the next units. Specifically, the era we are referring to is about 8 or 7 centuries BC, which was the period that Sparta really reached the height of her glory as a military force.

Sparta believed so much in military exploits and cared less for beauty and culture. There is a saying that Spartan parents owed their male children one thing: the shield, and that on handing over this military tool, they usually accompanied the act with the saying, 'Go, and return with it, or on it.' What does this terse saying mean? It signifies that the parent is sending off the son into the wide world with the shield to defend himself against all sorts of attack, and that he should either return in victory with it, or die and be brought home on it. Such was the military disposition of Sparta that it soon became a force among other states. Sparta subdued one after the other of the other states. First it was its neighbour, Messenia, which lost its independence to Sparta in the 8th century BC and did not regain it until the 360s. Historians have asserted that it was this factor, of subjugating Messenia, 'that determined the peculiar development of Sparta, because it forced Spartans to adjust their institutions to deal with a permanently hostile subject population'. Before long, Sparta sprang out to other states, conquering one after the other including Athens too. However, it was just this military might for which it was noted, but not for much else. So, there is not much of poetry, drama, sculpture, etc., that we can learn from Sparta. What we can learn is the type of education that prepared the citizens for warfare rather than for the arts, science, governance, etc. So, what is this type of education?

ACTIVITY I

1. In which part of the world would you find the ancient Sparta today?
2. How long ago was the rise to glory of Sparta?
3. What does the statement to the Spartan boy tell us about Sparta?
4. Why do we not hear of Messenia today? What impact did the conquest of Messenia have on Sparta?

EDUCATION IN SPARTA

Education in Sparta began from age 7 to 20 years. Before then, mothers brought up children, 'in an atmosphere of severity and harshness'. Throughout life, girls were given a type of education that prepared them for their role as wives and mothers; however in an atmosphere of severe discipline. Sickly or deformed children were eliminated through death or by simply throwing them away, since they would not be useful for the type of life that Sparta wanted. Although in the beginning of the state, Sparta encouraged some form of arts, music and culture as part of the education of children, these gave way almost totally to a type of education appropriate to a warrior state.

Boys in Sparta were enrolled into formations corresponding to successive age grade. These were divided into smaller units under the authority of comrades of their own age or of young officers. It was a collective education, which progressively removed them from the family and subjected them to garrison life. Everything was organised with a view to preparation for military service. Thus they were lightly clothed, had to sleep on the bare ground, and poorly fed. They were told to steal to supplement their rations, and subjected to rigorous discipline. Hardening them to blows developed their virility and combativeness. Besides, they were sent on nocturnal expeditions designed to train the future fighter in ambushes and the ruses of warfare. They were also directly apprenticed to the military craft, using arms and maneuvering in close formation. The sole norm of this puritanical education, proceeding in a climate of austerity, was the interest of the state. The Spartan was trained under a strict discipline to obey blindly the orders of his superiors. Curiously, the child was at the same time trained to lying, to theft, and to dissimulation, (i.e. to conceal one's real feelings, e.g. pretending to be happy and contented when in actual fact one was acutely sad and in discomfort). All these were virtues when directed toward the foreigner, toward whom distrust and Machiavellianism (i.e. cunning, deceit, and duplicity) were encouraged.

This type of rugged education enabled Sparta to remain for long the most powerful city, militarily and diplomatically, of the entire Greek world and to triumph over its rival Athens after the long struggle of the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC). However, this did not prevent Sparta's decadence. It was not that Sparta ever relaxed its tension. On the contrary, in the course of centuries, the rigour and ferocity were accentuated even as such behaviour became more and more unnecessary and out of date and without real use. Rites of initiation were transformed into barbarous tests of endurance, the boys undergoing flagellation and competing in enduring it, sometimes to the very death, under the eyes of tourists attracted by

the sadistic spectacle. This occurred in times of complete peace when, under the Roman Empire, Sparta was nothing but a little provincial city with neither independence nor army.

ACTIVITY II

1. For how long was the Spartan boy educated? How would you compare this with the present system in Nigeria.
2. Mention at least three aspects of the education given to the Spartan boy.
3. Do you think the Spartan people had any respect for morality as it is known in our world today? Give reasons for your view.
4. The word 'Machiavellian' should tell us much about the values cherished by the people. Consult as many history books as you can to find out about the Italian statesman called Nicholi Machiavelli and his ideas.

What is there to learn from Spartan education?

Education in Sparta promoted the city state to a position of military prominence. It was a type of education that promoted discipline, both of the body and of the mind. Citizens were brought up not to expect any life of opulence and of pleasure. In the process, the state grew in prominence and was able to dominate others. To this extent, we can say that if any country wants to make progress and achieve greatness, it has to train youths to undergo and imbibe a life of discipline and indeed some degree of severity. Even today, countries which have achieved military and/industrial greatness are known to engage their youths in a sort of training that hardens the body and the mind.

But then, there is very little to show for all the sagacity of Sparta today. While we have a lot of poems and drama pieces from ancient Rome and Athens, there is hardly any such thing from Sparta. Indeed, archaeology cannot find anything of substance from the ruins of ancient Sparta. We should learn from this that a nation that trains its citizens solely for war and for nothing else can hardly survive. Certainly, we need military greatness if our borders are to be secure against external aggression and internal dissension, but then, we need a calm atmosphere in which to settle down, think of development, inventions and manufacturing. These today are what make a truly great nation. Better a nation of thinkers and inventors than one of boxers and assassins.

ACTIVITY III

1. In summary, state the major concepts of Spartan education.
2. Why does the writer stress that this type of education is not suitable for our present world? Would you agree with him? If so, why? If not, why not?
3. From your own point of view, what type of education would you prescribe for Nigeria of the twenty-first century? Give reasons for your answer.

SUMMARY

- Spartan does not exist today as a country. Rather, it was just a city state in ancient Greece, just as other city states like Athens.
- Education in formal schools as we know it today did not exist in ancient Sparta. Rather, boys and girls were brought up to live a hardened life that prepared them for a military-like type of life. Indeed, invalids were intentionally killed or left to die since they were of no use to the state and might even be an encumbrance (an impediment, a hindrance; a burden, a useless addition) to the state.
- Life in the military dominated all aspects of Spartan life. Beside this, it did not matter if a boy grew up to be a robber. Indeed, boys were encouraged to imbibe those traits we would consider as immoral today, e.g. stealing, lying, cheating, etc.
- As a result of this highly regimented type of life, Sparta grew to become a military force among other city states. It was able to subdue all others and dominate them.
- However, this state of things did not really last, as the state experienced internal decay and fell gradually. In the end, it was destroyed in the fourth century AD.

REFERENCES

- Osokoya, I.O. (1989) **History and Policy of Nigerian Education in World Perspective**. Ibadan: AMD Publishers.
- Good, H., & J.D. Tellar (1969) **A History of Western Education**. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc.
- The CD edition of the **Encyclopedia Britannica**, Inc 1994 – 2001.

UNIT THREE: EDUCATION IN ATHENS

OBJECTIVES

1. state clearly who the Athenians were and the era in which they lived;
2. discuss the type of education they developed then;
3. analyse factors that promoted this type of education;
4. discuss what lessons we can learn from the Athenians.

BACKGROUND

Who were the Athenians?

Athens was another Greek city-states, just like Sparta. Greece as we know it today as a country did not yet exist then. Rather, small city states like Sparta, Corinth, Megara and Athens were to be found in what is today the Greek peninsula. What bound these city-states today was the common Greek language.

THE ORIGIN OF THE ATHENIAN EDUCATION

Originally, Athens was like Sparta in its approach to the education of the citizens, with a heavy orientation towards the military training. However, beginning at a date difficult to fix precisely (at the end of the 7th or during the 6th century), Athens, gradually renounced the type of education oriented towards the future duties of the soldier. This did not mean that military life was totally excluded from the life of the Athenian youth. Rather, it meant that the military no longer dominated the life of the youth. 'The Athenian citizen was always obliged, when necessary and capable, to fight for the fatherland, but the civil aspect of life and culture was predominant: armed combat was only a sport.'

This shift reflected to large extent the shift in the city towards increasing democratization. More and more, the common people were being given a say in the affairs of the state; and all free citizens would gather together at a common centre to take vital state decisions. In short, democracy as we know it today was taking shape. This trend towards democratization, although relevant to just a minority of the people, since about 90 percent of the people remained disenfranchised, meant that the Athenian culture was continually oriented towards noble life. Thus, apart from some indulgence in the elegant sports such as horsemanship and hunting, military practices were drastically played down.

Aspects of Athenian Education

Athenian education was mainly for boys, as there was no specific type of education for girls who were entrusted to their mothers for moral and domestic training. So, unlike boys, girls did not attend school as such.

For boys, however, the whole educational system was structured. There were three types of schools for boys. These were:-

- (a) the letters school for reading and writing, analogous today's primary and secondary schools;
- (b) the music school for lyric, poetry and lyre, including learning and recitation of poems;
- (c) the gymnastic school for physical training.

The foregoing did not mean that a boy would attend just one type of school and specialize in it for life; rather, what obtained was that learners attended the letters and music schools in the morning and the gymnastic school in the afternoon. Thus, it was like having different institutions for different aspect of the same curriculum. From this explanation you would see that our schools today have merely combined all these functions under the same institutions.

However, whether in a letters school, a music school or a gymnastic school, the moral aspect of education was held in high esteem. 'The Athenian ideal was that of the kalos k'agathos, the "wise and good" man. The teachers were as much preoccupied with overseeing the child's good conduct and the formation of his character as with directing his progress in the various subjects taught him.' Besides, much of the morals were learned through poetry, as the content of the poems contained a lot of the intended moral lessons. Thus it was that the poetry of two great Athenians, Solon and Homer, became standard texts in the schools. Solon's poems had much to do with statecraft while Homer's poetry concerned itself with competition and heroic exploits.

Teaching was much more difficult than, and very different from what it is today. There were no texts as such, and only the teacher had his manuscript to teach from. The teacher in most cases dictated his lessons while the pupils wrote the notes down on their wax tablets for memorization. Meanwhile, apart from the teacher, there was the *pedagogue*, a man-servant employed by each rich parent to escort the boy to and from the school, and stay around to keep him from any mischief. In case the boy was disobedient or wayward, the *pedagogue* applied the whip.

There were no distinct subjects as we know them today, but much of what we learn today was beginning to emerge and take shape. The curriculum consisted of reading, writing, music, poetry, mathematics and gymnastics. Such subjects as religion, social studies, government, etc., did not exist separately as they were taught in embedded form in writing, poetry, music, etc.

Schooling continued till the age of eighteen. Between that age and twenty years, the boys received military training, after which they were free to choose which career to specialize in. However, in most cases, the Athenian boys preferred a career in state affairs. This seemed logical enough since there were very few free educated people to start with, and since most of the students were the children of the noble who could afford such luxury as formal education.

ACTIVITY I

1. What were the factors behind Athenian preference for civil rather than military education?
2. Describe in as precise a manner as possible, the curriculum in Athenian schools.
3. Why did most boys end up in politics rather than in other careers?

THE COMING OF THE SOPHISTS

The word 'sophist' means a wise person, and is from the Greek word 'soph', meaning wisdom. Realising that the word 'philosophy' contains this word 'soph', i.e. 'wisdom', and other Greek word, 'philo'. The latter word, 'philo' means 'lover of; so the word 'philosophy' actually means 'lover of wisdom'. So, what or who were the sophists and what significant role did they play in the education of Athenians?

The Sophists were itinerant teachers, mostly from outside Athens, who went about dispensing their knowledge to whoever was it that cared to listen and pay for such. In most cases, however, these were the nobles who had the time to listen, money to pay, and the knowledge to engage such itinerant teachers in discussions. Many authorities claim that the Sophists were few, but there are evidences that they numbered more than 30. For about 70 years, they until about 380 BC, 'they were the sole source of higher education in the more advanced Greek cities. Thereafter, at least in Athens, they were largely replaced by the new philosophic schools, such as those of Plato and Socrates.'

Looking back, most authorities would tend to deride the type of education given by the Sophists, since these were like 'hungry authors' going about to sell knowledge. The exception of course is Socrates, of whom we shall learn more later, since this great philosopher did not sell his knowledge and taught out of genuine interest in the truth and knowledge. There is also the question of how these Sophists were trained, to start with. There are some evidences that some of them really underwent rigorous and genuine training, but there are also enough reasons to regard some of them as self trained and perhaps 'fake'.

As most of the Sophists were not Athenians, how come they made Athens their centre of activities? There are three major reasons for this. First, Athens served as a geographic central point, through which most of the routes passed. It was thus a commercial focal point. Second, Athens was the most liberal of the city-states, the place where you could express your views without let or hinder. In other places, trying to express an opinion might land one in trouble. Third, there were many nobles there who were prepared to listen to, and engage in philosophical arguments and pay for these.

The Sophists taught men how to speak and what arguments to use in public debate. Most people, especially youths who needed skills of public speaking, increasingly sought after a Sophistic education. This was mainly because the changing pattern of Athenian society made merely traditional attitudes in many cases to be no longer adequate. Criticizing such attitudes and replacing them by rational arguments held special attraction for the young. Plato admitted that he learned at least one thing from the Sophists: that if the older values were to be defended, it must be by reasoned argument, not by appeals to tradition and unreflecting faith.

The Sophists left an enduring mark on the education of youths. It was the Sophists, for instance, who pointed attention to the grammar of the language. They taught such items as genders, tenses, moods and the like. In short, they established the fact that the language has structure which has to be mastered in order to speak, write, and think well. Besides, they improved the study of prose and thus helped the use of rhetoric as an art of public speaking. Remember that because of the development of democracy, public speaking was getting more

and more essential to intending politicians and practitioners in the courts. Thirdly, they developed the use of logic, the science of proper reasoning. When you think of these three contributions – grammar, rhetoric, and logic – you would realize that these early lovers of wisdom perhaps deserve their name.

This is not to say that they did not delve into some other areas. Of course, they engaged in the nature of virtue (arête) and the bases of morality; in the history of society and the arts; in poetry, music, and mathematics; and also in astronomy and the physical sciences, even though individual Sophists may specialize in one area and not in the other. In general, it is the general view today that these itinerant teachers initiated a method of higher education that in range and method anticipated the modern humanistic approach.

ACTIVITY II

1. From the analysis of the words ‘philo’ and ‘soph’, try to think of some other words in modern English which have these root words. Then try to work out their meanings in the light of the explanations given.
2. Discuss factors that made the Sophists acceptable in ancient Athenian community. Suggest factors why they might not be equally acceptable to present day society.
3. Discuss the major contributions of Sophists to education.

SUMMARY

The main thrust of this unit centres on the Athenian education. In the process, we learnt that:

- The Athenian education is drastically different from that of the Spartans. For former is more liberal and oriented towards the civil society, while the latter is fashioned for the development of military life.
- Girls are mainly educated at home for roles as wives and mothers, although their training also imbibes a lot of moral upbringing.
- For boys, education lasted till the age of 18 years, after which they received military training for two years.
- They received training in three types of schools: the letters school, the music school and the gymnasium. The curriculum of course included far more than is suggested by the mere names of these schools.
- The Sophists, itinerant teachers, influenced the education of youths greatly in that they contributed to the teaching of grammar, rhetoric, logic; and in the process they helped youths to develop their skills in public speaking and thus their preparation for public life.

REFERENCES

Osokoya, I.O. (1989) **History and Policy of Nigerian Education in World Perspective.**
Ibadan: AMD Publishers.

The CD edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 1994 – 2001.

G.W. Bowersock, **Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire** (1969)

UNIT FOUR: EDUCATION IN SPARTA AND ATHENS COMPARED

OBJECTIVES

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

1. enumerate similarities and differences between the educational systems practiced in Sparta and Athens;
2. discuss the strengths and weaknesses inherent in each of the systems;
3. analyse what we can learn from each of the two systems.

BACKGROUND

It is perhaps instructive to discuss the background factors responsible for the educational system in each of the two states. We can recall that Sparta aimed at military superiority over its neighbours. The pertinent question we need to ask is 'Why was there a need for such an ambition?' We can further ask if after achieving this ambition, Sparta was much happier for it. This should be a good starting point for the present exercise.

We should also recall that the Athenian city-state was the first to steer away from an over-emphasis on military superiority and military education. The instructive question here is 'What motivated Athens to deviate from what had become the age-old philosophy of life?' We should also further ask what the consequences of this type of new orientation were. Finally, we should like to ask why, in spite of its defeat and subjugation by Sparta, it is Athens as a state that survived while Sparta the conqueror was obliterated from the face of the earth.

FUNDAMENTAL BASES FOR THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO CITY-STATES

Sparta chose the path of militarism as a way of life. Why? To start with, we should realise that it was not alone in doing this. Most other states did so because it was on that type of life that they could survive. The practice in those days was for each state to attack and conquer those they could. The conqueror could loot and plunder the conquered that were consequently turned into slaves. Life at that time was akin to 'survival of the fittest'. Doomed were those states that did not develop their military forces, in time they would be attacked, conquered, and subjugated. To a great extent, the states that survived were those that conquered others and extended their boundaries to cover areas they had defeated, making the subjugated people part of their new states. So, Sparta was not doing anything much different from what was the norm in most states.

But then Athens chose the path of civility. Why? The fact is that Athens itself was not much different from others originally. Athens chose a new path only when it had sufficiently achieved military glory for along time and thus had built up a large number of noble men who had fed fat on the returns from looted areas. The arrivals on the scene of many nobles

created a need for a peaceful epoch so as to enable them enjoy their wealth. You cannot enjoy your riches if there is an unending war. Realise too that nobles who have more slaves and attendants could have more time to think, to develop ideas. And one of the vestiges of this is thinking of governance. Thus, the seeds of democracy had been sown.

So, we had these two city states existing side by side, one believing so much in military exploits without thinking of morals, and the other believing in culture, morality, ideals, etc. Almost inevitably, there was a clash in which, after a lot of dingdong results, Athens was finally defeated. One would have thought that Sparta the victor would bestow a more enduring legacy for mankind. No, it has been the other way round. Sparta itself was later defeated by some other forces, and indeed was utterly destroyed. There was not much to learn from it since there were no moral lessons worth bequeathing to mankind. Athens, on the other hand, survived the holocaust.

The first thing we can realise about the two is that hardly can we refer to any great scholar or philosopher from Sparta today. There are no great writings, no great plays, no great poems from Sparta. On the contrary, there are countless scholars from Athens some of whom we shall be learning about in the next units. Think of poets, and there are those like Homer and Simonides; think of historians, and there are those like Thucydides and Melesias and when we think of mathematics, we reckon with people like Pythagoras and Euclid. Though some of these men may not have been Athenians as such, in most cases, they functioned as Athenians or were influenced by Athenian culture and life. Most of these men left writings or at least theories which are still cited today, almost three thousand years after they lived.

What do all these connote? It stands to reason from these that no civilization can thrive and survive for long on militarism alone. This is a sense in which we can assert that knowledge is superior to force, that the pen is mightier than the sword. Also, it shows that morality it is that can build up a nation, not lack of ideals. Robbers can thrive for a while, but their doom is certain.

ACTIVITY I

1. Why did Sparta choose the path of militarism?
2. What factors influenced Athens to deviate from militarism and choose the path of civility?
3. What were the immediate and distant results of the two different ways of life?

LESSONS FOR OUR PRESENT DAY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

Imperfect as the Spartan educational system was, it has some messages for us today. First, we need to learn that for excellence in athletics, there must be constant training and the earlier the youths are identified for such physically demanding roles, the better. For, in ancient Olympic competitions, Sparta usually defeated all other city-states, winning more than half of the laurels. Today, most families frown on letting youths fend for themselves,

whereas there may be a point in letting youths try it if only to realise that survival depends on it.

However, there are very many things we should never learn from the Spartans. Lack of morality destroys society, as it finally did Sparta. Lying, cheating, stealing, etc., are vices that should be recognised for what they are. Besides, today, we know that killing or abandoning deformed or invalid children is evil. Good a thing today that rather than destroy or throw them away, our society caress for them in special institutions, for we now realise that some disabled children are indeed very useful to society.

From Athenian education, we have learnt and can still learn a lot. To start with, the development of subject areas is indirectly owed to them. Secondly, moral education which was the centre of Athenian education has influenced our own system today. Perhaps, we still need to stress more of this since our school subjects like literature, history, government, religious studies, etc., could still contain more of moral lessons.

Besides, we need to learn to be more accommodating of other people's ideas. Recall that the Sophists who greatly influenced Athenian education were not Athenians themselves. But because they were accommodated, they contributed to the glory of Athens. We should learn to be more tolerant of others' ideas, though we need not swallow them hook, line and sinker.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to learn from the Athenians that it is only under a free atmosphere that education and civilization can thrive. An administrative system that gags the press and the school system cannot sow the seeds of growth.

ACTIVITY II

1. What lessons can we learn from the educational system in Sparta? Which should be not learned?
2. What lessons can we learn from the educational system in Athens?
3. If you are to summarise the lessons learnt from the two city-states, how would you do it in just one sentence?

SUMMARY

The main thrust of this chapter has been that:

- Force cannot build up an enduring civilisation.
- Morality is essential for the survival of any society or nation.
- Ideas are best nurtured under a free, democratic dispensation.
- A state that builds so much on militarism cannot produce great thinkers such as philosophers, writers, scientists, etc. On the other hand, these are the types of products we can expect under a civil society.