ADLT 101
Introduction to Adult Education

Session 7 – Puberty Rites and Marriage Ceremonies in Ghana

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Session Overview

Goals and Objectives

• Discuss puberty rites as it pertains in among Krobos and Akans in Ghana.

• Describe naming ceremonies among the Akans and how it promotes indigenous adult education,

• Discuss the adult educational implications of the naming ceremony among the Gas.

• Explain how marriages are contracted and organised in Ghana.
Session Outline

• Introduction
• Puberty Rites and Indigenous Adult Education
• Marriage Ceremonies and Indigenous Adult Education
• Educational implications of puberty rites and marriage ceremonies in Ghana
• Conclusion
• References
Reading List

• This week, complete the following tasks:
• Log onto the UG Sakai LMS course site: http://sakai.ug.edu.gh/XXXXXXXXXX
• Watch the Videos for Session 7 – Indigenous Adult Education
• Review Lecture Slides: Session 7 – Indigenous Adult Education

• Visit the Chat Room and discuss the Forum question for Session 7
• Complete the Individual Assignment for Session 7
Introduction

• Puberty rite is a cherished ritual performed especially for girls after their first menstruation.
• Akans call it Bragoro while the Krobos call it Dipo.
• This rite initiates a girl into womanhood with a ceremony.
• A small section of ethnic groups in the Northern parts of Ghana initiate boys into adulthood with less ceremony compared to young girls (Osei-Adu, n.d cited in Kwapong & Aggor, 2012).
• Most preserved puberty rites in Ghana are among the Krobos (dipo) in the Eastern region and Akans (bragoro) in the Ashanti region.
Dipo Puberty among the Krobos in Ghana

- Dipo means *womanhood* and its performance normally lasts for five days in April.
- It can be performed for a girl as young as five years.
- The rituals are conducted by a fetish priest who finds out whether a girl’s virginity is broken or not.
- In the affirmative, it brings shame to her family who are required to pay for the purification of the society (Ahwenkoko, 2008).
- The celebration starts with announcement on behalf of Nana Kloweki, the earth goddess.
- This is to inform parents whose daughters are ripe.
Dipo Puberty Rites among Krobos in Ghana

- The first day is called sonimouni taking the girls (dipo yi) with parts of their heads shaved and their childhood clothing removed to a ritual house.

- They are made to parade in the entire village naked (now modified), crush corn which symbolizes their initiation into cooking while the fetish priest performs certain rituals (Ahwenkoko, 2008).

- **Ke pam yemi marks the** second day where the girls undergo a ritual bath.

- The third day is **bua sira mi** girls are painted with clay solution on their bodies and made to sit on a special stool covered with a white (Marma, cited in Kwapong & Aggor, 2012).

- **The fourth day, Blemi ke yi fo**- the girls receive instructions from the priest on womanhood and they learn the klama dance.
Dipo Puberty Rites among the Krobos in Ghana (Contd.)

• On the fifth day, Mane ya mi is a day for rejoicing where the girls are dressed in rich kente cloths and expensive beads handed down from ancestors the beads symbolize the wealth and status of the girl’s family in the community (Ahwenkoko, 2008).

• There is a durbar where the girls perform the klama dance for public viewing.

• Girls who lose their virginity or get pregnant before initiated were banished (kukudipo) from their communities but this has been modified so that both the girl and boy suffer same fate (Boakye, 2009).
Bragoro Puberty Rites among the Akans in Ghana

• In the Akan society, women play major roles in the upbringing of children due to the fact that formative years of the children are spent with their mothers.

• As such, the Akan culture makes sure that women are properly trained to be good mothers to bring up children with good morals, hence place of girls initiation into womanhood in the Akan traditional setting (Osei-Adu, n.d cited in Kwapong & Aggor, 2012).

• During the performance of the puberty rites, virgin girls with their first menstruation are put under the supervision of the queen mother and some elderly women in a private place for two to three weeks.
Bragoro Puberty Rites among the Akans in Ghana

- During the seclusion period, they are taught the ways of womanhood, marriage, child bearing and caring, bathed, oiled etc.

- A grand durbar is organised, for the chiefs and elders other dignitaries in the community where they sing and dance to traditional songs, and rituals performed to make them fertile during their period of marriage (Osei-Adu, n.d cited in Kwapong & Aggor, 2012).

- It is during the durbar that would-be husbands meet their partners and every girl in Akan custom had to undergo these rites before marriage.
• Girls who got themselves pregnant or lost their virginity before the rites were both fine and ostracized from their communities. The fine was to perform rituals to purify the community (Osei-Adu, n.d cited in Kwapong & Aggor, 2012).

• Bragoro used to be very important to check teenage pregnancy in the Akan culture but, Christian transitional ceremonies such as confirmation are replacing it.
Marriage Ceremonies in Africa

• Marriage is considered as one of the most important ceremonies as it is the most central and common African culture on the continent.

• Though marriage traditions differ across Africa and cultures they yet share the same values as it enriches communities lack of it can wipe out a nation.

• The main purpose of marriage is to provide companionship, support, sexually satisfaction and above all to reproduce.
Traditional Ghanaian Marriage

The Practice of the Akans of Ghana

• Marriage ceremonies serve as a forum for indigenous adult education

• In Ghana, traditional customary marriages are conducted based on the ethnic group from which the couples come.

• This union is recognised by both the families of the man and woman after they study and consider some young people in the community to contract marriages for their children.
The Background Investigation of Akan Marriage in Ghana

- This is an important process in contracting marriage for it to large extent determines the success or failure of the relationship.
- It is only when both families are satisfied with outcomes of the investigation that they make a formal marriage proposal to the lady’s family to start preparations towards the marriage (Wreh and Kofitse, n.d cited in Kwapong & Aggor, 2012).
Performance of the Rites

- After the background investigation, the head of the man’s family, who may be his father, uncle or any respectable member of his family lead his delegation to perform the customary rites as practiced by the lady’s ethnic group.
- This is mainly called kɔkɔkɔ “door knocking” ceremony (Wreh and Kofitse, n.d cited in Kwapong & Aggor, 2012).
- On the set date, a list (pride price) is given to the man and his family to provide the items which may include undisclosed sum of money and bottles of strong drink.
- Cloth and expensive drink that contains money, for the bride’s father, a pair of sandals and money for the bride’s mother, money for the bride’s brothers or male cousins if she has no brother.
- It could also include jewellery, at least six traditional wax print, shoes and headpieces for the bride.
Performance of the Rites

• Once everything has been presented, the bride’s consent is sought before a gathering her acceptance follows prayers, and advice for a successful marriage.

• It ends with huge celebration amidst drinking, eating and dancing.
Educational Implications

• Both Dipo and Bragoro are very important in Krobo and Akan cultures as they were to ensure that the young women maintained not only their dignity but that of their families and the entire community.

• The rites also served as a way of prevention from teenage pregnancy.
Conclusion

• Naming and marriage ceremonies are held supreme among Africans, and for that matter, Ghanaians. Every effort must be made to preserve it. This certainly is a challenge for adult education.

• Adult education institutions are to work in all front to secure support of all key stakeholders to preserve this important tradition.
References
