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CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

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GUIDE**

**ECE 112  
ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION**

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- Unit 1 The Concept of Early Childhood Education
- Unit 2 The Nature and Needs of Children
- Unit 3 Historical Views of Children
- Unit 4 The Contributions of Individuals to the Improved Status of Children
- Unit 5 The Rights of Children
- Unit 6 Origin and Development of Early Childhood Education
- Unit 7 Western Education in Nigeria
- Unit 8 The Universal Primary Education (UPE) Programme in Nigeria
- Unit 9 The Development of Pre-school Education in Nigeria
- Unit 10 The National Policy on Education
- Unit 11 Early Child Care and Development Programme in Nigeria
- Unit 12 UBE and Early Childhood Education
- Unit 13 Major obstacles for the UBE
- Unit 14 Problems of Pre-primary Education in Nigeria
- Unit 15 How to Start a Pre-primary School

# **UNIT 1 THE CONCEPT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

## **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main content
  - 3.1 The Various Definitions of Childhood Education
    - 3.1.1 Definition of Childhood
    - 3.1.2 Early Childhood Education
    - 3.1.3 Primary Education
  - 3.2 The Purpose of Early Childhood Education
    - 3.2.1 Early Childhood or Pre-primary Education
    - 3.2.2 Primary Education
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References and Other Sources

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

You must have seen or probably attended some pre-school establishments which are given different names in different places. Can you mention some of those names to your classmate? You must have also learnt some things about children generally in one way or the other in some of the courses in this programme. That is good! However, you may not have learnt what early childhood education really means and why it is necessary. Therefore, you are going to learn in this unit the meaning of early childhood education and its importance.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- explain the concept of early childhood education.
- enumerate four reasons why early childhood education is necessary particularly for Nigerian children.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 The Various Definitions of Childhood Education

##### 3.1.1 Definition of Childhood

In discussing anything about childhood education, it is necessary for us to first identify a child. That is, who is a child? If we are able to do this, then it will not be difficult for us to classify children into stages namely; early, middle or later childhood.

According to the National Child Welfare Policy of 1989, a child is anybody who is 12 years or below. But this has been modified a little recently. Thus, a child in Nigeria is now considered to be anybody below the age of 18 years. This appears to agree with the United Nations age definition of a child. As you may be aware, the Nigerian law also regards anybody below the age of 18 years as a child (minor). In other words, anybody below the age of 18 years in Nigeria cannot vote or be voted for **because he/she is still a child.**

Now that we have been able to identify who is a child, let us look at the classification of the childhood period. There are three major ways of classifying childhood. These are the early childhood, the middle childhood and the later childhood. The early childhood period is generally referred to as the period from birth till about the age of five or six (Charles et al 1978). In other words, it is the period before the official primary school age in Nigeria. It means that early childhood does not go beyond the pre-school or what is popularly called **nursery school year** in Nigeria.

There is a recent development in some parts of Europe, which appears to have modified the early childhood period to about 8 years. According to some childhood organizations such as Organization Mondial Pour L'Education Pre-scolaire (OMEP), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and Early Years Education's (EYE), this period is from birth till about eight years. This means that in Nigeria, early childhood period will extend to primary three pupils and not limited only to the nursery school children. Therefore, in our discussion of early childhood education, we may not have to limit ourselves to the nursery schools. We may have to discuss both pre-primary and primary schools so as to take care of this recent development in some parts of the world. In the next section of this unit, we are going to examine the various establishments that take care of

early childhood children which we now say include children up to 8 years of age.

### 3.1.2 Early Childhood Education

We have just discussed the age of children in the early childhood stage. There are different names for the various establishments that take care of children at this stage. Such names as given by Kolawole (1989) and Maduewesi (1999) include:

**Daycare or Playgroup:** This establishment is for children below the age of three. There are many of them in urban centres in Nigeria. Working mothers use them as safe places to keep their children **while they are at work**. It can be home-based or centre-based. In the case of home-based, it may be in the child's own home, a relative's like grandparents' home or somebody's (a babysitter) home. This type of arrangement may be for profit or non-profit. When it is centre-based, it is no longer in the child's or a relative's home. It is an organized one which may also be for profit or non-profit. It may be owned by an individual, government, non-governmental organization or even a faith-based.

**Crèches:** It is for children below three years. This establishment is usually located where the mother is working. They are usually available within the campuses of tertiary institutions, hospitals, markets or big factories. For example, there is one within the Campus of the University of Ibadan and another one at the University College Hospital also in Ibadan. This is usually separated from the pre-primary and primary schools.

**Nursery School:** This is also known as pre-primary school establishment. This is usually for children between three and five years in Nigeria. The nursery schools are common in urban centres as well as small towns in Nigeria. They are owned mainly by private individuals, groups, **faith-based** and institutions.

**The Kindergarten:** This normally refers to the school for children between five and six years. That is, children who are about to enter the primary school. This implies that such children must have completed their nursery school education. However in Nigeria, people tend to take the kindergarten and the nursery schools to mean the same thing. Only a few schools actually separate them while many do not even operate the kindergarten. This is why many children proceed to the primary school at the age of five after completing their nursery education.

For the purpose of our discussion here, we shall concern ourselves with the pre-primary or pre-school children's education. This is the age

recognized in the National Policy on Education. This National Policy on Education (1998,2004, 2013) refers to pre-primary education as the education given in an educational institution to children aged 3 – 5 plus prior to their entering the primary school. In other words, we shall not be concerned much with the day care or crèche. Although, we may still have to refer to them, yet our attention will focus more on pre-primary education, **which is for children who are within the age range of three and five.**

### **3.1.3 Primary Education**

The National Policy on Education (1998, 2004,2013) refers to primary education as the education given in educational institution to children aged 6 to 11 plus. That means, children who are not up to six years are not officially expected to be in the primary school. You may now be asking why are children expected to attain a particular age before they can start primary schooling? There are some reasons for this. For instance, there is the physiological factor. That is, by the time the child is six years old, the child should have been physically strong enough to withstand the rigours of school life. The child by the age of six should also be physically strong enough to walk to and from school particularly in places where the schools are far from home without any problem to his health.

Psychologically, the child is also ready for formal learning. You should know that up till the time of entering the primary school, the child's learning has been taking place in an informal way. Therefore, the child at six years is mature enough and ready to sit down and listen to formal teaching. He can now pay attention better than the earlier years. In the same way, the child is now capable of being less dependent on the parents. He can now play with other children and is capable of doing certain things for himself. He does not need to call for help again when going to the toilet. By the time the child finishes primary six at about the age of 11 or 12 years, he is better prepared for further education at the secondary school level. As for those who cannot, for some reasons, go to secondary school, they are also prepared for non-formal education such as becoming an apprentice to master (**artisans**) **skills** such as the **tailoring, bricklaying**, etc. Have you ever seen products of primary schools learning a trade or craft in your area? Are they able to cope with it?

From this discussion on why the primary school age is fixed at 6 to 12 years, you will know that primary education is very necessary for the child. We shall discuss more about the purpose of pre-primary and primary education in the next section of this unit.



## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

- i. Identify and explain the differences among the pre-school establishments that take care of children from birth to five.
  - Your answer should include the following:
  - Day care – for children below the age of three. They are found in different places in all parts of Nigeria.
  - Creches – for children below the age of three but such establishments are located within the premises of educational institutions, companies or markets where their mothers are working.
  - Nursery — is also known as pre-primary. It is for children between 3 and 5 plus.
  - Kindergarten — for children who are 5 years old and are getting ready for the primary school level.

### **3.2 The Purpose of Early Childhood Education**

#### **3.2.1 Nursery/Pre-primary Education**

As we already discussed, pre-primary education refers to the education given to children between the age of 3 to 5 years plus in an educational institution before they enter primary schools. That is, such a place must be approved by the government as a place for the education of children between 3 and 5 years. There are many of such establishments in both urban and semi-urban towns in Nigeria. Did you attend one when you were young? Do you have your own children there? Why do you keep your children in such **an establishment**?

Well, there are many people who may not really know why children need pre-primary education. There are some women, who were interviewed a few years back on why they send their children to the nursery schools. Their answers include the following: "I send my children there because the other children of my husband are there", "because I want my children to speak good English", "because, I want the children to give me peace and time to do some other things at home, etc." These reasons given by the women might be good. However, there are many people who do not send their children to nursery schools at all. Some do not send their children because they cannot pay the high fees charged in the schools. There are others who do not send their children to nursery schools as a result of ignorance. For example, I met a man in the early 1980s who said it is a waste of time and money to send

children to nursery schools. According to the man, he did not attend a nursery school when he was young and he was still able to become a university graduate. There are many people like the women mentioned above and this man. In other words, there are many people who even send their children to the nursery schools without knowing the benefits their children can derive from the school. There are also some like that man who felt that since he has 'made it' without nursery school education, it is a luxury to send children there.

Well, I do not want to disagree with the man who said he 'made it' even without attending a nursery school. There are many Nigerians like that who have become great men and women in the various professions without attending a nursery school. I am sure if you interview all the professors in Nigerian universities today; majority of them will tell you they did not attend nursery school when they were young. That is that time; but I do not think there would be any of the professors or lecturers who will tell you he does not want his/her children to attend nursery school. Even market men and women, who in most cases are not literate, now send their children to nursery schools. So, it now appears that our people are becoming more interested in the education of their children, even at this preschool level. Most parents particularly those who are illiterates want their children to be better than themselves hence they send their children to the nursery schools.

It is now a popular thing throughout the modern world to send children to nursery schools when they are not old enough to start primary education. The pre-school establishments have therefore been recognized all over the world as good place for the children before they start primary education. There must be some very strong reasons for this. The whole world cannot just be doing something without some very strong reasons. Why then do children between the age of 3 and 5 years need pre-school/nursery education? There are many reasons. Let us examine some of them now.

In modern societies, married women are now taking up paid employment to augment family economy. This means that they are no longer full-time housewives whose main duty is to take care of the family. Besides, as you are already aware, the African extended family system whereby there are always people at home to look after the children is gradually giving way. Moreover, house helps where available are now very expensive. Even some of the house helps have become security risks hence many people do not like to have them again. Therefore, in order to ensure safety and adequate care of the children while their parents are at work, the nursery school is necessary. When children are left in the nursery school, the parents can have peace of mind and be sure that their children are not only safe, but also under the

care of experts. Therefore, for security reasons, the nursery school is a good place to keep the children when their parents are away at work.

Another important reason for having the nursery school for children is the fact that, it provides children with very good environment for socialization. There is no home, however wealthy that can provide the type of environment which nursery schools provide for the proper education of children. For example, no home can have as many as twenty or more children of the same age group. There is also no home that can provide the different experts in education as well as the live experiences, which the school can provide. Therefore, since children need a good environment for their proper social and emotional development, it has become necessary for parents to keep their children in the nursery schools.

As stated by Akinbote (2001), the ability of a child to realise his potentials depends on the type of stimulation and encouragement the child receives from home. However, as a result of the socio-economic problems in Nigeria for example, many parents can no longer provide their children the necessary stimulation which they need for their all round development. Therefore, in order to prevent anything that will reduce or prevent the child's rate of maturation and high level of achievement, the nursery school is necessary for the child. In the nursery school the child will receive the necessary opportunities which are not available at home.

There are also some children with some problems, which the parents may not actually notice or identify in their children early. The problems could be physical such as bad sight or hearing problems. It could also be emotional problems such as fear, restlessness, etc. The various experts in the nursery schools could help to detect such problem early and advice the parents on how to correct them. There are many examples of such problems that should be corrected before they get out of hand. Therefore, in order to provide children with the necessary security and care while their parents are away at work, we need the nursery schools. Also, for proper social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children, the nursery school is a must for all children in modern societies. In fact, experts in the field of early childhood education as well as brain development have emphasized that the period between 0 and 5 years is critical for all the areas of development that we have mentioned earlier including personality and character development. It is further pointed out that it might be difficult to put things right in children if proper care is not given at this period of development. Can you see that we can not neglect or ignore this level of education? As we mentioned earlier on, the importance of pre-primary/nursery education for the well being of the child has been recognized all over the world. In

Nigeria, government has realised the importance of pre-primary education hence, it has stated the purpose of this level of education in the National Policy on Education (1998) as follows:

- (a) to effect a smooth transition from home to school.
- (b) to prepare the child for the primary level of education
- (c) to provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices, etc.)
- (d) to inculcate social norms
- (e) to inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys, etc.
- (f) to develop a sense of cooperation and team-spirit
- (g) to learn good habits, especially good health habits, and
- (h) to teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc through play.

From our discussion so far, you will surely know that, it is not a luxury to send children to pre-primary schools. In fact, in some units that we shall discuss later, you will see how the love for children's welfare has led to the development of early childhood education over the years.

### **3.2.2 Primary Education**

I am very sure that many of us are familiar with primary schools. This is because we have all at one time or the other attended primary school. Some of us had our primary school education in the cities, some in the towns and some in the villages. Do you still remember what we said when we were discussing pre-primary education? We said there are many professors and other successful professional men and women in Nigeria who did not attend a pre-primary or nursery school. However, have you ever seen a professor, a doctor, lawyer, engineer, teacher or nurse who has never attended a primary school? I have never seen any of such people who have never attended a primary school. I know of some professors and many successful businessmen and women who did not attend a secondary school. They had their primary school education and with that, they started studying privately at home for their O'level and other examinations. Find out from your father, grandfather or any other old relation whether or not they ever attended a secondary school. I am sure some will say yes and some will say no, but none will tell you that they did not attend a primary school. If there is anyone of them who never attended a primary school even for three or four years and is a successful accountant, banker, sailor, etc, then he is a rare person. What we have just discussed above tell much about primary education. It is the most commonly found educational institution in all parts of the world. It is available in the developed and the developing countries, in

urban and rural areas. For example, not every town in Nigeria has a university, a polytechnic, college of education, or a technical college. There are even some small communities without a secondary school. However, in modern day Nigeria, I do not think there is any community with about 500 to 1000 people without a primary school. Why is primary education made so common in the country then? Why are governments in various parts of the world investing heavily in primary education? There must be some important reasons why this level of education is made available everywhere. Now, let us quickly have a look at some of the reasons.

### **Development of Literacy and Numeracy Skills**

The foundation for permanent literacy and numeracy is laid at the primary school. In other words, the ability to read and write and do some calculations is developed at the primary school level. You may want to say that nursery school children learn to read and write. Yes, you may be right but remember that they will still have to get to the primary school before they can become permanently literate. This means that if anyone has received good primary education and for whatever reasons, he or she cannot go further, he or she must be able to read and write well in at least a language. It could be the mother tongue or another language or both. There are many people like that in Nigeria today who with their primary education can read, write and even speak English language very well. It does not matter whether you call it standard six or primary six-certificate holder. The point is that, that person has not attended any other level of education apart from the primary school.

Therefore, primary education lays the foundation upon which all other levels of education later build. Without the primary education, I do not think it will even be possible to have other levels of education. This is why there must first be a primary school in a community before there could be a secondary or any other educational institution. Do you know a town that has a secondary school without a primary school?

### **Political and Civil Education**

A popular French philosopher named Voltaire was once quoted as asking the question – who will lead the world? He provided the answer himself by saying those who know how to read and write will lead the world. This answer is very correct because, at whatever level you are looking at it, local government, state, national and international levels, our political leaders are all literate. An illiterate person can only vote for the literate person to become his governor, senator or president. He himself cannot be one. This means that the ability to read and write which was learnt at the primary school is a very important factor to

consider in the election of our leaders. There are many communities in Nigeria today who will not allow an illiterate person to become their traditional ruler.

If we even look at the international level, the literacy level of a country is one of the factors that determine the level of progress they make. The progress could be political, social, economical and technological. When you hear that some countries are referred to as developed while others are referred to as developing or underdeveloped, one of the factors used is the literacy level of that country. In the so-called developed countries, the literacy rate is very high while in the others like Africa, it is low. In other words, there are more people who cannot read and write in the developing countries than in the developed countries.

### **Social and Economic Education**

There is a popular saying that illiteracy is a disease? Do you agree with that? Well, people say so because those who can read and write will know many things through what others have written down for them to read. On the other hand, a person who cannot read and write will not know those things even if the books are given to him. He will always depend on some other people to read and tell him what is in the book. A scholar once said that he who can not read or write will be a prey in the hand of those who can read and write. Do you agree with this submission? Perhaps you have heard about this incidence before, It was once said of a man who wanted to withdraw certain amount of money from the bank, because he could not read or write he had to asked somebody for assistance. He told the person the amount he wanted to withdraw. Do you know what that person did? He inflated the amount that the man asked him to write and made him to thumbprint. If he knew how to read and write do you think that would be possible? Moreover, an illiterate person cannot put his ideas across to other people' Have you helped your grandfather, grandmother or any other relations to write a letter before? How did he or she feel when **you finished** writing the letter?

Therefore with at least a good primary education, people will be able to read and write. This will in many ways improve their social and economic life. They can read simple information that could affect their lives, **health** and businesses. A driver with at least primary education will be able to read road signs and therefore become a better driver. Similarly, the ability to read and write will make people better farmers, tailors, carpenters, bricklayers, fishermen, cattle rearers, etc. Can you allow an illiterate bricklayer to build your house? He will find it difficult to read the plan.

### **Providing Supporting Staff**

The highest person needs the lowest person to succeed. This is another popular saying that is very true. For example, the president, governors, doctors, lawyers, judges and other highly placed people need the services of messengers, drivers, cleaners, gardeners, etc. With primary education, such junior workers will be more effective and efficient in the performance of their duties. Therefore, most government and even private establishments in recent years no longer employ these categories of workers without at least primary education.

The government has recognized the importance of primary education in Nigeria long ago. This is why that level of education has attracted much funding by the government since our independence. Primary education is the only level of education that has been free throughout the country for a long time. All other levels of education are not. The United Nations has even asked the member Nations to make primary education free and compulsory for all their citizens.

This tells much about the importance attached to this level of education all over the world. The goals of primary education as stated in the National Policy on Education are to:

- (a) inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively;
- (b) lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking
- (c) give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- (d) mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child
- (e) develop in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment
- (f) give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity;
- (g) provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Early childhood education is a very important aspect of the general education in any society. Even in traditional African societies, early childhood education is given proper attention. The fact now in modern societies is that because of their socio-economic engagements, parents no longer have enough time to stay at home and take care of their children. This is why the various educational institutions have been

established to help parents take adequate care of their children while they are away at work. Moreover, the early childhood establishments provide the type of stimulating environment, which no home, however wealthy can provide.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt the meaning of childhood and early childhood education. You have also learnt the various establishments responsible for the care of children at different ages. You have also learnt about primary education and how important it is. By now, you should be able to enumerate the various purposes served by the pre-primary and primary schools around us. In the next unit, you are going to learn the nature and needs of the child.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1.
  - (a). Who is a child?
  - (b). Identify two major differences between pre-primary education and primary education.
2. Explain four reasons why early childhood education is necessary for the Nigerian child.
3. List some of the reasons for having primary education level everywhere.



## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGSAND OTHER SOURCES**

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## **UNIT 2 THE NATURE AND NEEDS OF CHILDREN**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Nature of Children
    - 3.1.1 The Physiological Make-up
    - 3.1.2 The Sociological and Psychological Nature of Children
  - 3.2 The Needs of Children
    - 3.2.1 The Basic Needs
    - 3.2.2 The Development Tasks.
    - 3.2.3 Educational Implications of the Developmental Tasks
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Reading and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Children are the same all over the world as far as their physiological make up is concerned. Similarly, their interests, needs, growth and development patterns are the same. Therefore, majority of the differences we often observe in children are due mainly to hereditary and environmental factors. For example, the colour of the skin, shape of the nose, height, body size and weight and intelligence are all products of heredity and environment or what some people refer to as nature and nurture.

In the last unit, you have learnt the meaning of childhood, and the purpose of childhood education. In this unit, you are going to learn about the nature of children and their needs. In other words, you will learn the peculiarities of children and their special needs and how they can be met.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- describe the basic physiological make up of children.
- identify the developmental tasks for pre-primary and primary school children.

- explain the educational implications of the developmental tasks.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The Nature of Children**

##### **3.1.1 The Physiological Make-up**

The childhood period could be regarded as the most important stage in human development. First of all, it is a stage, which every adult member of the society has passed through in life. Therefore, there cannot be adulthood without childhood. As you are aware, not all children grow up to experience adulthood. This therefore makes the childhood period a unique one for everybody. The second reason why childhood can be regarded as the most important stage of development is that it lays the foundation for all other stages of human development. As the morning often shows the day, so also the childhood period shows what the adult life will look like. As people say, who we are today depends much on our development and experience as children.

As you have just read in the introduction to this unit, children are the same all over the world. The differences, which you may find is in their physical appearance, level of intelligence or even attitude, and these are due largely to hereditary and environmental factor. The birth normally follows the same procedure in all cultures of the world. In the same way, all children follow the same principles of growth and development no matter their geographical location or their family background. The only thing that may be different is their rate of growth and development. So, it is possible for children from very rich families in urban centres to be faster than their counterparts from very poor families in urban or rural areas. Why do you think that can be so? Yes, it is because the children from the rich families are given balanced diet, which keeps them growing up well. Also, they are given good care in terms of medical and other material needs. On the other hand, children from the poor families may have retarded growth because of inadequate care and balanced diet.

However, this does not mean that all of them will not pass through the same stages or process of development. As another example, all children learn to sit, crawl and walk before they can run, it is only the time of attainment that is different from one child to another. In the same way, the developments of spoken language among children start with babbling and gradually to the picking of their first words. Environmental factors may favour the rate of development of these skills in some children than others, but the fact still remains that they all follow the same pattern or process of development. Therefore, we can say that all normal children no matter their home or environmental backgrounds have the same types of organs of the body and these organs follow the

same natural process in their growth, development and functions. No child in this regard is superior or more favoured by God. All of them have the same number of eyes, ears, hands, legs, toes, fingers, heart and mouth. Anyone that has for instance three eyes or no hands will be regarded as an abnormal child.

### **3.1.2 The Sociological and Psychological Nature of Children**

You have just learnt that children are the same in their physical make up. The European child is not different from the African or the Asian children as far as the organs of the body are concerned. In the same way, children are the same in their social characteristics. Let us take an example to explain this point. Children are by nature gregarious. That is, they always like to be in the company of other children. If it is possible to bring children each from Europe, Asia and Africa to a place where they can see themselves, they will naturally walk towards each other. Even if language will initially be a problem, this will not stop them from moving very close to one another. What we are saying here is that no child likes to be alone. They all like to keep the company of other children. If you see a child that fails to move with or get closer to other children of approximately the same age, you should know that something is wrong. It is either the child is sick, hungry or angry. If they are older children, it might be due to the influence of some environmental factors such as racial discrimination, ethnicity or other negative things their parents must have 'planted' in them right from home. But if none of the above conditions exists, children will naturally want to move with other children no matter their background.

Children are by nature egocentric. That is, the child is self-centred or selfish. He is more concerned about his personal interest and needs. That is why he wants to have his way in all things **or wants everything for him or herself alone**. If for whatever reason he is not allowed to have his way, he cries. For instance, when the mother buys some biscuits, sweet or fruits from the market. You will always see the youngest trying to take possession of everything. In the same way, if a child wants to have something and the parents for some reasons say no, he does not want to listen to or hear why such a thing is denied him.

All his thinking is based on the personal desire for that thing. This is one of the general characteristics of children. However, with time and age, they gradually learn through the socialization process to be less selfish. They learn to share things with others, listen when others talk, **take turns** and cooperate with others during play. All these are learnt in the school where children from different home backgrounds interact and share things. They learn to tolerate others and from there the spirit of give and take is developed in them. Therefore, children who for one

reason or the other do not have access to school education may miss this early socialization process.

Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist has made it known to us that all children pass through the same stages of intellectual development. Although some children may be faster or slower than the other in going through the stages, yet the fact remains that all children go through the stages. Let us have a look at the stages of mental development as identified by Piaget. They are:

1. Sensorimotor period (from birth – 2 years)
2. Pre-operational period (2 – 6 years)
3. Concrete operations period (7 – 12 years)
4. Formal operations period (12 years and above)

In one of your courses on child development, you must have learnt the details about what children can do during these stages. I want you to find out more from some of the books listed at the end of this unit.

One of the characteristics of children, which we must not forget, is curiosity. That is, all children naturally want to find out things for themselves. This they do through the exploration of their environment and asking questions from people around them. Again, some children are encouraged to develop this natural tendency in them by providing them stimulating environment with different toys and other objects, which they can play with. On the other hand, there are some children who are often discouraged from asking questions from elders. In some cases, unnecessary restrictions are placed on them as a result of cultural practices and beliefs. This is peculiar to traditional African children, who were 'to be seen and not heard'. This ideology is not too good for proper development of children who are naturally curious and inquisitive. It is not surprising therefore to find some children that are very restless in their natural desire to know. Such children often develop self-confidence, self-assertion and autonomy, **if the environment is supportive**. Such children are known to be great achievers and competent individuals later in life **when the environment is made conducive and not hostile for them to develop that trait**. The point we are making here is that all children possess this important natural tendency. The environment in which the child finds himself may hinder or promote it. But the fact still remains that they will like to explore, find out things and ask many questions.

All children also like to play with water and sand. No matter their location children always want to play with these two natural materials. Why this is so, we do not know. However, some children may not have access to these materials as a result of their environment. This is why

pre-school establishments always have a corner for sand tray and water for children to play with. There are many other characteristics of children, which you can still find out on your own.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What do you think is responsible for the differences in children's physical appearance?

- i. Your answer should include:
  - (a) Heredity which determines the colour of the skin, shape of the nose, etc
  - (b) Environment, which determines whether or not the child will grow and develop well e.g. food, materials to play with, good care, etc.

## **3.2 The Needs of Children**

### **3.2.1 The Basic Needs**

As soon as the child is born, there are some needs, which must be satisfied for them to survive. Needs tend to persist throughout human lives, although, Maslow has categorized needs into higher and lower needs, yet certain basic needs have to be met first before meeting the high order needs. The child needs oxygen that is the air we breathe. This is naturally available in the environment that is free from pollution. Since the baby's respiratory organs are just starting to function independently, it is necessary to provide them with fresh air. In other words, children should not be kept in badly ventilated rooms or rooms that have been polluted in one way or the other. Anything that will hinder the effective functioning of the respiratory organs should therefore be avoided. As you are aware, any damage to the lungs can easily lead to death.

Children also need food and water. Although, the new baby cannot take solid food, yet he needs food to grow and survive. As you have learnt in one of the courses, breast-feeding is the complete natural food for the new baby. Everything the child needs to grow and develop well is supplied in adequate quantity and quality in the mothers' breast milk. This has been proved by modern medical science. Therefore, you will notice that in recent years, mothers are being discouraged from giving other things like baby food, to the child at least for the first six months of life. **I hope you have heard about exclusive breast- feeding.**

As the child grows older, the child will be introduced to adult food that is available in his cultural environment. What is important for the child is regular feeding with balanced diet. This does not need to be imported or expensive food. Majority of the local food items, fruits and vegetables contain all the essential minerals, vitamins, protein, fats and carbohydrates for the healthy growth of the child. They also need adequate in-take of good water for good health; parents should therefore do all they can to provide regular food and water for their children.

Sleep is another important need of children. It is a device by which the body regulates itself, maintains **stability and** thus preserves the individual's energy for later activity (Messen et al 1974). The length of time required for sleep depends on the age of the child. For example, a year old child spends about 12 hours of the day asleep. This usually includes about two or three naps during the day. However, the pre-school and primary school children do not require as much as 12 hours a day. The pre-school children may require at least between seven and nine hours a day while the primary school children may require between six to eight hours.

As we have mentioned above, sleep is an important and natural way by which the body is allowed to rest and regain some of the lost energy. Therefore, children should not be denied their well deserved rest and sleep. Overworking the children or reducing their hours of sleep may actually be dangerous to their health. This is why there are periods for break on the school timetable. Such breaks are used by children to relax and move about to get them refreshed for their work. They do not need to sleep during the break before they can take a rest from the mental activities **they engage in.**

It is not enough to provide children with good food and water. They need love, care, attention and protection as much as they need food and water. In fact, it is part of the love and care of children that makes **parents take** good care of them by providing their basic needs. Children need the love and care of their parents to give them the much-needed confidence and self- esteem with which they can do well in life. Staying with children at home, engaging the in conversation or discussion or taking them out to visit friends or relations means much to children's social and emotional development. It is not good to always lock the children up in the house while the parents go out to 'enjoy' themselves. Showing love and admiration for the children's good behavior or performance encourages them to do better. This could be shown by taking them to places of interest in the cities, town or other towns such as the zoological garden, waterfalls, etc. All these go a long way in helping the children to develop a wide range of experience that will aid learning in all areas of development.

Another needs that should not be denied a child are stimulating environment and play. A stimulating environment is characterized with safe and healthy objects such as toys that will give room for children to explore and make discovery, a safe and healthy space that allow for freedom of movement, provide a variety of experiences and with warmth, committed and creative caregiver to initiate the stimulating environment at all time(Kaplan-Sanoff, 2002). Play is children's work and should be allowed to engage in it. I know that you must have learnt a lot about play in one of your materials. It is a critical need for children, little wonder, it is given recognition as one of the rights of children in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) document. Have you heard about this document before? It is an international document stating the rights that must be accorded children anywhere in the world, no matter the colour, sex, ethnicity or disability. So if children are denied the opportunity to play, apart from hampering their development, it is even a violation of their rights.

Therefore, for children to have an all round development, the basic needs discussed above should be provided. The home and the school should co-operate in meeting the basic needs of children. While the parents must provide food, water and other materials needed, **with love, warmth and care, the school should also** help in giving the children love, care, assurance and protection **to compliment the home.** This will in a way support the efforts of the parents. Nigerian primary school teachers, more than other levels of education, need to make their schools conducive to learning. That is, make the school child- friendly.

### **3.2.2 Developmental Tasks**

Developmental task has been described as a task that arises at a certain period in the life of the individual. The successful achievement of such a task leads to happiness and success with later tasks for the individual. On the other hand, failure to accomplish the task leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by the society and difficulty with later tasks (Charles, et al 1978). There are stages within which the tasks can be performed.

For our discussion here, we shall concern ourselves with the pre-primary and primary school years. For the pre-primary school years, Havighurst, the originator of the developmental tasks has identified the following tasks.

- (a) **Learning sex differences and sexual modesty.** In this task, children are just learning to notice that boys at school wear different uniforms. However, they are not worried whether their dresses are up or down.



- (b) **Forming simple concepts of social and physical reality:** By the time the child is about 5+, he is beginning to move away from selfish understanding of the world to reality. This therefore makes it possible for the child to learn some of the subjects or topics taught in the school.
- (c) **Learning to relate emotionally to parents, siblings and other people.** Gradually the child now learns to give and take and cooperates with others.
- (d) **Learning to distinguish right and wrong and the development of conscience.** Although this is not yet well developed in the child, he is beginning to realise that certain things are good or bad particularly as from the age of six.

### **Primary School Children**

The developmental tasks for primary school children are as follows:

- (a) **Learning physical skills necessary for games.** By the age of nine, children become interested in organized competitive games involving special skills in catching, throwing, running, jumping and kicking among others.
- (b) **Learning to get along with mates.** Even if children often engage in verbal arguments and fighting, such disagreements or confrontations in a way help them to get along with others.
- (c) **Developing fundamental skills of reading, writing and calculating.** These are very necessary skills for subsequent learning and even their general success in modern societies. Most activities in the primary school are concentrated on the acquisition of the skills hence they are usually the means of assessing them.
- (d) **Developing conscience, morality and scale of values.** The process by which the child acquires standards and beliefs about moral behaviour is referred to as conscience. Children towards the end of this period can recognize and retain varying points of view and make value judgements about them. They can say whether certain actions or views are right or wrong.
- (e) **Developing attitudes towards social groups and institutions.** There is usually a growing awareness among school children about other people and conditions. Therefore, as a result of their growing conscience, they can judge people and institutions.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain any five of the basic needs of children

Your answer should include:

- Fresh air
- Good food and water
- Love and affection
- Care and protection
- Stimulating environment
- Play, etc.

### **3.2.3 The Educational Implications of Developmental Tasks**

#### **(a) Pre-primary School Children**

We must emphasize here that the teacher should bear in mind that children differ in their rates of development and learning. Therefore, teachers should not use the chronological age as the yardstick for assessing the child's ability to learn or perform certain tasks. Individuals must be respected and accepted as they are. They need love and attention to build some confidence in them. Their desire for autonomy, creativity and curiosity should not be thwarted through unnecessary restrictions, scolding, punishment and other inhuman treatments. As much as possible, the classroom should be neat, attractive and learner - friendly. The children must be encouraged to play with others and share things with others. Opportunities should be provided for the children to have varied learning experiences with real objects. Most of what they learn should be through play since formal teaching and learning has little place among pre-school children.

#### **(b) Primary School Children**

Primary school children generally are usually full of energy, which must be properly directed for purposeful activities. Competitive games such as football, volleyball, basketball, table tennis and athletics could be introduced. These help to develop in them the team spirit as well as self-confidence in their ability to perform. We must however be careful not to over- work them so as not to have any negative effect on their growth. When children disagree or even engage in physical fighting, we must be very understanding. With proper guidance and counselling, from the teachers, children could develop mutual respect and understanding for one another. They therefore build up the ability to get along easily with others.

As regards the development of the skills of reading, writing and calculation, teachers should realize that only interesting and purposeful activities in which children will be involved could bring about permanent literacy and numeracy. Teachers should therefore not do all

the talking in the class. He must use different methods that will involve practical activities and participation of the pupils.

In the development of conscience, we must maintain a close and affectionate relationship with the pupils. This is better than the use of force, physical punishment, severe scolding or threat in controlling the pupils. In other words, the use of techniques that can arouse unpleasant feeling in the children should be avoided. For instance, giving some instructions in moral development and personal counselling can promote high level of conscience development in the pupils than punishment. Moreover, teachers should help children to recognise the good in other people through their own examples. Children should be encouraged to have adequate and correct information about others before they form their opinion about others.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Children have the same characteristics irrespective of their races or cultures. The differences we often identify among children are in most cases due to hereditary and environmental factors. Therefore, their growth and development patterns, natural tendencies such as curiosity, creativity, gregariousness among others are common to all children. However, we should not expect all children to exhibit these characteristics in the same way and at the same time. Therefore, as a result of individual differences, we should always help the children to develop according to their own rates.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have discussed the nature and needs of children particularly at the pre-primary and primary levels of education. You learnt in the unit that children have the same characteristics and that the differences we may find in them may be due to the influence of heredity and environment. As far as the organs of the body are concerned, there is no difference. You also learnt the developmental tasks and their educational implications. In the next unit you will learn how children were treated in the past in Western Europe.

#### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Explain with examples the major factors responsible for the differences among children.
2. Identify and explain two developmental tasks each for children between the ages of 3 and 6, as well as children between 6 and 12years.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING AND OTHER SOURCES**

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## **UNIT 3 HISTORICAL VIEWS OF CHILDREN**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Status of Children in History
    - 3.1.1 Ancient Greek and Roman Period
    - 3.1.2 The Medieval and Renaissance Period
    - 3.1.3 The Reformation Period
  - 3.2 Status of Children in African History
    - 3.2.1 Traditional African Reception of Childhood
    - 3.2.2 Status of Children in Africa since the Contact with the Europeans
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Market Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Reading and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, you learnt about the nature of children and their needs. In this unit, you will learn about the status of children at various places and periods in history. That is, you will learn the general ways children were treated before modern civilisation. This will help you to compare how children were seen in the past with the present views about children.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- explain how children were treated in parts of Europe before the 17th century
- identify two factors that led to the change of attitude towards children as from the 17th century.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Status of Children in History**

##### **3.1.1 Ancient Greek and Roman Period**

There was a period in the history of the Ancient World popularly referred to as the period or era of Greek and Roman Civilization. This period which lasted from about 600 BC to about 400 A.D is regarded by historian as a period of enlightenment particularly as regards learning, art and culture. The education of children particularly those from the upper social class was highly appreciated. Despite this great awareness on almost everything during this period, the status of children in the society was not good enough (Vesta et al 1995). Even great thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle who were the first to recognise the needs for the early education of children could not do much to protect children from the evil practices of their time.

In almost all communities in Western Europe during this period, the killing of children for various reasons was very common. For example, children who were found to be unhealthy were either killed or left in the cold, open spaces or forest. The Greeks were particularly noted for not allowing sick or weak children who could not become good soldier to live. The same story is true about baby girls. Baby girls were not considered good for wars hence there was no need for them to live. The only condition that made them allow baby girls to live was for the purpose of child bearing in future. Even then, most Greek and Roman families allowed only one daughter while others were regarded as unwanted and were therefore not allowed to live (Breiner, 1990).

Those children who were lucky to be allowed to live were treated badly. Severe punishments were meted out to them and they were sexually exploited. Children were bought and sold for various purposes such as for domestic work and services in brothel where they were sexually exploited by adults. In some other instances, children were killed and burned in the foundations of public buildings or burned in mass graves as sacrifices to the gods (Vaster et al 1995) People at this time did not see anything wrong or bad in their cruelty to children. As we mentioned earlier on, great thinkers like Plato and Aristotle even defended such practices, which we in modern societies regard as evil.

Therefore, we can see that children in the ancient world were not adequately protected and catered for. Although, they were recognised as necessary in every society at least for the continuity of life, yet the attitude of the adult to children was bad. However, as we shall see in the

next sections, things started to improve as far as attitudes to children generally were concerned during the next periods of Europe history.

### **3.1.2 The Medieval and Renaissance Period**

In the last section, you learnt that the ancient people during the era of Greek and Roman civilisation did not have much concern for the well being of children. Children were not accorded much respect and dignity as human beings. As we discussed, towards the end of Greek and Roman era, things started to change, the status of children started to improve and the various forms of cruelty to them were gradually reduced.

This change in the attitude towards children during the middle ages (Medieval period) as the period between 400 AD and 1300 AD is called, could be attributed to two factors. These are the spread of Christianity and the attempt by the church to promote the new image of children. The church apart from preaching against the killing of children also helped parents of the unwanted children like the girls, the twins and the weak or sick ones. This they did by taking such children away to mission houses where they were looked after. Although the church could not provide good education during this period, yet they were able to teach reading and writing to children. The church tried during the period to change people's attitudes towards children. However, the church could not completely stop all forms of negative attitude towards children.

Therefore, children in most parts of Europe during the Middle Ages were still not treated as a class of human beings requiring special attention. They were generally considered to be small adults' once they passed the infancy stage. Thus at about the age of seven years, children were mixed with adult in the classroom. They worked and played with mature adults. In other words, there were no separate classes for children of different ages as we now have in the school system. In the same way, there was no separate place or type of work and play for children. Children who were regarded as immature adults' were made to participate in all adult activities at work, play and even religious festivals. There was no special consideration for the implications of such activities on the health and the general growth and development of the child.

You will be surprised to learn also that children during this period had no special dresses. In other words, there was nothing like children's wear as we have in modern societies. Children were made to wear adult dresses meant for men and women of various status. So, if a child was from the lower class, he or she would wear the same clothes like adult

from the lower class. It was the same thing for children from the middle or upper social classes.

From this brief account on the status of children during the Middle Ages, we could simply say that childhood, as we now know it did not exist. In other words, children were just regarded as small adults who did not deserve any special treatment or consideration in any form.

The Renaissance Period (1300AD to/600AD) witnessed an improved concern for the welfare of children. In some places such as Florence in Italy, Charitable institution known as 'fondling homes' were set up to take care of children (Vaster 1995) the children admitted into such homes included the sick, lost and unwanted children such as girls and twins. Such homes were financed mainly through donations from wealthy individuals or groups. Do we say this is the beginning of modern day motherless babies' homes or childcare centres? These fondling homes later spread to other part of Western Europe. The springing up of such homes in different places could therefore be regarded as the sign of new attitude towards the care and protection of children during this period. Most of the changes in the attitude toward the care and protection of children during this period had been attributed to the effort of some philosophers and religious people. In the next section of this unit, we shall discuss the period of reformation, which actually brought about the modern ideas and attitude towards children.

### **3.1.3 The Reformation Period**

The 17th century marked the beginning of the great and lasting changes in the attitude towards children generally in Western Europe. The activities of clergymen and some humanitarians, which we shall discuss later, encouraged the separation of children from adults. They also ensured that certain privileges and right were accorded the child. As time went on, the activities of the clergymen and humanitarians greatly changed the attitudes and orientation of not only parents but also the general public towards children generally. The reformation period saw the emergence of new Christian Protestant denominations. The Puritans led by John Calvin were very prominent because of their belief and attitude toward child rearing. They, for instance, believed that all children have the natural capacity to learn early and that parents have the great responsibility to give them the proper training. As noted by Vasta, et al. (1995), the Puritans were the first to write manuals to assist parents in the proper upbringing of their children. Their approach to the training of the child was more child friendly than those of other sects or the medieval period. For example, they believed that children should be helped and encouraged to become self reliant, independent individuals with self-control. According to them, proper guidance would prevent



children from mis-behaving and would thus eliminate the need for severe forms of punishment for children (Vasta, et al 1995). The puritan's emphasis was on the proper education of children. Their insistence on guidance rather than severe punishment of child made them the first to write books that were particularly meant for children.

This in fact could be regarded as the beginning of modern ideas of making learning relatively more interesting and easy for children. In the next unit, we shall be learning about some individuals and groups that contributed to the development of early childhood education in various ways.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Enumerate some of the way children were treated in Western Europe before 1700.

Your answer should include the following:

- Killing of unwanted children
- Killing of children as sacrifice to the gods
- Severe punishment for children
- Treating children like adults
- No special children's clothing
- Children played, worked and attended the same class with the adults.

## **3.2 Status of children in African history**

### **3.2.1 Attitude towards Children in Traditional African Societies**

Africans generally has a very warm attitude towards having children. In fact one of the major reasons as discussed in ECE 103, why Africans go into marriage is not because of love but because of their desire to have children of their own. In a study conducted by Uka, (1973.36) some of the reasons given by Nigerians for having children include:

- (i). Children are the yardsticks for assessing the success of marriage.
- (ii). They are a source of social prestige. Parents who have many children are greatly respected and are addressed by special titles.
- (iii). Children prove their **fathers' manhood and mothers' womanhood thereby removing** the stigma of barrenness.
- (iv). Children are of economic value. They are valued for their help in the farm and in the home.

- (v). They support the parents in old age. Children perpetrate the family and the family name forever etc.

The reasons given above show that Africans are very much interested in having children. They can do anything to have children and they do all they can to take good care of their children when they are young. Since children are regarded as a source of social prestige to their parents Africans usually ensure that children are given proper training right from the early childhood period. By this time to when the child is old enough to acquire a skill, he is made to acquire the necessary skill in any of the professions, trades or crafts, **especially the family trades or crafts**. This is done to ensure that children have a means of supporting themselves and also their family members later. Thus, African traditional education is very comprehensive in scope and content.

As regards the status of children in the society, the attitudes of Africans to children differ a little from the Europeans. We discussed earlier on that the Europeans before the 17th century treated children above the age of seven as little adults, thus children were made to do all things the adults were doing. We also said in that section of the unit that children were badly treated and killed for various reasons. The Africans in those days were not as wicked to children. In fact, they recognised children as children hence there were certain things children should not do. Apart from the high moral standards expected of children, Africans expected them to behave well as children and do only what the culture allowed them to do.

However, some of the African traditional practices did not give children full freedom to do what societies would allow them to do. For example, children are to be seen and not heard. That is, children should not talk where elders are talking or ask too many questions from elders. It was considered bad manners in traditional societies for children to look straight into the elders face and ask them frivolous questions or say that the elders are wrong. This however does not mean that Africans had no regard for the children's personality. Whatever restrictions were placed on the child socially on account of age could be regarded as part of the general training in good conduct. As you should know, Africans like respect for elders and those in position of authority. Therefore, in order to inculcate all these social norms and values in the child, that restriction had to be placed on him.

Mass killing of children as practised in Western Europe in the ancient times was not common in African societies. As we have already mentioned, Africans cherished the sanctity of human life. Therefore, when they had sick children, they would try all they could to save their lives rather than willingly kill them. Even when they were to make

sacrifice to the gods, they often had to look for strangers or criminals and not necessarily children. Although Africans usually preferred male to female children yet, they never involved themselves in the killing of female children. Their attitude to have as many children as possible did not allow them to destroy children. There were however certain communities where the killing of twins took place. But this does not mean that Africans generally were killing children for various reasons like the Europeans in the olden days.

During the various inter-tribal wars that took place in Africa, children and women were usually spared. The worst that could happen to them was to take them as prisoners of war. Generally speaking therefore, the African child enjoyed much love, care and protection in the traditional societies. However, we cannot say that the African child of the olden days enjoyed the types of freedom, care, love, attention and protection being advocated in modern societies. But relatively speaking they were treated better than their counterparts in Western Europe during the ancient and medieval periods.

### **3.2.2 Status of Children in Africa since the Contact with the European**

We have just discussed the status of children in the traditional African societies before their contact with Western civilization. As you have learnt in the preceding section, Africans generally had a kind and warm attitude towards children. Even if the status of children in traditional African societies cannot be compared with the modern trends, it was better than the European experience of the ancient or medieval periods.

As you have already learnt that the activities of the clergymen changed the attitude of people in Western Europe towards children. In other words, the clergymen through preaching, personal assistance to children and parents and through education gave people a new orientation about how to treat children.

The church in Nigeria also performed similar roles among different ethnic groups in the country. Although the Nigerian situation was not as bad as that of Western Europe, the missionaries made some significant impact on the life of children and Nigerians generally. You still recall that we said the killing of twins took place, in some parts of Nigeria in those days. There were some other cultural practices that could not be regarded as good in modern societies. For example, female circumcision was common in different part of Nigeria before the coming of the Christian Missionaries. There were also many superstitions and taboos which created unnecessary fears in the minds of the children.

However with the coming of the Christian Missionaries, efforts were made by them to stop such practices among Africans. For example in Nigeria, Mary Slessor worked hard to stop the killing of twins in Calabar and some other parts of Eastern Nigeria. There was also Rev. Father J. M. Coquard, a medical doctor who built a hospital in Abeokuta. There, children and adults were taken care of and educated on how to live hygienic lives. He also worked against some of the cultural practices which did not allow the people to live happy and healthy lives.

Many other missionaries worked in different parts of Africa and Nigeria in particular helping to change some of the traditional practices and beliefs that were not good. They also introduced western education which has helped greatly in improving the general care and education of children generally and girls in particular. We shall discuss this aspect of the Christian missionary activities in detail in another unit.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The present views about the attitude towards children in modern society are relatively new developments. In the past particularly during the ancient medieval periods, there was no special consideration for childhood as a special or unique stage of human development. This was particularly so in Europe. Although the situation was not as bad in Africa, yet things were not particularly very good also. It was the activities of the clergymen and some humanitarian groups that brought a change of attitude towards children. This has gradually developed into the present views that children desire protection, love, care and attention, in different parts of the world.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt the attitude of adults to children in some parts of Europe before the present civilisation. You have also learnt how children were treated in different part of Europe and Africa during those days. Finally you also learnt how some changes were brought into the way children were treated through the activities of clergy men and some humanitarian groups. In the next unit, you will learn the specific roles of the individuals in the right ways of bring up children.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Discuss the ways children were treated in some parts of Europe during the ancient and medieval periods.
2. Identify and explain two factors that led to the change of attitude towards children as from the 16th Century.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING AND OTHER SOURCES**

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## **UNIT 4 THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF INDIVIDUALS TO THE IMPROVED STATUS OF CHILDREN**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Pre-Nineteenth Century Thinkers and Reformers
    - 3.1.1 John Amos Comenius (1592— 1670)
    - 3.1.2 John Locke (1632— 1704)
    - 3.1.3 Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712— 1778)
  - 3.2 Post Nineteenth Century Thinkers and Reformers
    - 3.2.1 Jean Pestalozzi (1746— 1827)
    - 3.2.2 Fredrick Froebel (1782— 1852)
    - 3.2.3 Maria Montessori (1870— 1952)
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Reading and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The status of children has greatly improved over the years. You learnt in the last unit how the church and some humanitarians helped to improve the attitude of people to children particularly during the reformation in Western Europe. In this unit, you will learn how the reformation cleared the way for some other reformers to further help to elevate the image and status of children through their various activities, ideas and suggestions.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- identify some individuals whose ideas and writings have influenced the status of children.
- explain their individual contributions to the theory and practice of childhood education.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Pre-Nineteenth Century Thinkers and Reformers**

##### **3.1.1 John Amos Comenius (1592— 1670)**

You have learnt in the last unit that one of the Christian sects led by John Calvin played some significant roles in changing the negative attitude of people towards children. The activities of these Puritans, as they were called, also greatly influenced others in the 17th century. In other words, the 17th century witnessed the rise of some great thinkers who had strong feelings about the well-being and education of children.

One of such great men was John Amos Comenius who lived between 1592 and 1670 A. D. He was elected a Bishop in 1632 but gained popularity and recognition as a teacher. In a way, we can say that he was influenced by both his religion and the teaching profession on his stand about children and their education. He saw education as a birthright of all children. He also believed that education should help individuals to learn all things and to achieve power over these things and discipline himself. The most outstanding contributions of Comenius to the theory and practice of childhood education can be summarised as follows: -

- (a) Learning, by children should be without tears, without blows or force. That is, parents and teachers should not be using punishment in the process of teaching and learning if we want the child to develop a positive attitude towards learning. Rather, the child should be treated gently and kindly so that he can be motivated to learn with great interest and joy.
- (b) Teaching should be through all the senses and in the mother-tongue. Here, it would seem as if Comenius was making use of some of the most recent psychological theories about learning. What he suggested then and which is being vigorously pursued by child psychologists and educators now is that children should learn whatever they are learning practically. There should be no abstract presentation of ideas or principles to children. Moreover, his suggestion that children should be taught in their mother tongue has been empirically supported as the best means of making learning more meaningful to children. Similarly, research findings have shown that whatever children learn in their mother tongue is retained for a long time. That is why all children in Europe and America learn in their first language. It is only in Africa and possibly the other developing countries that children are made to learn in a foreign language (Fafunwa et al 1989).

- (c) The school should be made a house of joy for children and they should be grouped according to their stages of development. This view could be regarded as a protest against the mistakes of the ancient and medieval people's attitude towards children. What Comenius is saying here is that children should not be mixed with elders in the class and that they should be made very comfortable in the class. These are good ideas that childhood educators all over the world are trying to fully put into practice.

### **3.1.2 John Locke (1632-1704)**

This is another philosopher whose ideas have greatly influenced the theory and practice of childhood education. He was of the strong belief that all children are created equal. According to him, the mind of a new born infant was like a piece of white plain paper — a tabular rasa, which mean a blank slate (Vaster, et al 1995). Therefore, he believed that the child acquires knowledge, attitudes and values through experience. That is, it is the type of environment the child is exposed to that will make him a good or bad person. Other ideas of John Locke that have great implications for early childhood education include the following:

- (a) The function of education is to help the child to learn how to use his reason more and more in the making of decisions. Thus, according to Locke, it is useless to make or keep the child too submissive or over protected (Curtis and Boulwood, 1975). In other words, we should encourage children to be very enterprising and courageous. From our own personal experience, you must have observed that children that are not given any chance to be free and do certain things on their own hardly become good and independent minded people in future. This is possibly why Locke would not encourage too much prohibition and the use of the cane on the child. In fact, he regards such things as the evidence of laziness on the part of the teacher or parents (Curtis and Boulwood, 1975).
- (b) Play and childish activities are necessary for the child - That is to say, children should be allowed to play and do things the way they like it. They should not be given too many rules, which could make the children unhappy. In his own view when there are to be rules for children at all, they should be very few and should be within the ability of the children to keep. All these ideas of Locke should not be seen as giving too much freedom for the child. In fact, he encourages the absolute authority of parents on their children, which they can exercise in an easy, friendly and hardly noticeable way. For instance, a mere look or gesture from



the parents or teachers should make the child stop a noisy game or any other unacceptable act (Curtis and Boulwood, 1975).

- (c) Rewards and punishment-Even if Locke favoured the use of reward and punishments, he did not favour material rewards or physical punishment. According to Vaster, et al (1995), Locke believed that discipline should involve praise for appropriate behaviours and scolding for wrong behaviours.
- (d) Curiosity is natural with children hence parents and teachers should never discourage their children. This simply means that all children have the natural desire to know. Therefore, parents and teachers should do all they can to encourage and guide their children. For example, children's questions should be answered as much as possible. In some cases, they may not even want to ask questions, the parents or teachers could stimulate their curiosity by asking questions. By so doing the children may be encouraged to find out certain things.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Briefly discuss the major contributions of Comenius to the theory and practice of childhood education in modern societies

Your answer should include the following:

- learning without tears, without blows or force
- teaching should be through all the senses
- education is the birth right of the child
- the school should be made a place of joy for children
- children should be grouped according to their age or stage of development.

### **3.1.3 Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778)**

J. J. Rousseau, as he is popularly called, was a naturalist philosopher whose ideas have influenced in many ways our present understanding of the nature of children. Rousseau's views about child rearing practices are presented in his popular book, 'Emile'. In Rousseau's view, the child is naturally good and innocent. Therefore, he should be allowed to learn from his environment whatever is of interest to him. According to Rousseau, it is not wise to instruct the child formally like we do in the school. Rather, he said, children should be encouraged to learn through a process of exploration and discovery (Vaster et al 1995). Although, Rousseau's ideas could not be completely accepted, yet he has made

significant contributions to the theory and practice of childhood education. His major contributions include the following:

- (a) The child is not a miniature adult hence he should not be treated as such. You will still remember that in Western Europe during the medieval period, children were regarded as little adults. Therefore, they were dressed in adult clothing, played the same games with adults and attended the same class with adults. This wrong view of the child and the difficulties involved must have influenced Rousseau's view that children should be treated as children and not as adults. Good enough, we now have special dresses for children, as well as games, books, stories and even schools that are specially made for children.
- (b) The child's education should be based on his interest, experience and needs. This is an important departure from the medieval ways of training children. You will still remember that apart from being made to learn what adults were learning, children were also made to do things which were often not of interest to them by the elders. As you are now aware, the modern child educators and psychologists take the child's interest into consideration in either the type of material to teach and learn as well as the methods to use among other things.
- (c) Each child is a unique individual with his own interests, needs and problems.  
This is actually the basis, of the individual differences that educators talk about in their discussions of the child. This means that we should not compare children unnecessarily since every child has his or her own areas of strength and weaknesses that should be taken into consideration while teaching them. Every child should be helped to go at his or her own rate. Moreover, the teacher should respect his pupils and serve as an adviser and guide and not a dictator to them.
- (d) Learning by doing, observation and exploration are the most natural ways of learning for children. No one can dispute this great idea from Rousseau. In fact, the modern theory of learning supports the fact that children learn better, whatever they learn practically. This is why in all pre-primary and primary schools today, emphasis is now on learning by doing as against the old practice of rote learning.

## 3.2 Post Nineteenth Century Thinkers and Reformers

### 3.2.1 Jean Pestalozzi (1746-1827)

Pestalozzi was an educational reformer whose ideas as a naturalist are similar to those of Rousseau. He like Rousseau, was of the view that education of the child should be in accordance with 'Nature'. That is, it should be in line with the child's personal experiences, interests and ability (Akinpelu, 1981). His ideas about the education of the child are all clearly explained in his two books Leonard and Gertrude and how Gertrude teaches her children. We can summarise his ideas which have influenced the theory and practice of childhood education as follows (Akinbote et al 2001):

- (a) The school cannot replace the home. In other words, the home is the best place for laying the foundation for the proper all round growth and development of the child. However, since most homes cannot provide the child the necessary stimulation for this foundation, the school can come in to help. Therefore, for the school to be close to the ideal home, Pestalozzi has suggested that all school activities must be based on love, acceptance and discipline.
- (b) The teaching of anything must start from the pupils' area of interest, experience and gradually move into more difficult areas. In order for this to be effectively done in schools, he was of the strong view that specialized training is necessary for teachers. What Pestalozzi is saying here is that teaching must start from known to unknown, simple to difficult, concrete to abstract. Above all, anyone who is to teach little children effectively must be a specialist in Early Childhood Education. This is why you are now undergoing this course. You know children require special attention and methods to effectively assist them to have an all round growth and development. It is only when a teacher is very familiar with their nature, needs and interests that he can be successful with them.
- (c) The complete education must combine the hands, the brain and the heart, which he refers to as the 3Hs that is, the head, the heart and the hand. Here, the major idea of Pestalozzi is that the education of the child should combine practical activities with moral and intellectual development. Thus, as much as he was calling for vocational education, he was also very much interested in the proper moral development of the child. Therefore, according to him, the complete education must not just

take care of the intellectual development of the child. It has to be many-sided.

### **3.2.2 Fredrick Froebel (1746-1827)**

This German educator and reformer is popularly referred to as the father of the play-way method. He was greatly influenced by both Rousseau and Pestalozzi. His most important book where most of his ideals on the education of the child are written is titled, 'The Education of Man'. His deep religious background reflected in his ideas and thought about education. The major ideas and contribution of Froebel to the theory and practice of childhood education can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Education is a process of aiding the inner development or potentials of the child to unfold.. That is, the education of the child should be allowed to proceed according to his nature at their own pace and appropriate time (Akinpelu, 1981). This means that parents and teachers should not put unnecessary pressure on the child so as not to destroy his natural order of learning. As you are already aware, there are individual differences among children hence each one of them should be allowed to go on at his rate.
- (b) Learning is to be done by the child himself, through play activities. This, according to Froebel, is because play allows children to exercise their physical, emotional and intellectual qualities. Moreover, play helps them to combine attention with relaxation, purpose with independence and rule with freedom.
- (c) The teacher should not be a dictator of ideas and actions to the children. Rather, he should provide the necessary resources and in conducive environment for children to learn. This, according to Froebel, will be giving the children the freedom to choose which activities to engage in and where to explore. The teacher in Froebel's view stands as a gardener is to the plant. All he needs to do is to water the plant, apply the necessary manure and leave the rest to nature. Although, it may not be possible in the classroom situation to leave the children all alone to choose what to do or learn without some measure of guidance or control by the teacher. Nevertheless, I think the point Froebel is making here is that teachings should as much as possible give pupils freedom to do some things by themselves. The present situation in many of our child care classrooms do not give room for enough freedom for the children to explore or do things by themselves. It is mostly the teachers that would dominate the teaching process. This is contrary to Froebel's idea.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain briefly the major similarities between the educational ideas of Rousseau and Pestalozzi.

Your answer should include the following:

- They are both naturalists.
- The education of the child should be in accordance with his nature, interests and needs.
- Learning by doing

### **3.2.3 Maria Montessori (1870-1952)**

Maria Montessori was an Italian medical doctor who became a teacher by 'accident'. That is to say, she was not originally trained or intended to be a teacher. She became a teacher through her contact with the mentally retarded children she was asked to supervise in a hospital in Rome. According to her, the mental deficiency of the children presented mainly a teaching problem rather than a medical problem (Curtis and Boulwood 1975). She therefore developed some materials which she successfully used with the mentally retarded children. She later used the same materials with normal children and found the materials to be very helpful to them as well. Therefore, her teaching methods which relied much on an organized environment, freedom and individual materials among other things, is now known as the Montessori Method. We can summarise her major ideas and practices as follows (Akinbote et al 2001):

- (a) The careful organization of the child's environment and the provision of special materials designed to give him practice in activities which might otherwise be encountered in the environment just by chance.
- (b) The child's imagination is to be developed through realities and not by the use of fairy-tales and fantasy.
- (c) Learning must take place at the child's rate, and must be free from the stress of rivalry and from the false incentives of rewards and punishments.
- (d) The teacher should have a good knowledge of the nature of the learners. He is to direct, organise and guide rather than teach them.
- (e) The teacher must acquire moral alertness, patience, love and humility in order to be effective.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The status of children and the general attitude toward them started to change for the better as from the 17th Century. The reformations in the church and the development of various ideas by individuals since then have greatly influenced the process of educating the child. The uniqueness of every child with his nature interests and needs recognized by the early educators and educational reformers are still much relevant today. In fact, we can say that research efforts in the area of child psychology and education have further strengthened all the views about the personality of the child. Therefore, the child is no longer treated like an adult but as a child that he really is. Similarly, all the severe punishments and other inhuman treatments experienced by children in the medieval period are no longer encouraged in modern societies.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt the contributions of six different thinkers and educational reformers to childhood education. You have learnt that children should be regarded as unique individuals with their own independent minds, interests, and needs. Similarly, you have learnt that learning by children should be without tears, blows or force and that they should be actively involved in the teaching and learning process. That is to say, children should be allowed to learn by doing and should be made to enjoy themselves when learning. In the next unit, you will learn more about child's rights in modern societies.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Mention six thinkers and educational reformers whose ideas have influenced the theory and practice of early childhood education since the 17th century.
2. Enumerate what you consider to be the two most important contributions of any three of the educational reformers to childhood education.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING AND OTHER SOURCES**

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## **UNIT 5 THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 United Nations Organization's Declaration
    - 3.1.1 The right to special care if physically or mentally challenged
    - 3.1.2 The right to free education and to learn to be a useful member of the society
    - 3.1.3 The right to develop his abilities and enjoy full opportunity for play and recreation
  - 3.2 Nigeria Laws and the child
    - 3.2.1 Freedom of expression
    - 3.2.2 Right to dignity of human person
    - 3.2.3 Right to life and development
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Reading and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, you learnt the contribution of six different thinkers and educational reformers to the theory and practice of childhood education since the 17th century. In this unit, you are going to learn about the rights of the child as recognized by the United Nations and the Nigerian laws. From these rights of the child, you will be able to identify the different ways through which the interest and needs of the child are being recognized and protected in Nigeria. You will also be able to see the ways some of the rights of children are being violated in Nigeria.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit you should be able to:

- enumerate some of the educational and civil rights of the Nigerian child.
- explain how the rights of the child are being implemented in Nigeria.
- identify the ways the rights of children are being violated.



### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 The United Nations Organization's Declarations on the Rights of the Child

There are certain rights that have been agreed upon internationally for children. The essence of which is to accord a child the proper treatment s/he deserves anywhere in the world whatever be the race, religion or disability. The document that contains these rights is known as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Many nations in the world signed into this document including our country Nigeria. We will now look at the rights one by one.

##### 3.1.1 The Right to Special Care if Handicapped

In our discussion of the status of children in the ancient and medieval Europe, we mentioned how unwanted children were killed. That is, some children who were either found to be unhealthy, deformed or those who were weak were killed. You remember that even in a particular part of Nigeria, twins were also killed. We also discussed that as from the 17th century, things started to improve as far as the attitudes toward children were concerned. What started in the 17th century through the activities of some clergy men and humanitarian groups, have now become an international affair. In November 1959, the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization (UNO) adopted some declarations on the rights of children. Nigeria endorsed the declarations in 1990 (Amafah, et al.1990). One of the declarations is the right of the child to special care if handicapped. What this means is that no child should be left uncared for as a result of his or her deformity. As you must be aware, nobody likes to have a blind, deaf, dumb, mentally retarded or even a lame child. This may be due to the problem which such children bring to their parents. Therefore, those who do not like to kill them as it was done in the past now hide them at home or allow them to go out and become beggars. **Apart from this, even other people in the society also looked down on persons with deformity, that is, they were stigmatized and denied things that could make life bearable to them.** It is in an attempt to stop these bad attitudes towards the physically or mentally challenged children that the UN has declared that the physically or mentally challenged has the right to be properly taken care of like the normal children.

So in all members' nations of the UN, efforts are being made in various ways to take good care of such children. Here in Nigerian, there are many homes, school or centres for the various categories of handicapped children. Have you heard of any such homes? At these centres, such children are taught to read and write by their specially trained teachers.

In addition, to being able to read and write, some of them also had to further education at the secondary and post secondary levels. There are many blind boys and girls who are now university graduates as a result of this international interest in their welfare. There are some universities in Nigerian today with Department of Special Education, where teachers for physically or mentally challenged are specially trained. Can you mention some the universities with the department of special education? Are you aware also that there is a College of Education (special) which trains teachers for the physically or mentally challenged? Where is that college located in Nigeria? So also in some of the homes, the children are exposed to different vocational training so that they can be self-reliant instead of going about begging.

### **3.1.2 The Right to Free Education**

This is one of the UN declarations on the rights of the child. Do you still remember that one of the great thinkers and educational reformers we discussed in the last unit called for free education of children? Yes. Comenius who lived between (1592 and 1670 A.D) said education is the birth right of the child. In other words no child should be denied access to education for whatever reason.

The non- implementation of the right of the child to education as once suggested by Comenius in different parts of the world must have forced the UN to make the declaration. Many countries, of the world including Nigeria are now providing free primary education to all children of school age. In some countries, including Nigeria it is even an offence for parents not to send their children to school. This is to ensure that all children enjoy their right to be educated no matter their socio-economic background, sex or even their disabilities. In Nigeria, the free education formally enjoyed only by primary school pupils has been extended to the junior secondary school level under the new UBE program. Unfortunately however, many Nigerian children are still being denied their right to free education as a result of many reasons.

Can you give some of the reasons?

### **3.1.3 The Right to Develop his Abilities**

As you must be aware, there are individual differences including abilities among children. However, right from the ancient times, some children have been denied their right to develop their special gifts and abilities. For example, in ancient Greek, only children who were found to be physically fit were considered good enough to live and receive special military training. Even in modern societies, many children who cannot gain much from formal education are usually regarded as useless.

Children are not given the necessary encouragement to be the best of whatever they are. Some class teachers were in the past fond of calling boys and girls who could not do well in mathematics and English Language as ‘the never do wells who should drop out of school’. We thank God that as a result of this UN declaration, there are now different levels of educational institutions and vocational training centres to cater for the different interest and abilities of children. You should be able to mention some people either in your town, state or country who did not attend or complete secondary school education but are successful in certain trades or crafts? There are many musician, footballers, boxers, carpenters etc. who are known all over the world to day but who were not good in class work in the past. So these rights of the children and many more which you can still find out on your own have gone a long way in protecting the rights, interest and needs of children all over the world.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Identify and explain how any three of the rights of children as declared by the UNO are being violated in Nigeria.

Your answer should include the following:

The right to special care if physically or mentally challenged is being violated in Nigeria by parents who still keep such children at home or ask them to beg in the street while some parents refuse to send their physically or mentally challenged children to special schools designed for such children.

## **3.2 Nigerian Laws and the Child**

### **3.2.1 Freedom of Expression**

The 1999 Nigerian constitution has indicated clearly the rights of every Nigerian citizen including the child. Therefore in this second section of this unit, we shall briefly discuss some of the constitutional rights of children in the country.

In one of the courses, we discussed the position of the child in the traditional African societies. There, you were told that tradition does not allow the African child to talk here or when elders are talking. In other words, children should only be seen but not heard. Therefore whatever ideas or views children had were not allowed to be publicly made by them. The situation as we discussed in that unit was so bad that children were not even allowed to ask ‘frivolous’ questions from their parents at home. The only time when children were allowed to ask moderately reasonable question were during the moon light stories often told by

elders. Such questions when allowed at all were often too limited to make the personal views of the children known.

The Nigerian constitution however recognises the right of the child to freedom of expression. That means the child is free to hold his own opinion, receive information and express his own ideas on any issues without any interference. In the same way, the child's views, thought, and conscience are recognised by the constitution of our country. Even if the parents or guardians have the power to direct their children in the exercise of these rights, that fact still remains that they have the freedom to exercise them. In other words, parental control over their children does not mean that the children do not have the constitutional freedom to exercise their rights. So, you can see now that the struggle for children's freedom of expression, thought and conscience which started in the 17th century is now fully recognised by law. This is not saying however that all is well with children generally in Nigeria and in other parts of the world.

### **3.2.2 Right to Dignity of Human Person**

Apart from the ancient or medieval periods, there are many people in different parts of the world including Nigeria who still treat the child badly. You must have heard or read the news about some Nigerians who often inflict serious bodily injuries on children. Sometimes, this is done by the parents of the children themselves or by their guardians or those who employed them as house helps. Some people make children to work too much or carry very heavy loads and walk long distances. You must have been seeing some children selling pure water, bread, biscuit and other things on the major roads. In most cases, the children are forced to do all these things by their parents or guardians. The Nigerian constitution however grants the right to dignity of human person to the child like all other citizens. In the relevant portions of the constitution, it is stated accordingly that:

- (a) The child shall not be subject to any form of torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment
- (b) The child shall not be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.

Although the law prescribes punishments for anyone who violates the children's right to the dignity of their human person, many people still do it. The cases of corporal punishment and sometimes using blade or knife to make marks on the child's body are still common. People do all these things probably as a result of ignorance of the law or they are just wicked. In some cases, the culture allows such practices to some extent.

Whatever the reason, it should stop. If some people who violate the right of children are arrested, tried and punished accordingly by the court, it will stop. Teachers who inflict corporal punishment on their pupils in schools should also be aware that the Law does not cover them.

There have been cases of pupils taking their teachers to court through their parents. You must have heard the case of a pupil in Kwara State who successfully sued a teacher and the Kwara State Teaching Service Commission over the violation of the right to dignity of his person. The child had an eye injury as a result of corporal punishment on the pupil by the teacher. The pupil was awarded thousands of Naira as damages by the court. Do you usually punish your pupils in the school? Then you should be careful in the way you do it so that you will not find yourself in court.

### **3.2.3 The Right to Life and Development**

The Nigerian constitution also guarantees the right of the child to life, survival and development. In other words, once a child is born either in the hospital or home, the constitution protects him. The parent or anybody else has no right to kill him for whatever reason. Similarly, nothing should be done to deprive the child all things that could ensure survival or proper development.

For example, parents must not kill any of their children who is physically or mentally challenged in any form. In the past, some parents used to privately kill and burn children that were found to be physically or mentally challenged. This was often done to save the parents the trouble of having to carry such children up and down for care or treatment. The shame and disgrace of having such children have also led to their killing. As you have learnt in one of the earlier units, this killing of children is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. It happened to physically or mentally challenged also in Europe during the ancient and medieval times. However, just as Nigerian Laws go against the killing of children for whatever reason, the laws of those European countries equally guaranteed the child's right to life.

Although we often hear about cases of abandoned children in Nigeria, we have not been hearing of cases of parents killing their physically or mentally challenged children. You probably must have heard or read from the newspaper sometimes ago that the police were looking for the mother of an abandoned baby. This shows that such mothers who want to deprive children of their rights to life and development could be prosecuted if they are caught. You may say that such mothers did not actually kill their children hence they should not be punished. The fact remains that they have deprived such children of their right to survival

and proper development if not that such children were found before died. By throwing babies away either in to the toilet, well, bush or uncompleted building, their right to survival and development have been violated. Anything could happen to such children. Those who are lucky to be picked up among such children by good and kind people cannot in any way receive the natural love and affection which a child enjoys from the mother.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The world has come a long way to ensure that the rights of the child are recognized and respected. United Nations Organisation and many individual countries have made some declarations and constitutional provisions on the rights of the child. Various policies and programmes have been put in place to ensure the implementation of all such declarations and laws on the rights of children. Significant progress has therefore been made in different parts of the world including Nigeria in ensuring the protection of the rights of children.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this lecture, you have learnt some of the rights of children as guaranteed by the United Nations declarations which many member countries including Nigeria have signed or ratified. In the same way, you have learnt some of the fundamental rights of children in Nigerian as guaranteed by the constitutional provision and other laws in the country. However, despite all these constitutional provisions, many people in Nigeria still violate the rights of children. Can you mention any act of violation of children's rights that you have seen or heard?

In the next unit, you will learn how what we now refer to as early childhood or pre- primary education originated. What you have learnt so far on the child has prepared the ground for the introduction of pre— school education in different parts of the world.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Identify five rights of the Nigerian child
2.
  - (a) Explain how the right of the child are being violated in Nigeria
  - (b) How can we stop the violation of the right of children in Nigeria?

## **7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING OTHER SOURCES**

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## **UNIT 6 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Origin of Ike-school education
    - 3.1.1 The Ancient times
    - 3.1.2 Modern Europe
  - 3.2 The Development of Pre- school Education in Britain
    - 3.2.1 The Dane school and others
    - 3.2.2 Pre-school Education since 1900
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Reading and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The previous units in this course have provided you with the general background information about the child and his education. The attitudes of people towards children in different places and at different times in history were discussed in those units. We have also discussed how some individuals and groups took up the courage to press for the recognition of children as individuals with separate minds, interests, needs, rights and conscience. The declarations of children's rights by the UNO and the constitutional provisions on the rights of children have also been discussed with you. Therefore, in this unit we shall start discussing how the pre- school establishment started at different times and places in Europe. It is really going to be an interesting experience for you to find out the origin of pre- school education.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this chapter carefully, you should be able to:

- described the Pre- school education in ancient times.
- enumerate the roles of individuals or groups in the development of pre- school education in Britain.



## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Origin of Pre-school Education**

#### **3.1.1 The Ancient Times**

Plato is widely recognized as the first person to classify education into the formal levels as we now have them in modern societies. The educational levels by Plato as recorded by Akinpelu, (1981:31) are:

- (a) Nursery/Kindergarten for children aged 3-6 years
- (b) Elementary (Primary) level for children aged 7-10 years
- (c) Secondary level for children aged 11-17 years
- (d) Higher education for Adults Aged 20-35 years

Our concern will be for the first level which is the pre-school or Nursery school level. One thing that is very important for us to appreciate about Plato, who lived between 427-248 BC, is his great ideas about how and why children between three and five years should be educated. According to Plato, this level of education should be developed to play and games. He was of the opinion that the process of education should start as early as possible. This, according to him, is because it is during the childhood period that any impression which one may wish to communicate is easily stamped and taken. In other words, the childhood period is the stage when we can start to give the necessary training for an all-round development of the child. We should not wait till the child has become an adolescent or an adult before we start his education. Why? You know, it will be very difficult for example to start teaching an adult how to read and write. Plato also suggested that children should be taught by specially trained teachers and not just anybody as it was done during his time.

Another important contribution of Plato to the development of early childhood education is in the area of learning environment. He strongly believed that we should surround the child with beautiful things and the right kind of environment. That is to say, we must place the child among those things, places or people which are like what we want him to become. This shows that Plato realized that children always like to imitate people or things around them. Therefore, if we do not want them to imitate bad things, we must expose them only to good and desirable things, attitudes and values. We must also appreciate the fact that Plato brought in these good ideas on early childhood education at a time when education was not well coordinated and people were just doing whatever they thought was good for them. Thus, Plato's ideas marked the beginning of the formal school system, a formal curriculum that we are now very familiar with (Akinpelu 1981).

From this brief discussion on the development of early childhood education, you will realize that the education of children has for a long time been attracting the attention and interest of people right from the ancient times. Although various forms of cruelty were meted to children during this period, yet there were people who could still think about how best to educate them. We shall now see the beginning of early childhood education in modern Europe.

### **3.1.2 Modern Europe**

In one of the earlier units, you have learnt how children were treated in the middle ages. You have also learnt about the activities of groups and individuals who influenced the general change in attitude towards children. You will still recall how children were to do things like adults as from the age seven years. In other words, they worked, played and even discussed like adults. There was no special school for them as children and adults were taught together in the same class. However as from the 17th century, particularly during the reformation, men and women were inspired by religious or humanitarian feelings to protect and defend the life and rights of children. Through great people such as John Calvin and the Puritans, a comprehensive model of child development was provided. As you learnt, the puritan under the Leadership of Calvin took child-rearing practices seriously. They believed that children have the capacity for learning at an early age and that they could be helped to become independent and self-reliant individuals (Vasta 1995).

Similarly, people like John Comenius, John Locke, Rousseau, Froebel and Maria Montessori all contributed greatly to the development of early childhood education. If you can quickly go through your unit four of this course, you will see the various contributions of each of these people in early childhood education in Europe.

From their individual contributions, childhood education has been generally accepted as a desirable thing for children in all parts of the world. Moreover, the international community has now risen up to the task of protecting children from all forms of deprivation, abuse and inhuman treatment. As you have learnt in unit five, the United Nations Organisation (UNO) has adopted certain declarations on the rights of children. Nigeria as a member of the UNO has endorsed the declaration like others. In addition to this, various countries of the world now have laws which protect the rights of the child. The countries in Western Europe and North America are in the forefront in the call for the eradication of all forms of child abuse.

In different parts, of Western Europe and North America, there are now various programmes initiated by government to ensure the proper growth and development of children. Moreover, there are guidelines, which are strictly enforced in the establishment and management of pre - primary schools. We shall discuss more about such activities in the other units or sections of this course.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

- i.
  - (a) Identify the different levels of Education as suggested by Plato.
  - (b) Why did Plato say that the Education of children should start early in life?
- Your answer should include the following:
  - (a) Nursery education 3-6 years
    - Primary Education 7-10 years
    - Secondary education 11-17 years
    - Higher education 20-35 years
  - (b) So that we can make lasting impression on the child
    - Children easily learn during this period
    - They always imitate people around
    - We should surround them with good and decent things or people to Imitate early in life

## **3.2 Pre-school Education in Britain Before 1900**

### **3.2.1 The Dane schools and others**

There is an important fact about pre- school education in Britain which we must discuss before we can go on. This has to do with school for children under- five years. Until the beginning of the 20th century, there was no separate school for children below the age of six years. Provisions for them were included in primary schools. The only exceptions were the four schools set up by the theories and examples of Pestalozzi and Froebel (Kent 1972).

This however does not mean there were no places where children were looked after. As we have already said, some individuals and groups started the struggle for the proper care of children. One of such places where children were looked after in Britain before the 20th century was the Dane schools. The schools according to Maduewesi (1999) were no

more than child minding establishments. Some old women, who on humanitarian grounds were running the centres as places to keep children safe while their parents, were away.

Another group that made great efforts in the provision of preschool establishments for children in Britain during this time was the Sunday school movement under the leadership of Robert Raikes. The first school by the group was established in 1780 to cater for children who worked in factories from morning till evening for about six or seven days a week. This education was given to them during their free time at work. By 1803, the number of schools under the Sunday school union had risen to 7,000 with 850,000 pupils of all ages from three upwards (Kent, 1972 P.21). Another person who made efforts in the provision of pre-school education during the period was Robert Owen. He was a socialist who believed that environment entirely determined character and personality. He started an infant school in New Lanark in 1816. His method of teaching was based on securing children's attention through interesting activities and not the rod. Later, one of Owen's assistant, James Buchanan established the first infant school in London with about 150 children (Kent 1972). The Infant school society, which was later formed, was a result of the growing interest in Owen's educational ideas started schools for two to six years old children in different parts of England.

Others who were involved in the development of pre- school education during the period under review include Dr Charles Mayo and his sister Elizabeth who in addition to establishing infant schools also trained teachers for the infant schools. We can not but mention the contribution of Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell who organised what they referred to as monitorial system. Older children were used as helpers for teachers. They were taught by teachers and they would deliver the lessons they were taught to smaller group of children. As we discussed earlier on, these individuals and groups who were responsible for the establishment of what could be regarded as real infant schools were motivated by people like Pestalozzi and Froebel. You will still remember that these great childhood educators were particular about the use of play as the best means for making children realize their full potentials if properly used. The expansion of pre-school establishments in Britain even in 20th century was based on the effectiveness of the ideas of these and other childhood educators. We shall say more about them in the other sections of this unit.

### **3.2.2 Pre- School Education Since 1900**

The period between 1870 and 1900 was very significant in the development of pre- primary education in Britain. The education Acts of

1870 and 1880 stipulated the official school age at five. The schools which had separate floors for infants junior and old children were well patronized. By 1870 about a quarter of all the five years old were in school (Kent 1971). This marked the new beginning for early childhood education in Britain. By 1900 the public elementary schools and the private Nursery schools were admitting the three and five year olds hence the high increase in the number of such children in school. As you could expect, the large number of children created problems in the schools. The teacher/pupils ratio was as high as 1 to 6 in some schools for infant classes. This therefore rendered the teachers ineffective with the children rarely having any benefit from the system.

Therefore, as from 1905, the public schools started rejecting the pre-school children. As expected, the population of under five children in schools dropped. However, the policy of not allowing pre-school children in public primary schools gave rise to the establishment of private nursery schools as they were from then called. The Hardow report 1933 that most children would benefit from nursery education and that a nursery school could be of benefit to the primary school had great influence on the popularity of nursery education in Britain ever since. Although the report did not make nursery schooling compulsory, yet, it provided the necessary motivation for all those who are concerned with the education and welfare of children to take it more seriously.

Although there was not much attention given to pre-school establishment during the war, (1939-1945), by the government, yet government did not mean to destroy it. Many associations were formed which actually intensified the campaign for nursery school education. The efforts of the various associations such as the pre-school, Playgroup Association, the National Campaign for Nursery Education among others actually encouraged the establishment of as many 7000-play groups by 1971 (Meduewesi 1999).

It must be emphasized here that since the formation of the various associations for the promotion, of nursery school education, there has been a great awareness on the part of the people on the benefit of pre-school education. Thus, there has been a great demand for nursery education. The modern Socio — economic engagements of parents in modern societies, coupled with the number of immigrants into Britain must have somehow been responsible for the ever increasing demand for nursery school education.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The development, of pre-school education has come a long way in Britain to become very popular. From the ancient ideas of Plato to those

of Calvin, Comenius, Lock, Rousseau Froebel and Montessori, the child has been accepted as a unique individual who can be educated. In Britain, the activities of individuals and associations have helped in making the Pre- school establishment very popular Government regulations from time to time have been issued to ensure that children are given the necessary health care and education in the nursery schools. There has for a long time been a high demand for nursery education in Britain as a result of the high level of awareness on the benefits of nursery school education to the child, by the parents, and invariably the society.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt how Plato who lived many centuries before the birth of Christ categorized education into the formal levels which we are still operating today. His ideas about why and how children should be educated early are still very valid today. Similarly, you have learnt how individuals in Europe helped through their ideas about how children should be educated to influence the teaching and learning activities in Nursery school. You also learnt in this unit how the various nursery school associations have helped to increase peoples awareness on the importance of nursery education in Britain. In the next unit we are going to discuss the origin of Western education in Nigeria.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Explain briefly why and how Plato said the education of the child should start early.
2. Enumerate the roles of two individuals or groups in the development of nursery

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING AND OTHER SOURCES**

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## **UNIT 7 WESTERN EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Missionary Efforts
    - 3.1.1 The First Missionary Efforts
    - 3.1.2 The Second Missionary Efforts
    - 3.1.3 The Colonial Administration's Intervention
  - 3.2 The Regionalisation of Education
    - 3.2.1 The Pre-independence Era
    - 3.2.2 The Post independence Era
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Reading and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, we discussed the development of early childhood education in Western Europe. We specifically discussed how preschool education started with Plato's classification of education into the formal levels as we now know it. We also discussed how pre-school education started in Britain through the activities of some individuals and groups. In this unit we are going to discuss how Western formal education was introduced into Nigeria. It is necessary for you to be familiar with the historical background of schooling in Nigeria. This will make our discussion of the development of pre-primary education in Nigeria clearer and more meaningful to you.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit carefully you should be able to:

- explain why the first attempt at introducing Western education in Nigeria failed.
- explain how western education was eventually introduced into Nigeria.
- identify factors that led to the expansion of primary education in Nigeria right from the missionary era to the post independence era.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The Missionary Efforts**

##### **3.1.1 The First Missionary Effort**

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to visit some parts of the present day Nigeria in the 15th Century. They came mainly for business activities which took them to Lagos, Warri and Benin City. It was through the Portuguese traders that the first Christian missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church started the first school in Benin in 1515. They established a school in the palace of the Oba of Benin mainly for his sons and those of his chiefs who had already become Christians.

Meanwhile, the Portuguese traders were carrying on with their business activities which included the slave trade along the coast of Nigeria. They visited Lagos and Warri in the process. In fact, Lagos became an important trading post for the Portuguese. We must not forget that the traders were always followed by the missionaries. That is, the missionaries needed some form of protection from their fellow countrymen who were mainly here to do business, so through the help of the Portuguese traders, some of the Roman Catholic Missionaries who had settled on an Island, called Sao Tome came to Warri where they established schools.

However, the activities of the slave traders and raiders along the cost of West Africa during the time actually disturbed the work of the missionaries. As Fafunwa, (1991) has rightly put it, the influence of the Catholic missionaries was almost wiped out as a result of the slave trade. Therefore, we can say that, the first missionary effort at introducing western education into Nigeria was not successful because of the slave trade. However, what the Roman Catholic Missionaries could not successfully do in the 15th Century that is, to permanently plant western education in Nigeria, was done in the 19th century by another group of missionaries, this time from England. We shall discuss this fully in the next section.

##### **3.1.2 The Second Missionary Effort**

You have just learnt that the first set of European traders in Nigeria were the Portuguese. It was through them that their fellow countrymen who were Roman Catholic Missionaries (RCM) also came to Nigeria. In other words, this first, contact of Nigerian with missionaries was with the Portuguese and not the English speaking people.



The Second Coming of the Christian Missionaries was however led by the English-speaking missionaries. They came at a time when the slave trade had been abolished. In other words, there was no more slave trade when the English-speaking Missionaries came in the 19th Century. After the slave trade had been stopped, all the ships carrying slaves on the West African coast were arrested and the slaves set free. However, because of the difficulty of tracing their home towns, and to avoid other problems, the free slaves were settled in Freetown, Sierra Leone. There they received western education and many of them became Christians. Do you still remember Bishop Ajayi Crowther? He was one of the freed slaves who were settled in Free Town. So, like Ajayi Crowther, many other Nigerians who were also freed slaves, went to school in Sierra Leone and later became catechist, teachers and traders.

Some of the freed slaves who became traders came to Lagos and Badagry on business trips where they met some of their relations. You will still recall that Lagos and Badagry were the major ports where slaves from the hinter land were shipped to Europe and America. Among these freed Nigerians who returned from Sierra Leone some came to settle in Badagry in 1840. By 1841, they asked some of the missionaries in Sierra Leone to come down to Badagry. They wanted the missionaries to help and preach the Gospel to their fellow Africans who did not know Christ then.

The request of the ex-slaves for missionaries to be sent to them in Badagry was eventually granted. Revd. Thomas Birch Freeman and other missionaries came to Badagry in 1842 while Henry Townsend and some other Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) missionaries arrived at Abeokuta early in 1843. One of the missionaries who came to Badagry with Rev. Thomas Freeman remained there while Freeman left for other places. So, the first school in Badagry was established by the Missionary and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. de Graft in 1842.

The school in Badagry opened the door for other schools to be established in other parts of the country particularly in the south by the various missionary bodies. For example, the CMS established two schools in Abeokuta, in 1846. Other Missions such as the Church of Scotland, the Baptist, the Catholic, the Qua Ibo e.t.c. established schools in Calabar, Lagos and other places in the South between 1842 and 1892. The missionaries established schools mainly for the purpose of spreading Christianity. In fact, it could not have been easy for them to spread Christianity without the school. So, as soon as the missionaries arrived at a place, they would first establish a mission house which in most cases served as the school and the church. Each of the Missionary bodies such as the Methodist, C.M.S, RCM, Baptists, Presbyterians, Qua

Ibo and others tried to outdo the others in their desire to win more converts.

The school served as the means for converting the people hence all the missions struggled to establish a school in each station. The school curriculum was prepared by each mission hence there was no uniform curriculum for all the schools. However, all of them taught Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Religion as the core subjects.

As we mentioned earlier on, the early schools took off within the mission houses. However, as the number of pupils increased, separate classrooms were built within the church premises. This is why you will still find most of the oldest schools in each town or village within the church premises. The funding of the early schools in Nigeria was done by the various missions with support from their home missions and friends. This means the schools were free then. Why did they make the schools free? Well, this was the time when the missionaries were begging the parents to send their children to school. Therefore, it could have been impossible to get such children released by their parents if they were asked to pay. In fact, some missionary teachers even requested their mission to pay some little amount to the school children were living as home. The idea of Boarding school started with the early missionaries who for various reasons preferred children to live with them (Fafunwa 1991).

English language was the medium of instruction during the early stages of school education. This was so because the missionaries did not understand the local African languages. So, the ability to speak the white man's language by the children who attended the schools probably encouraged other reluctant parents to send their own children to the mission schools. Above all, some of the good children were sent to England for further training either in the various vocational courses or full pastoral work.

The Missionaries were in full control of education in Nigeria up till 1882. That is, colonial administration at that time was more concerned with other things than the education of Africans. This therefore gave the missionaries the full opportunity of using their schools to win more converts. It was rare in those days for a child to attend the mission school without becoming a member of that particular Christian denomination that owned the school. As time went on, the colonial administration started developing some interesting in what goes on in the mission schools. The reason for this we shall discuss in the next section of this unit.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Mention three towns in Nigeria that were first visited by any white man.

- (a) Why did the Portuguese visit the towns?

Your answer should include the following:

- (b) The Portuguese were the first European to visit Lagos, Benin and Warri in 15th Century.  
(c) For trading and missionary work.

### **3.1.3 The Colonial Administration's Intervention**

You have just learnt that the period between 1842 and 1882 was the period of total missionary control of education in Nigeria. It was the period when the various missionary bodies established, funded and managed the schools all alone. They therefore dictated what to learn and how to learn it. As noted by Fafunwa (1991), the major achievements of the Missions in the field of education during the period of complete Missionary control include the translation of the Bible into some Nigerian Languages such as Yoruba, Ibo, Ekiti and Nupe. They also introduced vocational training and enforced high moral discipline among the teachers and children.

As we mentioned earlier on, the various Missions dictated what should be taught and learnt in their schools. This did not give room for a uniform syllabus, textbooks or duration of the school. Moreover, there was also no uniform or standard examination system and there was inadequate funding of the schools. These problems must have forced the colonial administration to start looking for ways of coming into the educational scene.

In 1882, the first Education Ordinance for West Africa comprising Lagos, Gold Coast (Now Ghana), Sierra Leone and the Gambia was promulgated. The Ordinance made provision for a Board of Education that would among other things take care of all matters relating to: -

- The opening of new government schools,
- The granting of teachers certificate
- Grants in aid to schools (Fafunwa 1991:94).

One important fact for you to note is that the educational system in Nigeria was patterned after the British system of education. Therefore, the 1882 Ordinance was based on the British Education Act of 1844. The establishment of the protectorate of Northern and Southern Nigeria

by the colonial administration in 1899 had some effects on the development of education in Nigeria generally. The various reorganizations in the education system brought a noticeable increase in the number of schools in Nigeria. For example, government started to establish its own primary schools. At this time, the government assisted primary schools were about 91 (Fafunwa 1991). Generally speaking therefore, we could say that active government involvement in primary education started with the promulgation of the 1882 Education Ordinance. From that date, government has been involved in the administration of primary education in Nigeria. We shall discuss this further in the other sections.

## **3.2 The Regionalisation of Education**

### **3.2.1 The Pre-Independence Era**

As we have just discussed, the establishment of the Protectorate of Northern and Southern Nigeria had some great effects on the development of education in Nigeria.

There were other events after the establishment of the protectorates. For example, there was the amalgamation of the two Protectorates in 1914 which made Nigeria one country that we now know it to be. We also had the Richards Constitution of 1946 which divided the country into three Regions — North, West and East. With this constitution, each Region now had its own government under the Governor. However, the Richard Constitution did not really meet the desires of the Nationalist then. Therefore, further discussions on how to arrive at an acceptable constitution continued and this led to the 1951 Macpherson Constitution, which gave the Regional Government the power to make laws on education among other things. As Fafunwa (1991) has rightly pointed out the Macpherson Constitution brought about what can be rightly referred to as the era of self- determination in education. This Constitution therefore gave each of the regions the power to go at their own rate as far as the establishment; management and control of educational institutions were concerned. As we shall see later, there were some educational revolutions in some of the Regions, which had lasting effects on the social, economic and political life of the people.

We must not forget that the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorate in 1914 did not affect the education system. In other words, the two separate education departments which were in existence for the two Protectorates before the amalgamation were not merged until 1929. Thus between 1929 and 1946, the educational system of Nigeria was centrally controlled under one Director of Education. As you should expect, it was not easy for just one director to oversee every part of the

country. There were agitations for improved educational institutions from the Nationalists on the one hand and the missionaries on the other hand. We could therefore say that the unification of both the Southern and Northern Protectorate in 1914 and the two education departments in 1929 did not bring much development in education.

You can now appreciate the joy and enthusiasm of our people with the Regionalisation of education. The three Regions then started making their own education laws with the Western Regions taking the lead (Taiwo, 1985). As we mentioned earlier on, the Regionalisation of education and the subsequent education laws had positive effects on the development of primary education in Nigeria.

The Western Region in 1955, under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme. It was a great educational revolution in Nigeria, which was the first of its kind not only in Nigeria but in Africa. The enrolment figures in primary schools increased greatly. In the same way, the number of primary schools and teachers were more than double in the Western Region.

### **3.2.2 The Post Independence Era**

The period between 1955 and 1960 witnessed a rapid increase in the number of primary schools as well as teachers and pupils in the western region. As we have already discussed, the regionalisation of education provided a kind of healthy rivalry among the three Regions in all areas of development. However, it appeared all the Regional Governments gave special attention to education. In fact, primary education took the central stage in the educational programme of the regions. This special interest and attention given to primary education may be because of the important role which this level of education plays in the promotion of literacy. Since majority of our people were then illiterates, it was necessary to quickly find a means of reducing or eradicating illiteracy. This may therefore explain why the Regions embarked on various measures to make primary education accessible to all the people. We have just learnt about the introduction of the UPE in the Western Region. A similar programme was introduced in the Eastern Region which started in 1957.

We shall discuss more on this when we are talking about the UPE in the next unit. The great vigour with which the people oriented education programmes were pursued after the Regionalisation of education continued even after independence in 1960. The three Regions were increased to four in 1964 with the creation of the Mid-west Region out of the Western Region. Generally speaking the development of primary

education in Nigeria after independence was based on the recommendation of the Ashby Commission. The Ashby Commission was set up in 1959 by the Federal Government to look into Nigeria's need in higher education for a period of twenty years (1960-1980). The Commission had recommended that primary school enrolment in the Northern Region should target 25 percent of children of school age attending school by 1970. However, in the East and the West where the enrolment figures had been relatively high as a result of the UPE programme, it was recommended that in the East, the quality of teachers should be improved while the West was to concentrate on the quality of teaching in the schools (Taiwo 1980).

These recommendations on how to improve enrolment, teachers' qualification and quality of teaching in our primary schools were effectively pursued in all the Regions. There were appreciable increases in enrolment figures in all Regions. In order to address the problem of quality of instruction in the schools, the Western Region Government set up the Banjo Commission in 1960 to among other things, review the existing structure and working of primary and secondary schools, the adequacy or otherwise of the teacher training programme and the inter-relationship between primary education and secondary education (Taiwo 1982).

Similar bodies were set up in the other two Regions. For example in 1961 the Government of Northern Region appointed Mr. H. Oldman as the sole commissioner to advise on (a) the form which the local contribution to the cost of primary education should take, (b) whether there would be advantages in delegating control of primary education to the Local Education Authority.

In 1962, the Eastern Region Government Authority appointed the Dike Commission to review the educational system of the region. Specifically, the commission was asked to investigate among other things, the organization, administration and management of education in the region, (b) to investigate the arrangement of the curricular of the primary and secondary schools, teachers training, commercial and technical institution in the region.

The civil war 1967 —1970 disrupted the educational system particularly in the Eastern Region. Therefore the civil war period did not record much progress as all efforts were directed at ending the war. As we shall see in the next unit, the post war period witnessed some remarkable development in the development of primary education in Nigeria.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The establishment of the first primary school in Badagry in 1842 by Mr. and Mrs. De Graft of the Methodist missions marked the beginning of a new era in our history. Before the establishment of the schools, the experience of the people that now make up Nigeria about Europeans was negative. The Europeans who first came into contact with our people were slave traders and others who came to exploit our human and the material resources. However, the coming of the missionaries with their schools brought about literacy and all its advantages to the people particularly in the South. Since that time, various developments have taken place in all aspect of our lives as individuals or as a nation.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have discussed how the first attempt by the Portuguese Missionaries to introduce formal school education failed. We later discussed the successful introduction of school education into the country through Badagry and Abeokuta by English speaking Missionaries. The rivalry among the different Christian Missions helped in a way to have schools built in different parts of the country. So, for over forty years, the Missionaries were in complete control of education in Nigeria. It was the 1882 Education Ordinance by the colonial administration that brought about government participation in the establishment, funding and management of primary education in particular. The regionalisation of education as a result of the Macpherson Constitution brought about the rapid expansion of both primary and secondary education in different parts of the country. In the next unit, we shall discuss the UPE programmes and the expansion of primary education in Nigeria.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. What factors led to the successful introduction of school education in Nigeria by the English speaking missionaries.
2. Explain how the regionalisation of education affected the development of primary education in Nigeria.

## **7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING OTHER SOURCES**

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## **UNIT 8 THE UPE PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Pre-Independence Period
    - 3.1.1 The Western Region Initiative
    - 3.1.2 The Eastern Region Effort
    - 3.1.3 The Expansion of Education in the Northern Region
  - 3.2 The Post-Independence Era
    - 3.2.1 The 1969 Curriculum Conference
    - 3.2.2 The National UPE Programme
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Reading and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, we discussed how Western education came to Nigeria through the Christian missionaries. We also discussed the development of primary education before and after independence. In this unit, we are going to discuss the various UPE programmes in Nigeria and their impact on the Nigerian society. We shall also discuss the 1969 Curriculum Conference and its implications for educational development in Nigeria.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- enumerate the purpose and impact of the various UPE programs in Nigeria.
- explain the Significance of the 1969 Curriculum Conference.



## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 The Pre-Independence Period.**

#### **3.1.1 The Western Region Initiative**

In the last unit you learnt how the colonial administration started showing some interest in education. You also learnt how the creation of three Regions and the Regionalization of education helped to increase the rate of educational development in Nigeria. As we discussed then, the three Regions were involved in healthy rivalry in their development programmes.

As far back as 1952, the Western Region Government made a proposal for the expansion of educational institutions at all levels in the Region. In a paper presented to the House of Assembly on Educational Policy of the Region, by the then Minister for Education, Mr. Awokoya, some of the reasons for embarking on the expansion of educational institutions were stated. These according to Taiwo, (1982) include the attitude of the illiterate parents to sending their children to school, the shortage of teachers and lack of fund. Although the Federal Department of Education recognized the desirability of Universal Primary Education, the colonial administration preferred the provision of secondary education and teacher training colleges. On one hand, the Western Region Government realized the need for the expansion of education at all levels. However, the Region decided against all difficulties facing the Region to start with the introduction of the Universal Primary Education Programme. As the Minister of Education for the region said, educational development is imperative and urgent. It must be treated as a national emergency, second only to war (Fafunwa 1991).

Therefore on 17th January 1955, the great education revolution in Nigeria took place with the take off, of the first UPE Programmes in Nigeria, the Giant of Africa. It was a great event in the history of education in Nigeria. Apart from making primary education accessible to all children of school age, it also marked the beginning of the war against illiteracy, ignorance, diseases and superstition not only in the West but also in Nigeria. The UPE programme led to the expansion of primary school facilities, teacher training programme as well as the secondary level. There was an unprecedented increase in the enrolment figure which jumped from 457,000 in 1954 to 811,00 in 1955 representing a jump from 35 percent to 61 percent. Thus, by 1958, that is three years after the introduction of the UPE, the enrolment figures in primary schools in the Region had gone up to one million. As you can see in Tables 1 and 2, the expansion was not limited to Primary Education.

Level of education	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
Primary School	456	81143	90802	98275	1,037,75	1,080.30
	600	2	2	5	5	3
Secondary School	9,126	10935	12621	16,208	18,754	22374
Teacher Training						
Grade II	1,508	2,093	3152	3833	4128	3311
Grade III	3,483	4,659	5,988	6,609	6,609	6681

Table 2: Number of Education at Institution in the West

Level of Education	1954	'1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
Primary School	-	6407	6603	6628	6670	6518
Secondary school	59	73	91	108	117	138
Teacher Training						
Grade II	21	25	27	27	28	30
Grade III	42	59	69	71	70	67

As one should expect from any kind of new project, the first problem was finance. The resources of the region like the other regions were not much. There was also the inadequacy of facilities such as classrooms and materials. Moreover, there was a shortage of professionally qualified teachers. Many of the classrooms were overcrowded with pupils. Whatever the problems that confronted the UPE programme, we should give some credit to those people who even thought it right to start it. They were African Leaders operating within the colonial system with all the problems associated with colonialism. The various limitations did not stop them from introducing a programme that would benefit all their people. This bold step by the Western Region Government actually encouraged other Regions and in fact other Black African countries to embark on programmes that could uplift their people educationally

### 3.1.2 The Effort of the Eastern Region

We mentioned earlier on that the regionalization of education brought about some healthy competition among the three Regions. As you will still remember, each Region was given the power to make laws on education. In other words, they could establish new educational institutions, expand the existing ones or introduce new programmes. The great desire of our Nationalists to liberate their people from the colonial

rule encouraged them to embark on the development programme that could benefit the people. The great initiative by the Government of the Western Region to introduce the universal primary education in 1955 served as a motivation for the Eastern Region. The Eastern Region had less time than the Western Region to plan for their, own programme. This was possible in the NCNC led government of Eastern Region. Nevertheless, when Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe became the premier, his government proposed an eight year free primary education to start in January 1957. This was against the earlier plan in the region to make only the junior primary education free.

When the UPE program eventually started in January 1957, it had some problems as we should expect. The first major problem was the lack of funds. As we mentioned earlier on, the financial resources of the Regions were very limited and there was not much they could do about it. Therefore in 1958 as a result of inadequate funds to pay the teachers salaries and provide other facilities, many of the teachers had to be laid off and many of the schools closed down (Fafunwa 1991). However in order not to completely do away with the UPE programme, it was modified a little. In other words, the program was changed to six years as against the earlier eight year primary education. With the new arrangement, the first three years were free while the last three years were fee paying.

Whatever might be the weakness or problems of these UPE programmes the point remains that genuine efforts were made by Nigerian Leaders to make education accessible to their people. This was even done at a time when Nigeria was still under colonial rule. The lasting effects of these early efforts at fighting illiteracy are still present in those parts of the country despite the problems they encountered.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Why did the UPE programme in the Eastern Region run into problems?

Your answer should include:

- The short period of preparation
- Financial problem, etc.

### **3.1.3 The Expansion of Education in the Northern Region**

The Northern Region did not introduce any UPE programme like we had in the West and the East. The major reason why the North could not enter the UPE race was because of the financial problem to cater for the large number of the school aged children in the North (Fafunwa 1991)

As you may be aware, the Northern Regions was the largest of the three regions in both population and land mass. Therefore, if the relatively smaller Regions could experience some financial difficulties, with their own programmes the North could probably have had a greater problem. Other reason why the Northern Region could not introduce UPE was possibly because of the misgiving of some Northern Leaders about the benefits of Western education. In other words, some of the leaders preferred Islamic education to Western education.

Moreover, education had almost been free in the North as pupils in Government and Native Authority schools paid very low fees. Those who could not even pay were exempted from paying (Taiwo 1982). Therefore the introduction of the UPE programmes did not appear to be a priority to the leaders in the North in those days. Although the North did not introduce any UPE scheme, yet there were some efforts made at expanding education generally. Special attention was given to Teacher Education, Mass Adult Literacy and craft were also given attention. For example, at the end of the Second World War, there were 935 primary schools in the Northern Region. However by 1958, there were 2,204 primary schools in the Region (Taiwo 1982).

We can therefore say that appreciable expansion was made particularly in primary education in all the Regions before independence. The regionalization of education helped the Nigeria leaders during the period to take steps that would make education accessible to the people. As we have just discussed, even in the areas where there was no UPE programme, education was almost free. The great achievements made in the expansions of primary education in particular, after the regionalization of education in Nigeria were consolidated after independence. With the difficult economic and political situation of the time, our leaders were still able to make some appreciable progress particularly in the development of primary education. So, they should be commended.

## **3.2 The Post Independence Era**

We have examined the state of education before Nigeria gained her independence from the colonial masters. Let us now consider the situation after independence to see whether things were better off or not.

### **3.2.1 The 1969 Curriculum Conference**

The rate of development in the field of education which started in the mid-fifties, continued after independence. As we have discussed in the previous unit, the Ashby Commission report encouraged the development of education in post- independence period. All the Regions

including the newly created Mid-West Region in 1964 intensified their efforts at expanding primary, secondary and tertiary education. The civil war between 1967 and 1970 however disrupted the educational development particularly in the Eastern Region and parts of the Mid-West.

It was however during the civil war that an important event that has shaped the destiny of Nigerian education in the last three decades took place. This was the 1969 National Curriculum Conference. In fact, it will not be too much to say that the conference was the most important event in the history of Nigerian Education. It was the first time a cross-section of Nigerian stakeholders in education came together to determine what actually should be, the role and function of public education in the development of the individual for the national progress and national reconstruction (Fafunwa 1991). In other words, we could say that it was at that conference that the decision on the education of Nigeria by Nigerians and for Nigerians was taken.

The conference was held in Lagos from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12th September, 1969. It was organized by the Nigerian Educational Research Council. The 1969 National Curriculum Conference was not the only one held in the desire to recognize the goals, contents, methods and materials for our education. It was the first time such a curriculum conference would take place in Nigeria. What we had in operation in terms of the goals, content and methods of education up till that time were purely colonial inventions. Therefore, that Nigerians could come together during the war to review the old and identify new national goals for Nigerian education is quite commendable.

The 1969 National Curriculum Conference was an important landmark in the history of education in Nigeria for many reasons. As we mentioned earlier on, it was the first time that a cross-section of Nigerian stakeholders in education came together to deliberate on the future of education in Nigeria. It was also significant in the sense that it took place during the Nigerian Civil War. This helped the participants to look at ways through which education could become an instrument of unity in the country. The various experts who participated actively in the conference made useful suggestion on how to make education meaningful to the citizens. Moreover, apart from giving birth to the Nigerian Philosophy of Education, the conference also laid the foundation for further discussions on the improvement of the school curriculum and the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education. Finally, while the conference closed the major educational activities during the decade of independence, it opened the door to the next decade. As we shall discuss in the next section and other units, the 1970s witnessed the introduction of the National UPE programme in

1976 and the New National Policy in 1977. There is no way we can discuss these laudable steps that we shall not make reference to the historic 1969 National Curriculum Conference.

### **3.2.2 The 1976 National UPE Programme**

As we have discussed earlier on, the Western and Eastern Regions introduced UPE in 1955 and 1957 respectively. This was possible because of the regionalization of education in 1951. The development of education particularly at the primary school level went on well until the civil war broke out in 1967. The war as you would expect disrupted not only education but all aspects of our social and economic life. This was particularly so in the Eastern part of the country.

However, when the war came to an end in 1970, massive rehabilitation, and reconstruction work was embarked upon. All the damaged school buildings had to be repaired or reconstructed. Essential facilities had to be replaced. All these took a lot of effort and money from the government. It was done to actually ensure that the general rate of development in education which started during the decade before independence could be restored.

In September 1976, the Federal Military Government launched the National UPE Programme. It was planned to cover the whole country. Although it was initiated by the Federal Government, all the 19 States in the country as at that time supported it. So, with the National UPE Programme, primary education became free throughout Nigeria. The programme also made the duration of primary education six years as against seven years in some of the Northern states. The primary school age was also fixed at six years. In other words, all children who were six years before September 1976 were qualified for admission. Thus, for the Western, Lagos and Mid-Western States, it was a continuation and maintenance of the free primary education which they have already known. As for the Eastern States, it was full achievement of free Universal Primary Education (Taiwo, 1982). You will still remember that the UPE in the old Eastern Region was in 1958 modified to be free only in the lower classes while at the upper classes, fees were paid. That means that from 1976, all classes of primary education in the East became free. However in the North where the UPE had not been officially launched, the national UPE program aimed at closing the education gap between the Northern and the Southern states.

While the Federal Government provided all the funds for implementing the UPE programme, the States served as the agents through which the funds were released. The projected enrolment figure for the first year was 2.3 million. Thus, the total number of pupils expected in all primary

classes by 1976 stood at 7.4 million. However, when the programme eventually started in September 1976, the actual enrolment figure for primary one was 3 million. The total number of primary school pupils then rose to 8.2 million (Taiwo 1982).

As you should expect, this unexpected increase in school population created some problems. In the first place, there was shortage of classrooms, equipment, teachers and funds. The second problem centred on the quality of teachers. For example, out of about 195,750 teachers, about 70,000 were not professionally qualified (Taiwo 1982). The problem of the National UPE programme could probably have been eliminated or reduced drastically if the Federal Government had learnt any lesson from the previous programs. So all the problems experienced in the Western and Eastern Regions in the 1950s were repeated even on a larger scale in 1976.

The lack of adequate statistical data on which the projections could be based created one of the major problems of the programme. If there were adequate records of birth and death, the Government could have been able to make accurate projections on the number of children to expect in the schools. Do you think that problem has been solved now?

From all indications, it appears we are still having that problem. There are no adequate records of birth and death in the country till now. This therefore means we cannot say with any degree of accuracy how many children of school age we shall have next September. As long as we do not know how many children are to be in school, so shall we continue to experience shortage of everything in schools.

The problem of inadequacy of teachers in quantity and quality led to the introduction of crash programmes in teacher education. This led to the production of half-baked, reluctant and undedicated teachers. This was because our Teachers Colleges in those days became the dumping ground for the never-do-wells, or those who had no other places to go. Have we learnt anything from that experience? Are we not introducing another crash program now?

May be the inadequate funding of the UPE program which we mentioned earlier on could have been avoided. For instance, many contracts were awarded for the construction of classrooms and the supply of equipment. Many of the contractors collected the money without doing the work. Some of the abandoned UPE projects could still be seen in many parts of the country today. Despite the problems that confronted the National UPE Programme. It was another significant landmark in Nigerian education. For the first time in our history as a nation, the 1976 UPE brought uniformity into primary education. As

mentioned earlier on, the duration of primary education became six years. In the same way, there was uniform school curriculum, goals and objectives of primary education. Moreover, the UPE programme became a national design to make primary education accessible to all Nigerian children of school age irrespective of their socio-economic background. It was also a national effort at eradicating illiteracy with all the attendant evils.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The regionalization of education in Nigeria as a result of the Macpherson constitution was an important event in Nigerian history. It gave the regions the power to legislate on education and therefore develop at their own rate. The introduction of the UPE programme in the West in 1955 and the East in 1957 made primary education accessible to children of school age in those areas. In the North, where there was no UPE, education was almost free to those who came to attend the public schools. The 1969 National Curriculum Conference and the National UPE Programme of 1976 were important landmarks in the development of education in Post-independent Nigeria.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt how the Western Region introduced the first free Universal Primary Education programme in Nigeria. This as you also learnt, was followed by the Eastern Region in 1957 even if it was not as successful as that of the Western Region. The development of education in the Northern Region which did not introduce any UPE program was also discussed. We finally discussed the 1969 National Curriculum Conference and the National UPE program of 1976 with their effort on our educational development.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Why was the National UPE programme introduced in 1976?
2. Enumerate three major problems that were encountered in the entire UPE programme in Nigeria.
3. In what ways could the 1969 National Curriculum Conference be regarded as significant in Nigerian history?



## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING AND OTHER SOURCES**

Fafunwa, A.Babs (1991). History of Education in Nigeria. Ibadan: NPS Education Publishers.

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## **UNIT 9 THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Historical Background
    - 3.1.1 The Early Missionary Efforts
    - 3.1.2 The Public School Experiment
    - 3.1.3 The Post Independence Period
  - 3.2 Factors Responsible for the Rapid Expansion of Pre-school Establishments in Nigeria
    - 3.2.1 The Level of Awareness among Nigerians
    - 3.2.2 The Inconsistency in Government Programmes
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Reading and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last two units, we have discussed the origin and development of Western Education in Nigeria. We concentrated on primary education in those two units. In this unit, we are going to discuss how pre- primary education started in Nigeria. It is going to be an interesting discussion since this unit will form the basis of our discussion in the other chapters. Moreover, the development of pre-primary education in Nigeria has a link with the formal education, which was introduced in the 19th century.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit carefully you should be able to:

- explain how pre- primary school education started in Nigeria.
- enumerate the factors which led to the rapid growth of pre-school establishment in Nigeria since the 70s.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 The Pre-Independence Era**

#### **3.1.1 The Early Missionary Efforts**

In unit six, we discussed the development of pre- primary education in Europe. In that unit, you learnt how individuals and groups first started nursery schools in Britain on humanitarian grounds. You still remember the Dane school, which was started by old women in Britain. You will also remember that when the British government developed interest in pre- school education, it was not built as a separate school. Rather it was in the same building with public primary schools. The pre-primary section of the public schools was known as the infant classes. Let us now consider how it started in Nigeria.

The history of pre- primary school education in Nigeria can be traced to the Christian Missionaries who introduced Western education in the 19th century. The earliest schools in Nigeria were mostly organized within the church premises. The nursery schools were usually organized by wives of the Missionaries for their children and the children of their members. They also organized Sunday schools in which one of the classes would be for children. As time went on, the number of children involved in such Sunday classes increased. This encouraged the Missionaries to formalize the Sunday school classes which later became a Monday to Friday affair. In other words, the teaching and learning in the schools were no more limited to Sundays (Akinbote, et al 2001). They were now taking place on weekdays like the other formal schools. This could really be regarded as the origin of pre- school establishment in Nigeria. Later on, as more Europeans came into Nigeria either as missionaries, traders or members of the colonial administration, the demand for pre- school establishment increased. Since the European settled mainly in the Government Reserved Area (G.R.A.), the first sets of pre- primary schools to be established outside the missions were in the GRA. This explains why the first sets of pre-school establishment were found only in the big cities that were either capital cities or commercial centres. In this case, cities such as Lagos Warri, Ibadan, Port- Harcourt, Enugu, Benin, Kaduna, Jos among a few others were the places with large concentration of Europeans which had Nursery schools in those days.

#### **3.1.2 The Public School Experience**

We must however not forget that like the British system of education, our primary schools during the colonial period also had what was known as the infant class which formed part of the public schools in Britain in

those days. So, before Nigerian children would start the Standard One Class in those days, they must have spent two years in the infant school also known as the preparatory classes. Although, some of the children found in the infant classes then were in most cases older than the normal children. However, they performed similar roles like the normal nursery schools. That is, preparing children for the primary level of education.

This type of school was very common in different parts of Nigeria up till about 1955 when the free primary education was introduced in the West. You will still recall that it was the Western Region UPE programme that reduced the duration of primary education from eight to six years. Therefore, the colonial policy of running pre-primary education as an arm of the public primary education system was changed by the Western Region Government.

As regards the pre-school establishments that were run by private individuals and groups, they continued to expand. This was as a result of their being patronized by some Nigerian elites who had either travelled abroad or were working with the colonial administration or the private companies. They realized the importance of pre-school education and were able to pay the fees charged. Many Nigerians as at that time could not afford the fees paid in the privately owned pre-school establishments. Some even saw the pre-primary schools as unnecessary luxury. Therefore, the pre-school establishments in Nigeria before independence were mainly patronized by the Europeans and a few Nigerian top civil servants or those in the multi-national companies. As much as it is difficult to know the number of such school in Nigeria before independence, it is also difficult to say where and when the first pre- primary school was established. As we shall see in the next section of this unit, the growth rate of pre- school establishments in Nigeria after independence has been great and rapid.

### **3.1.3 Post Independence Era**

We have just discussed how pre-primary education started in Nigeria with the effort of the Missionaries. We also discussed the gradual spread of the pre- school establishments outside the mission house to the GRA before independence. Now let us discuss what happened to pre-school education after independence. The political, economic, social and industrial development of Nigeria improved considerably after independence. With the expansion in education particularly at the territory level, many workers both foreigners and Nigerians took up appointment with new universities at Ile-Ife, Lagos, Nsukka, Zaria and even at the premier University of Ibadan. Similarly, more Nigerians took up top management positions in the Civil Service, the various corporations and the multinational companies. Above all, more foreign inventors came into Nigeria in large numbers with their families. What

then could we regard as the implication of the new job opportunities for Nigerians particularly during the first two decades after independence?

First, the establishment of new universities in Ife, Lagos, Nsukka, Port-Harcourt, Zaria, Jos, Ilorin and Benin in the first two decades after independence meant a lot. As earlier mentioned, more workers both academic and non-academic were recruited. Those that were foreigners needed pre- school establishment for their children. This led to the establishment of nursery schools in the new Universities. In the same way, Nigerian workers in the universities also demanded pre-school education for their children. You should note that many of such Nigerians who took up top academic or administrative positions in the universities had been to the European and North American countries. So, they too knew the importance of pre- school establishments for their children.

After independence, there was an increase in the level of industrialization in Nigeria particularly after the Civil War, Thus, the economic life of the people improved considerably as more people became gainfully employed. As the financial position of people improved particularly during the era of oil boom, their tastes also changed. Many people now wanted their children to attend the pre-primary schools which they could not afford before. This increase in demand for places in the existing pre- primary school led to their expansion while new ones were established.

Similarly, with the many existing employment opportunities, many women took up paid employment either in government services or in the private organizations. It therefore became necessary for such women to look for places to keep their children while they were away at work. You will remember that the National UPE programme was introduced in 1976. This led to many boys and girls going to school hence there were no more houseboys and girls as it used to be for employment by the working mothers. In the traditional societies, grandmothers and other relations were always around to help in taking care of their children. However, with the rapid urbanization that took place in the country after the civil war, it became difficult to get the assistance of such good old relations. As a matter of fact, many of them got involved in some economic activities which gave them no time to go and stay with any grand child or other relations.

Generally speaking therefore the two decades after independence witnessed some great improvement in the level of economic power on the part of our people. The importance of pre- school education was also recognized and people then had the financial means to send their children there. As we shall discuss later, the Government Policy on Pre-

primary education which was published in 1977 encouraged many Nigerians to establish nursery schools.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain how pre-school education started in Nigeria.

Your answer should include the following points:

- Beginning with Sunday school
- The changeover to Monday-Friday classes
- GRA school for children of the Europeans

## **3.2 Factors Responsible for the Rapid Expansion of pre-school Establishment in Nigeria**

### **3.2.1 The Level of Awareness among Nigerians**

We have just discussed the growth and development of preschool education in Nigeria before and after independence. We identified the factors that led to the expansion of pre-school education during the first two decades after independence. Some of the factors we identified include rapid industrialization particularly after the civil war, the establishment of more tertiary institutions, the improved financial ability of many Nigerians, and more married women taking up paid employment among others. All these factors and others led to the expansion of pre-school education in Nigeria up till the 70s.

The last two decades of the 20th century could be rightly described as the period of rapid expansion in pre-school education in Nigeria. In fact, the rate at which pre-school establishments sprang up in all part of the country during this period is unprecedented in the history of childhood education in Nigeria. In the urban centres, you will find them in every corner, however remote. While some were operating from uncompleted residential building, others made use of completed residential buildings, Only a few had what could be called permanent school buildings and other facilities that make up a good school What then could we say was responsible for the upsurge in the number of pre-school establishments in Nigeria during the periods 1980-2000? There are many factors responsible for it. We shall try to identify and discuss some of them.

First of all, we must acknowledge the fact that the level of awareness of our people was more than double during the period. As we have discussed earlier on, the UPE programme of 1976, the high rate of industrialization and its effect on the economic power of the people and

the establishment of more universities somehow affected the people's level of awareness with the free UPE programs. Many people had access to formal schooling which in a way affected their level of awareness generally. Many of the university graduates got good ideas about the importance of education at all levels. Therefore, with many people graduating from the various educational institutions, there was an increased awareness generally on all aspects of national life and the need to give children good education right from the early childhood period.

The generality of the people including even some illiterate men and women traders and artisans started patronizing the pre-school establishments. There was also the pride and affluence of our people. As we said earlier on, the improved economic situation with individuals encouraged many to show that they have made it. Therefore, as a sign of their status, many Nigerians in the 1980s started sending their children to the nursery schools. If you ask many Nigerians why they are sending their children to the pre-school establishment, they may not have any other reason than just to say they like it.

### **3.2.2 The Inconsistency in Government Programmes**

One other important factor that was responsible for the upsurge in the number of pre-primary school has to do with the state of the public primary schools. You will still recall that the UPE programme of 1976 was financed by the Federal Government. However, with the coming of civilian government in 1979, there was a change in the method of funding. The 1979 constitutions placed primary education under the control of States hence the civilian government tried to follow the constitutional provisions. This was why in early 1980s, the States took over the responsibility for the funding of the schools. This actually led to the beginning of the problem encountered in Nigerian primary schools in the last two decades. You may now be wondering about how this affected pre-primary education in the country.

As the State Government could not adequately fund primary education, teachers' salaries in some of the States were not paid for many months. This led to strike actions by the teachers. Primary schools in many States were closed for many months. In other words, the academic programmes of those schools were disrupted. This led to the withdrawal of many pupils from the public schools to the private schools. Parents who could not afford the fees paid in the private schools in many cases kept them at home to assist them in their business. Now, with the patronage of the private primary schools by children from the public schools, there was expansion in the private schools. Since the public schools programme were disrupted many parents lost confidence in them. This led to the withdrawal of their children to the nursery schools

where they could later continue with their primary education. Thus, from the early 1980s, there has been a steady increase in the number as well as the enrolment figures of the private nursery/primary schools in Nigeria.

In 1988, the Federal Military Government through Decree 31 of that year established the National Primary Education Commission. (NPEC). The Commission thereafter took over the management, funding and supervision of primary education in Nigeria. This was widely regarded as a welcome development by many Nigerians. However, in 1991, the NPEC was scraped through another decree. The Local Education Authority was then established for each state. This arrangement gave the Local Government Chairmen control over the management and funding of primary education in their areas. It was indeed a disaster for primary education as funds were diverted or misused. The teachers' salaries were not paid for months in many States and this led to long periods of strike by the teachers. So, what we experienced in the 1980s before the establishment of NPEC was repeated on a wider scale, that is, the mass withdrawal of children from the public primary schools.

In 1993, with another decree, the Federal Military Government once again re-introduced the National Primary Education Commission. It was aimed at restoring normalcy into the management of funding and control of primary education in Nigeria. Frantic efforts were made by the new NPEC to restore the past glory of primary education in Nigeria. Even with the efforts made to make things normal in the primary education system, many parents have up till now not returned their children to the public schools. This is particularly so in the urban centres. As we mentioned earlier on, the situation in the public primary schools have forced many parents to take their children to the private fee paying schools. Along the line, they go ahead to enroll their pre- school aged children in the nursery section of the private primary schools. Thus, when such children complete the pre- primary education there, they normally proceed to the primary school section. Many parents have therefore lost confidence in the public primary school system. The enrolment figures dropped in the public schools. Government in some of the States had to result to paid adverts on the radio and television asking or rather begging parents to send their children to the free public schools.

In an attempt to correct the situation, the Oyo state primary Education Board (SPEB) introduced a new idea. That is, by running pre-school classes as a section of the public primary school. This is to be in line with the National Policy on Education statement that there should be pre-primary classes in the existing public primary schools. This was an experiment aimed at catching the children young. You will remember



that we said parents who sent their children to the private nursery school do not withdraw them to continue their primary education in the public schools. Since the Oyo SPEB nursery schools are free, it is hoped that parents will be encouraged to send their children there. Thus, such children will just continue with primary education after finishing their nursery education. Let us hope that the experiment will work.

From our discussion so far, you see that the demand for places in the nursery schools have been on the increase since the 1980s. As you will be aware, there is hardly a semi-urban town now where there are no private nursery/primary schools in the country. Therefore, we can say that the rapid expansion of pre- school establishments in Nigeria is due to many factors. Some of the factors discussed earlier on include, increased industrialization which not only brought in many foreigners but also provided job opportunities for many Nigerians. So, with many people now having enough money, they could afford to send their children to the nursery schools. We also mentioned earlier on the expansion of the tertiary institutions. With more universities, many people were employed thereby giving them the necessary economic power to send their children to the nursery schools.

Similarly, many of the products of these universities realized the importance of pre-school education and therefore send their children there. There was also the issue of married women who took up paid employment and looked for places to keep their children. In addition to these, the levels of awareness among our people improved considerably in the last two decades hence almost everyone now knows what is good for the children. The inconsistency in government policy and programmes as they affect primary education made people to loose interest in the public schools. Thus the demand for pre-school establishment has been on the increase. Even the illiterate market men and women as well as other categories of self employed people now send their children to the private nursery/primary schools. Is this not a welcome development?

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The development of pre-school education has witnessed a rapid expansion in the last two or three decades. From the very simple beginning in the mission houses as Sunday school, it has now become very common in all the major cities of Nigeria. The social, political and economic developments in Nigeria since independence have affected the rapid growth of pre - school establishments in Nigeria. The increase in the number of pre- primary schools and the high patronage which they enjoy could be regarded as indication of the high level of interest in early education of children by Nigerians.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have discussed the historical background to the development of pre-primary education in Nigeria. You have learnt how the wives of the Missionaries started nursery schools in the church compounds. Also, you learnt how it grew from the Sunday schools to a Monday to Friday classes like the formal schools. Finally you learnt some of the factors which contributed to the rapid expansion of pre-primary schools in Nigeria since independence. In the next unit, you are going to learn what the National Policy on education is as regards Pre-primary Education in Nigeria.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Explain briefly the historical beginning of pre- primary education in Nigeria.
2. What factors led to the expansion pre-primary education in Nigeria since independence?

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING AND OTHER SOURCES**

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## **UNIT 10 THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Historical Background
    - 3.1.1 The Philosophy of Nigerian Education
    - 3.1.2 The Goals of Pre-primary and Primary Education
  - 3.2 The Policy Statements
    - 3.2.1 Pre-primary Education
    - 3.2.2 Primary Education
    - 3.2.3 Implications of the Policy Statements
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Reading and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, we discussed the origin and development of preprimary education in Nigeria. We also discussed the various factors that led to the rapid expansion of pre-primary school in Nigeria after independence. In this unit, we are going to discuss the National Policy on Education as it affects pre-primary and primary education. This is an important aspect of the entire education system in Nigeria. It is therefore essential for all teachers and prospective teachers or others interested in education to be familiar with the various policy statements on education.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- List the various policy statements on pre-primary and primary education in Nigeria.
- Explain the implications of the policy statements on the development of pre-primary and primary education in Nigeria.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Historical Background**

##### **3.1.1 The Philosophy of Nigerian Education**

In unit 8 of this course, we discussed the 1969 Curriculum Conference. We then mentioned the importance of the Conference to the development of education in Nigeria. You should not be surprised that we are once again discussing that historic National Curriculum Conference of 1969. There is no way we can discuss the National Policy on Education without making reference to the curriculum conference. This is because as we said earlier on, the conference gave birth to the National Policy among other things. The 1969 National Curriculum Conference has therefore become an important landmark in the history and development of education in Nigeria. The Conference took place at a time when Nigeria was going through a civil war. This actually gave all the participants, which included Nigerians from different cultural, political, religious, social, economic and professional backgrounds, to look for ways by which education could be used to unite us. Thus, the report of the proceedings of the conference was titled, a Philosophy for Nigerian Education.

In a keynote address, the then Chief Federal Adviser on Education, Dr. S. J. Cooley, said among other things that, 'education should be used as a tool of national unity....' It is urged that we should inculcate in the students of our educational institutions the idea of belonging not to one clan or tribe but to the whole nation (Adaralegbe, 1981). Therefore, in discussing the philosophy of Nigerian education, it may be necessary to first of all look at the concept, philosophy of education. As used here, a philosophy of education means the particular ideals which our education should be concerned with. That is, what goals or purposes do we want our education to serve? These and many more were the questions which the participants at that conference tried to answer between September 8 and 12, 1969. As we discussed earlier on, what the conference agreed upon as the goals of Nigerian education at all levels is what we have in the document titled, National Policy on Education (1977) revised 1981 and 1998. The Philosophy of Nigerian education is therefore based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system.

From this stated national philosophy of education you, can see that, the individual citizens of this great country passing through any of the levels of education must be greatly transformed. In other words, everyone has

equal opportunity as far as access to education is concerned. Moreover, the system of education is also expected to make everyone that passes through it at whatever level a good citizen of Nigeria. Thus, Nigeria's philosophy of education is related to some special aims and objectives as follows:

1. the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
2. the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
3. the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.
4. the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society. If you can take time to go through the stated goals of education at the three formal levels — primary, secondary and tertiary, you will discover that the above national goals are reflected in them.

### **3.1.2 The Goals of Pre-Primary and Primary Education in Nigeria**

We have just identified the Nation's educational goals to which the philosophy of Nigerian education is linked. As mentioned earlier, the Nation's goals of education are reflected in the goals and objective of education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Even if pre-primary education is not one of the formal levels of education where government is directly involved in its funding, yet the National Policy covers it. In other words, the National Policy on Education is concerned about the well- being of the individual at whatever age or level of education.

In unit one, you have learnt the goals of pre-primary and primary education. However, for the purpose of emphasis and to be in a better position to see the relationship between the goals of primary education and the national goals, we shall state the goals here again. The purpose of pre-primary education, which according to the NPE is the education given in an educational institution to children aged 3 – 5 + are as follows:

- [a] to effect a smooth transition from home to school,
- [b] to prepare the children for the primary level of education
- [c] to provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are away at work (on the farm, in the markets, offices, etc)
- [d] to inculcate social norms

- [e] to inculcate in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity, through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys.
- [f] to develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit
- [g] to learn good habits, especially good health habits and
- [h] to teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc. through play.

A close look at the goals of pre-primary education and the national goals of education will tell you something. That is, the national goal is not directly reflected here since it is not a formal level of education. So, whatever the children do or learn at this age are to prepare them for the formal level of education. The situation is however different when it comes to primary education. Now let us look at the goals of education at the primary level.

According to the NPE, primary education is the education given in an institution for children aged 6 to 11+. The goals are:

- (a) to inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively.
- (b) to lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking
- (c) to give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
- (d) to mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child.
- (e) to develop in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment.
- (f) to give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity and
- (g) to provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

I want you to quickly compare the above goals of primary education with national goals of education which we identified earlier on. Is there any similarity? Yes, there are many similarities. In fact, we can say that the goals of primary education are based on the goals of Nigerian education. Then, why is this so? It is simply because of the fact that primary education is the key to the success or failure of the entire education system. As you know primary education is the first level or the foundation upon which all other levels of education are built. Therefore, if the goals of primary education could be effectively pursued and realised, then every product of the school system will be a good

citizen. What do you think we can do so as to realise the goals of primary education?

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the major focus of Nigeria's Philosophy of Education

Your answer should include

- making the individual an effective citizen
- providing equal educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels.

## **3.2 The Policy Statements and Implementation**

### **3.2.1 Pre-Primary Education**

We are now going to discuss the National Policy on Education as it affects pre-primary education. The purpose of doing this is for you to be familiar with the official policy of government on this level of education. You will then be in a position to determine whether any particular policy is appropriate or not. Moreover, you will be able to suggest ways of ensuring the effective implementation of the policy. As stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE), the policy statements which are aimed at achieving the objectives of pre-school education include:

1. Encourage private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education.
2. Make provision in Teacher Training Institutions for student teachers who want to specialise in pre-primary education,
3. Ensure that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community.
4. Ensure that the main method of teaching in the pre-primary institutions will be through play and that the curriculum of Teacher Training Colleges is appropriately oriented to achieve this,
5. Regulate and control the operation of pre-primary education as well as ensure that the staff of pre-primary institutions are adequately trained and that essential equipment is provided.

Before we go on to identify the policy statement on primary education, let us see how far the above policy statements on pre-primary education have been implemented. There is no doubt that the policy of encouraging private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education is being effectively implemented. This is because private individuals and

organization are having their ways in the establishment and management of pre-primary schools. The rate at which they are springing up in every part of the country tends to confirm this. Similarly, they determine how much to charge as school fees without any measure of control by the government. We shall discuss the implications of this policy in the next section.

As regards the policy of ensuring that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community is concerned, we can say no. A visit to any pre-primary school establishment in any part of the country will confirm this. As a matter of fact, many parents send their children to the pre-primary schools purposely to learn to speak English fluently. Therefore, any school proprietor or proprietress who uses the mother tongue will not be having pupils in his or her school. This means the school will fold up.

On the training of teachers for Early Childhood Education, it could be said that the policy has been implemented. This is because both the Colleges of Education and some universities have in the last two decades been offering courses in Early Childhood Education up to the Ph.D. Level. However, as regards the method of teaching and the quality of teachers in the pre-primary schools, very little has been done to implement the policy statements. For instance, if you visit majority of the pre-primary school establishments in any part of the country you will see that they do not have professionally qualified teachers in early childhood education. In some cases, some of the teachers are not even professional teachers at all. Similarly, most of the pre-primary schools do not have adequate facilities and equipment. This is not limited to the schools in rural areas alone. In fact, we can say that there are more badly equipped schools than the well-equipped schools in the large cities. What are the implications of both the implemented and non-implemented policy statements? We shall discuss this later.

### **3.2.2 Primary Education**

The policy statements on primary education are also intended to ensure the successful achievement of the stated goals of primary education. Unlike the policy on pre-school education, the policy statements of primary education are many. This is quite understandable since primary education is the foundation for all other levels of education. We may not be able to indicate all the policy statements here but some of them that I consider to be very important for us to discuss. You can pick a copy of the NPE and read on your own.

The first is making primary education free and proposes to make it compulsory as soon as possible. We can say that with the UPE programme of 1976 and the recently launched UBE programme,



primary education has been made free to a reasonable extent. The UBE Bill has made basic education which includes the primary schools free and compulsory in Nigeria.

On curriculum, government prescribes the following curricular activities for primary schools – inculcation of literacy and numeracy, the study of science, the study of the social norms and values of the local communities and the country as a whole through civics and social studies, the giving of health and physical education, moral and religious instruction, the encouragement of aesthetic, creative and musical activities, the teaching of local crafts and domestic science and agriculture. Again, this aspect of the policy has been adequately taken care of. As at now, there are about 16 subjects in the primary school curriculum from which appropriate or necessary ones are selected. There are however some core courses which are taught in all public primary schools in Nigeria. These include Mathematics, Language study, Cultural Arts, Integrated Science, Social Studies and Physical and Health Education. But government has not been able to make provision for all the facilities promised to ensure the success of the curricular activities.

As regards the medium of instruction, the policy states that the mother tongue or language of the immediate community will be used in the lower classes and English language in the upper classes – that is primary four to six. One may even say that there are instances of compliance with this policy and some instances where they are not. For instance in many public primary schools, the mother tongue is even used in teaching pupils in the upper classes where English should be used. On the other hand, there are schools where English language is used as medium of instruction in the lower classes. This is particularly common in private schools and some public schools in the urban centres.

The teacher pupil ratio of 1:20 (pre-primary) and 1:30 (primary) is the official policy with the provision that 1:40 would be acceptable for the transition period. Except for some schools in the urban centres, we could even say that the inconsistencies in government programmes in the last two decades have left the public primary schools under populated. That is, in many schools, the teacher pupil ratio is much lower than the 1:30 proposed.

Abolishing the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination is another policy that has been implemented. Unlike the past, when pupils in primary six will have to sit for their final examination in a day or two, the Continuous Assessment is now being used in many states.

Finally, on discouraging the incidence of dropouts among primary schools pupils, this has not been done. The incidence of dropout has even been encouraged by the problems of primary education in the last two decades. We discussed how the inconsistencies in the management of primary education in the past led to the mass withdrawal of children from public schools.

So far, we have discussed the policy statements implementation at the pre-primary and primary levels. Let us now look at the implications of the policy statements generally.

### **3.2.3 Implications of the Policy Statements**

After making some policy statements, government should always see to their implementation. We have just discussed which of the policy statements that have been implemented and which ones are not. Now let us discuss the implications of the policy statements on the society generally. Let us start with the pre-primary schools.

The first policy statement that government will encourage private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education has some implications on the society. To begin with, it means not all children of pre-school age in Nigeria will have access to such institutions. This is because individuals who want to establish them will want to make some profit. Therefore, they will only establish it in the urban centres where they can have many children and also charge high fees. In other words, children in the rural areas and those of poor parents cannot have access to such schools. As you learnt in one of the earlier units of this course, this category of children even need the pre-school education more than their counterparts who have been receiving a good degree of stimulation from their relatively better home background.

In the same way, the non-compliance with the policy on the use of mother tongue in the pre-primary schools has many implications for the child. There are many Nigerians today who do not speak their mother-tongue to their children even at home. Some children therefore grow up to feel that the English language and even the English culture are superior to African languages and culture. This is not good enough for the promotion of our own cultural heritage. As Fafunwa and Macaulay (1989) once asserted, it is probably only in Africa and the third world countries that children are made to learn in a foreign language right from the pre-primary schools. Apart from this poor attitude to our culture, the difficulty which our children often encounter in their school learning could be traced partly to the language of instruction. Since we think reason and learn and understand new concepts with the help of language, it is sure that children who learn in a second language will

always be at a disadvantage. The Ife six-year primary education project has proved this.

On the method of teaching and quality of teachers in pre-primary schools in Nigeria, we must be frank enough to say there are problems. As we said earlier on, most teachers in the pre-school establishments in the country are not professionally qualified to use the appropriate methods for teaching. The result therefore is the rote learning which is common in the schools. The implication therefore is that children at this tender age are not given the necessary stimulation to explore and find out things on their own. They are made to be docile receivers of facts and information from their teacher. On the long run, they will grow up to become dependent individuals who cannot carry out any research work on their own. As things are now, government has no control over the quality of teachers for the pre-primary schools. It is true there are institutions training teachers for the pre-primary schools. The question is, are they being appointed to teach in these private schools? The reason is that the qualified ones are not employed by the government.

Now let us discuss the policy on primary education. The implications of making primary education free in Nigeria are many. In the first place, it gives all children of school age equal opportunity to receive school education. Therefore, the question of parents not having enough funds to send their children to school is over. On the other hand, with more people receiving primary education, it means illiteracy and ignorance as well as the problems associated with them may be over soon if the primary education is well managed.

The curriculum has been designed in a way that will give all children the general education they need to function effectively as good citizens. While it prepares those that are academically good for secondary education, those that cannot profit much from secondary education are helped to acquire the necessary skills in local crafts and trades. In other words, they will fit in easily into the apprenticeship system in any of the trades. This again will depend on how well executed the programmes are in the schools. In this regard, much depends on the level of consistency in government programmes for primary education as well as the quality and dedication of teachers.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Government has good policy statements for pre-primary and primary education. The policy statements are based on how to achieve the stated aims and objectives of education at these two levels of education in Nigeria. To some extent, some of the policy statements have been implemented while others have not. The implications of some of these

policy statements for the general public are negative while some are positive.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have discussed the National Policy on Education with particular reference to pre-primary and primary education. We first looked at the philosophy of Nigerian education and the relationship with the objectives of primary education. We later discussed the level of implementation of the policy statements and their implications. In the next unit, we shall discuss early child care and development initiatives in Nigeria.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Identify any four government policy statements on pre-primary education in Nigeria.
2. Explain the implications of the government's policy to encourage private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING AND OTHER SOURCES**

Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998). The National Policy on Education (Revised) Lagos: NERDC.

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# **UNIT 11 EARLY CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA**

## **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 FGN/UNICEF Initiatives
    - 3.1.1 Early Child care problems in Nigeria
    - 3.1.2 Objectives of ECCD
    - 3.1.3 Prospects of ECCD Projects in Nigeria
  - 3.2 Non Governmental Organisations
    - 3.2.1 OMEP Nigeria (Historical Background)
    - 3.2.2 OMEP Activities in Nigeria
    - 3.2.3 Prospects of ECCD Programmes
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further reading and Other Sources

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, we discussed the National Policy on Education as it affects pre-primary and primary education. When we were discussing the policy on pre-school education we then highlighted the policy that government will encourage private efforts in the development and management of pre-school establishments in Nigeria. In this unit, we are going to discuss the various efforts made by the Federal Government, UNICEF and Non- Governmental Organizations in promoting Early Child Care and Development in Nigeria.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- explain the objectives of ECCD programmes.
- enumerate some of the efforts of the Federal Government/UNICEF at promoting ECCED objectives.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 FGN/UNICEF Initiatives**

##### **3.1.1 Early Child Care Problems in Nigeria**

In one of the courses on childhood education in traditional African societies, we mentioned the attitude of Africans generally towards children. We discussed how loving, caring and positive Africans are towards children in their attitude. In other words, Africans generally and Nigerians in particular have a warm attitude towards having children. This actually may explain why Africans take good care of their young one.

However, things have changed over the years in Africa generally. In terms of the social, economic, political and industrial development, things have changed. As you have learnt earlier on, the developments have affected not only the cultural practices but also the ways of life of our people. In Nigeria, while the life- styles of some have improved considerably, some cannot just make ends meet. This means that some have all they need to take proper care of their children including giving them good pre-school education. On the other hand, there are many others who are in the majority who cannot take good care of their children as a result of illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. The rapid urbanization since independence has led to the overcrowded cities with all the problems associated with it. So in Nigeria, the traditional love and care for children which have always been part of our culture are gradually giving way to lack of care and proper attention for children. This is particularly very obvious in the ever growing urban centres.

On the other hand, in the rural areas where much of our traditions are still being kept, many have been forced by circumstances to abandon them. For example, in many of the rural areas, there are no basic social amenities hence people have been moving to the urban centres. On getting to the cities, things often do not go the way they were expecting. Thus, they often find it difficult to return to their villages. This has often led to their living in slums and very un-stimulating environment for their children's proper growth and development since many of the people in the urban centres are poor, they cannot take adequate care of their children.

Those that are left behind in the villages are mostly illiterates who are not only poor but also unable to provide the basic needs for their children.

Therefore, majority of Nigerian pre-school children are not receiving the necessary early stimulation for an all-round growth and development. As you have learnt in one of the earlier units, the level of stimulation and encouragement the children receive at home goes a long way in promoting their all-round growth and development.

However, since most homes cannot provide such early stimulation and encouragement to the child, the pre-school establishments could have been most helpful. Unfortunately, majority of pre-school age children have no access to such establishments in Nigeria. A survey conducted by UNICEF has revealed that majority of pre-school age children in the urban and rural areas have no access to nursery school or day care centres. So, in a way, the average Nigerian child of pre-school age is not receiving the much needed stimulation and encouragement for his proper growth and development. This may therefore explain why Fafunwa (1967) once asserted that the average African child below the age of six is at a serious disadvantage when compared with his counterparts from Europe and North America. It is with this lack of early stimulation and encouragement for most Nigerian children in mind that FGN/UNICEF and some NGO's have introduced Early Child Care and Development (ECCD) Programme in Nigeria. In the next section, we shall see how the ECCD initiative has been organized to help the Nigerian child.

### **3.1.2 Objectives of ECCD**

The problem associated with early childcare in Nigeria has been mentioned in the last section of this unit. May be we need to add that the provision of pre-school education and stimulation of children has always been regarded as the responsibility of individual homes. The government has not been directly involved in that process of early child care and development. This partly explains why only the children of parents who have the financial capability enjoy such programmes.

Even the available day care centres and nursery schools which are located mainly in the urban centres are not adequately organised. Apart from this, they are too expensive for the average Nigerian families to afford. All the private owners of such centres and schools have commercialized them. In other words, they are after making huge profits from such centres. This is why there has been an upsurge in the number of such day care centres and nursery schools in recent years. Many of these mushroom centres and schools are not registered hence their services could not adequately meet the required standards. In other words, many of the available day care centres and nursery schools cannot provide the necessary stimulation and encouragement to the children who attend the centres and schools.

It is in the realization of these deficiencies in the Nigerian preschool establishments that the UNICEF with financial assistance from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation started the Early Child Care Development (ECCD) project in Nigeria. The collaborative pilot project on ECCD between UNICEF and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) started in 1987 in five Local Government areas of five states. The project was designed to counter the activities of the badly organized, inadequately equipped and expensive pre-school establishments in Nigeria. In this regard, the project was aimed at providing alternative and low-cost methods and ways of childcare and development which could encourage mothers to take good care of their children. The main goal of the ECCD project is therefore to improve the overall growth and development of children under- six years. This is achieved by:

- Strengthening the structures for appropriate ECCD interventions.
- reducing the shortage of trained personnel and adequate facilities;
- Strengthening the provision of informal low-cost, community-based pre-primary care and education in selected communities of the 46 focus local government areas of the community (Akinbote, et al 2001).

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Why was the ECCD project introduced in Nigeria?

Your answer should include the following:

- lack of adequate stimulation for children below the age of six years;
- inability of the parents to send their children to the available schools
- expensive nature of the available schools
- to provide alternative low-cost centres with good methods of improving the overall growth and development of pre-school children.

### **3.1.3 Prospects of the ECCD Projects in Nigeria**

Since its inception in 1987, the ECCD project has been accepted by the various communities as a low-cost community- based informal pre-school intervention programme aimed at promoting the complete development of children. The programme adopted a comprehensive multi-purpose cooperative strategy which is child-centred, and culturally acceptable. It was targeted at improved health, nutrition, psychomotor



and cognitive development activities for children. The output objectives of the project were to:

- Set up 920 low-cost community-based ECCD centres
- Provide early stimulation through non-formal learning opportunities to 92,000 children aged between 3 and 5 years.
- Support and promote health and nutrition services to 50,000 children under two years of age,
- Train 5,000 child-care providers, 700 trainers and supervisors in improved ECCD techniques and practices
- Orient 2,000 personnel from the existing day-care centres (Akinbote et al 2001, p. 156).

The ECCD strategy is to catch/reach children wherever they are. As noted by an anonymous writer on the project, about 2,045 ECCD facilities in ten UNICEF assisted states have been established. The facilities are located in market places, churches, mosques, community halls/centres, pouches and as annexes in primary schools. Home based facilities in rural and urban poor areas are also being supported.

There has been a great interest in the project by the various communities. This is demonstrated by the 175,000 children under -six years who benefited from the ECCD project. Moreover, about 7,000 pre-school age children have been de-wormed through the cooperation of some other agencies. The ECCD has made some achievements which have been summarised as follows:

- the project developed a number of materials for training various categories of ECCD personnel
- training manual and guide
- early child care curriculum guidelines
- a book on child health and nutrition in Nigeria
- Child Development: A module for training Early Childhood Education Teachers and care-givers
- 20 titles of pre-school readers
- ECC prototype learning packages/kits
- caring for the African child: a manual for caregivers
- a child assessment instrument and developmental chart for validation.

Generally speaking, the ECCD project has been helpful in the provision of child care facilities. It has been able to raise the level of awareness of parents, particularly in the rural areas on why and how to stimulate their children's social, psychomotor and cognitive development. The ECCD project has also shown that collaboration and co-projects development

are possible for the proper development of children; it is therefore not good enough for the government as you learnt in the last unit to encourage private efforts in the provision of pre-school establishments. With the FGN/UNICEF initiatives, many children who could have been deprived of the stimulation and care necessary for their development have benefited from early childcare and development programmes. It is only hoped that the programme will not be abandoned. The programme must be sustained so that millions of other deprived children could benefit from it.

## **3.2 The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)**

### **3.2.1 OMEP Nigeria-Background**

Organization Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire (OMEP) is a World Organization for Early Childhood Education. As the name implies, it is an international organization which is aimed at promoting the well-being, development and happiness of every child in the family, school, society and the world at large. It is a Non-Government Organization hence it is financed through private individuals. It was founded in 1948 to benefit children under- 8 years throughout the world. The Organization is represented in more than fifty countries and it cooperates with other international organization with similar aims.

OMEP (Nigeria) was accepted as a National preparatory committee at the 16th World Congress of OMEP International in Quabec, Canada in 1980. It was however formerly recognized as a full member of OMEP International at the 17th World Congress in Geneva, August 1983. The objectives of OMEP Nigeria are to:

1. Promote and coordinate research in Early Childhood Education.
2. Collect and disseminate information on Early Childhood Education.
3. Encourage the provision of pre-school institutions
4. Promote the education of parents and adults in charge of children.
5. Encourage the production of suitable books and other educational materials.
6. Encourage educational institutions to develop courses for the training of teachers of pre-school children.
7. Liaise with governments and any organizations with concern for children
8. Promote conferences, seminars, workshops, etc on childcare and education
9. Encourage the preparation and publication of pamphlets, journals, etc for parents and the public on childcare and education.

10. Encourage the formation of suitable educational programmes adequate for Nigerian pre-school children.

Membership of OMEP is open to everyone who works for or with children or has influence on the lives, happiness and development of our children either as parents, educators or members of other professional bodies. In short no one may be excluded from membership by reason of race, creed or political opinion.

### **3.2.2 OMEP Activities in Nigeria**

Since the inception of OMEP in Nigeria, it has engaged in various activities aimed at promoting the well being and happiness of children. It has a National body as well as State chapters. Apart from organizing workshops, seminars and conferences, it has been involved in the provision of day care centres and nursery schools for children. This is mostly done by the State chapters. Let us now look at one of the State chapter's activities.

In Oyo State, OMEP has been involved in taking nursery school to the villages and market places. This has been embarked upon so that children of poor rural women and those in market places can be assisted in receiving the necessary stimulation and encouragement. Moreover, OMEP helps in providing basic education, health care and survival of the child. As stated by Akinbote et al (2001), OMEP in Oyo State has been able to achieve the following as regards childcare and education:

- Children who often wander around when their mothers are busy selling have a chance to be looked after and cared for.
- Thus, there would be less danger of accidents among the children. They will also be able to socialize with other children and learn to share things and play together.
- The health of the children will also be monitored. The physical, emotional and educational needs will also be met.
- Parents also had some feeling of relief about the safety of their children hence their output could improve.
- The centres could also improve children's language skill and opportunity to attain their individual potentials which could have otherwise been affected as a result of the lack of stimulation by their parents.

You may wish to know how the OMEP centres/schools are financed. Since OMEP is not a profit-making organization, the centres are financed through token fees paid by the parents, donations from OMEP members and the general public. Similarly, fund raising activities such

as parents' day, children's art exhibitions among others are some of the sources of funding the projects.

Is there OMEP in your state? Who is the chairman? Where do they hold their meetings? Try to find out more about OMEP in your state.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The well being of children has been attracting the attention of individuals and organizations in different parts of the world. In Nigeria like many other developing countries, many children of pre-school age have no access to the pre-school establishments. Since the pre-school establishments are owned and managed by private efforts, they are often too expensive for the average Nigerian families. Therefore, the ECCD programme initiatives by FGN/UNICEF as well as some NGOs have really helped to bring pre-school education to the poor Nigerian children.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt how FGN and UNICEF have jointly organized the ECCD projects for some children in selected Local Government areas of the country. You also learnt how the projects have helped many children to receive the much needed care, education and stimulation essential for their optimum development. Some non-governmental organizations such as OMEP have also been helpful in bringing pre-school education and childcare to the grass root people. You specifically learnt how Oyo Chapter of OMEP has taken pre-school education to the villages and market places for the benefit of children who ordinarily could not have had access to pre-school establishment.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Why was the ECCD project introduced in Nigeria?
2. List four of the achievements of the FGN/UNICEF sponsored ECCD projects in Nigeria.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING AND OTHER SOURCES**

Akinbote, O.; Oduolowu, E. and Lawal, B. (2001). Pre-primary Education in Nigeria: A Basic Text. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers Nig. Ltd.

OMEP (Nigeria) Constitution and By-laws

## **UNIT 12 UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 UBE in Nigeria
    - 3.1.1 Definition and scope
    - 3.1.2 Goals and objectives
  - 3.1 Childhood
  - 3.2 Childhood Components of Basic Education
    - 3.2.1 Early Childhood Education
    - 3.2.2 Primary Education
    - 3.2.3 Special Education
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Reading and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In one of the earlier units, you learnt about the UPE programmes in Nigeria and how they affected the development of primary education. In this unit, you are going to learn what the Universal Basic Education is all about. Specifically, you are going to learn the meaning of UBE and how it affects childhood education. The difference between the UPE and the UBE as well as the prospects of the UBE will be discussed. As you are aware, the UBE is the latest attempt by the Federal Government to make education available to all Nigerians irrespective of their age, condition and location. Therefore, this unit will give general background knowledge about the meaning, purpose and component of the UBE programme.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning and purpose of the UBE
- Identify the component of the UBE
- Explain the major differences between the UPE and UBE programmes

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 UBE in Nigeria**

#### **3.1.1 Definition and Scope**

In one of the earlier units, we discussed the UPE programmes we have had in Nigerian so far. Do you still remember the full meaning of UPE?, It is Universal Primary Education. In discussing the various UPE programmes in Nigeria, we identified their specific effects on the development of primary education in Nigeria. You will still remember that throughout our discussion of the UPE, we concentrated only on primary education. In other words, Primary education was the major concern of the UPE programme. This is where the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programmes differ from the UPE. Therefore, before we start discussing the UBE and its various components, let us first explain its meaning.

In the blue print on Basic Education (1999), basic education is referred to as early childhood education, primary education, the first three years of secondary education, and basic and functional literacy for out -of-school children, youth and adults, In other words the UBE programme is wider in scope than the former UPE programmes. As explained in the Blue print, the UBE is an organized, multi- sectional community- based education. It involves not only the acquisition of reading, writing and numeracy skills, but also functional and other skills as may be determined by the government. One important fact about the UBE programmes which we should not forget is that it is extended to cover non- formal education. This means that pre- school children and adults outside the formal school system are not forgotten. Moreover, both private and public educational activities that are aimed at meeting the needs of Nigerians of all ages are covered by the UBE programmes. When we are discussing the childhood education component of the programmes, we shall be talking about the various bodies that are involved in its implementations. Therefore, we can say that the UBE unlike the UPE covers all aspect of formal education up to the JS III as well as pre- school and adult education. Let us now identify the goals and objectives of the programmes.

#### **3.1.2 Goals and Objectives**

In the last unit, we said the UBE has included some other levels of education which the UPE did not cover. The question one may ask then is why? In other words what are the reasons for extending the program to other areas out side the primary education level? This question will be answered as we now look at the goals and objectives of UBE.

According to the Blueprint (1999), the UBE is aimed at equipping every individual - child youth and adult with such knowledge, skill and attitude that will enable him or her develop to his or her fullest capacity, derived maximum social, economic and cultural benefit from his or her membership of the society and fulfill his or her civic obligations. This broad aim of the programme shows that all categories of Nigerians are to be helped to become the best of whatever they are. Age should not constitute any problem. You will recall that when we were discussing the characteristics of formal education, we said formal education is rigid in terms of entry and exit. That is, there is fixed age limit and other conditions you have to meet before you could be admitted. However, with the aims of the UBE, It is now possible for people to make it educationally even if they once dropped out of the formal school system, they can still make it.

The specific objectives of the programmes are as follows:

1. To increase enrolment, retention and completion in basic education.
2. To reduce gender, access and equality disparities in basic education.
3. To enhance the quality of basic education.
4. To strengthen partnership in the provision of basic education through cooperation and coordination.

As stated in the first objectives, the UBE programme was introduced to increase enrolment of children in schools. It was also to ensure that more children stay in school to complete their education. This may therefore mean that the UPE programme of 1976 has not really achieved the much expected 100% enrolment at the primary school level. In other words, not all children of primary school age are in school. Similarly, the statement that the UBE is to increase the retention and completion means that even out of those registered in primary schools for instance, not all of them stay to complete their education. Many factors could have been responsible for all these. For example the pastoral nomads, migration fishermen and the disabled children may not have been having the opportunity to go school. Now the UBE programme has taken adequate care of all categories of children in Nigerian.

Other areas covered by the stated objectives include the reduction of gender access and equity disparities to education. As you may be aware there are some parts of Nigeria where more boys than girls go to school. This is very common in some of the Northern States. On the other hand, there are some areas where there are more girls in school than boys. This is very common in Eastern States .So, the UBE programme is designed

to correct all these anomalies in the enrolment of boys and girls in school. Finally, as we observed in our discussion of the UPE programme, the Federal Government was mainly responsible for the funding. The present UBE program is to involve all other bodies in the provision of basic education. Thus, one of the strategies of the UBE is to encourage the various communities to support and sustain formal and non- formal education efforts in their areas. It is sincerely hoped that the programme will achieve a higher degree of success than the previous UPE programmes. This is if some of the problems which we shall discuss in the next unit are adequately taken care of.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Enumerate the specific objectives of the UBE programme.  
Your answer should include the following:

- To increase enrolment, retention and completion in basic education
- To reduce gender access and equity disparities in basic education
- To enhance the quality of basic education
- To strengthen partnership in the provision of basic education

## **3.2 Childhood Education Components of the UBE**

### **3.2.1 Early Childhood Education**

As we have already discussed in unit one, Early Childhood period covers the period from birth till 8years. This means that children who are yet to start pre-primary or nursery school (0 – 3 years) as well as those of pre-primary school (3 – 5) years are now included. We can therefore say that the target groups for the Early childhood education component of the UBE program include the following (Blue print 1999).

- i. Children in early childhood. That is, those who may be attending day care centres or play groups, which are common in the urban centres.
- ii. Children in pre-primary school. As we have discussed earlier on, the pre-primary schools are established mainly by private, individuals and organizations. They are now springing up in every corner in the urban as well as sub-urban areas in Nigeria.
- iii. Children of migrant fishermen. This refers to fishermen in the riverine areas of Nigeria who move from place to place in the process of fishing.
- iv. Children of Nomads — we tend to be more familiar with the Fulani cattle rearers who move from place to place particularly in the dry season in search of pasture for their cattle. Originally,



they were found mainly in Northern states. They are now found in some of the Southern States.

- v. Children in especially difficult circumstances such as street children.
- vi. Children with special needs.
- vii. Early childhood care givers, counsellors, teachers, administrators and proprietors.
- viii. Parents and guardians.

You will notice from this list of the target groups that all categories of children are included. It is not just a matter of taking care of the normal or privileged children alone. Also, those who are challenged and those who are less privileged will be taken care of. In addition, their parents and guardians as well as all those involved in the care and education of pre-school children are covered in the programme.

The question you should be asking now is how does the government intend to do this? Well, the approaches to be adopted by government in ensuring that the target groups benefit from the program are many. We shall only highlight a few of them here. The first thing government intends to do is to raise the level of awareness of parents and guardians, the community, the NGO, and other voluntary organizations, to participate in the care and education of pre-school children. Government also intends to encourage interested individuals or groups to establish and manage pre-school institutions.

There is also going to be a staff development through formal and non-formal approaches. This will follow the same pattern like the ECCD project which we discussed in the last unit. In the same way, government will help in the production of early childhood educational and instructional materials, which will be adapted to local conditions.

The implementation of the UBE programmes as they affect early childhood education is to be a joint effort. In other words, it is not to be only a government affair. The Ministry of Education at both the Federal and State levels and their parastatals as well as the Local Government Education Authorities will be involved. Their various activities will be in collaboration with the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community based Organizations (CBOs), the Mass Media, individuals and the International Donor Agencies. If all things go on well, it is hoped that the pre-school age children in all parts of the country will benefit from the program. This will therefore make it possible for the children to receive the much needed stimulation and encouragement for their development.

### 3.2.2 Primary Education

Primary Education as you already know refers to the education given in an educational institution to children aged 6 to 11+. This level of education has always been lucky in the sense that it has always received government attention. You will still recall that all the UPE programmes in the country have always been centred on primary education. The present UBE programme has also included primary education as one of its components. Why is primary education enjoying the patronage of all programmes aimed at making education accessible to all? This is because; primary education is the level of education that lays the foundation for the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy. It therefore follows that any program aimed at bringing education to the door steps of all citizens must include primary education. Everybody needs primary education as we discussed earlier on in one of the units. The modern day social, economic and political activities require at least literacy in the mother tongue for individuals to become relevant in the society. One does not need a University degree for example before you can be a good driver, carpenter, trader or bricklayer. However, a good primary education is necessary for anybody to become a driver who will be able to read the road signs, or a good tailor who will be able to design good clothes and so on.

Now that we know why primary education is one of the components of the UBE programme, let us now see the target group and the approaches to be adopted in the programme. The target group, that is, the particular group of people for whom the UBE primary education programme is meant for. They are:-

- i. Children of school age (6-11+)
- ii. The Girl child
- iii. Children in especially difficult circumstances
- iv. Children with special needs
- v. Children of nomads and migrant communities.

You can see that the list of the target group, like the early childhood education level, covers all categories of children of school age irrespective of their socio-economic background. Like we mentioned earlier on, the UBE programme is planned to equip every Nigerian child, youth and adult with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable him or her develop to the best of his or her ability.

How does the government intend to do this so that the goals of primary education can be achieved? The government intends to achieve the goals of primary education in the following ways (Blue print 1999).

- i. Establishment of more primary schools;
- ii. The use of incentives advocacy and mobilization to achieve higher enrolment and retention rates;
- iii. Training and re- training of teaching and non-teaching staff;
- iv. Involvement of the communities in the primary education programme;
- v. Proper gender mainstreaming in schools and classes;
- vi. Excursions and field trips to relevant sites and facilities;
- vii. Public enlightenment through the print, electronic and other media;
- viii. Improvement and effective utilization of existing facilities in primary schools.

All these approaches and strategies for achieving the goals of primary education under the UBE programme will be in cooperation with some, other bodies or organizations. As we mentioned under the early childhood education aspect of the UBE programme, the government cannot do it alone. This is why there is going to be some degree of collaboration with private individuals and organizations. The existing Federal and State Ministries and Parastatals involved in the management of primary education will still be involved. These include, the Federal and State Ministries of Education, National Primary Education Commission, National Commission for Nomadic Education, State Primary Education Boards, Local Government Education Authorities. Some educational institutions involved in the training of primary school teachers and agencies responsible for curriculum development and publication of course materials will also be involved. These include the National Commission for Colleges of Education, National Teachers' Institute and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council.

As we said earlier on, they will all work in collaboration with the various non-governmental organizations, voluntary organizations, the Parents Teachers Associations, the United Nations and other donor agencies, individuals and groups in the community and the Mass Media. There is no doubt that if all these bodies can cooperate with government, primary education will be adequately equipped to perform its roles in the overall development of the individual and the society.

### **3.2.3 Special Education**

Special education according to the National Policy on Education (1998) refers to; the education of children and adults who have learning difficulties because of different kinds of handicaps – blindness, partial sightedness, deafness, hardness of hearing, mental retardation, social mal-adjustments, limb deformity, or mal-formation, etc due to

circumstances of birth, inheritance, social position, mental and physical health patterns or accidents in later life. As a result, such children and adults are unable to cope with the regular school class organization and methods.

Also included in this category are children of nomads and migrant communities as well as gifted and talented children. As you are aware, all the people under the category of people in need of special education may not profit much from the regular schools. That is to say, such people in most cases require specialists who are trained to teach them in a special way different from what goes on in the regular schools. Have you ever visited any school for the handicapped? You must try to visit one and see how the deaf and dumb as well as the blind are taught.

The UBE programme does not want to leave anybody out of the desire to help everyone to develop to the best of his or her ability. Many parents in Nigeria often neglect their handicapped children. This is why we see many of such children begging on our streets in towns and villages. The reason why many of them are begging is because they are not adequately taken care of by their parents or the society. That a child is blind, deaf and dumb does not mean he cannot be helped to live a happy and decent life. It is in the new desire of helping all citizens to become the best of what they are that the UBE program has not excluded the handicapped. So, the target group of the UBE Special Education Programme includes the physically handicapped children and adults, the mentally retarded children, the disabled, the gifted and talented children and those in special circumstances.

In order to achieve the goals of special education which includes the inculcation of permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively in the handicapped people, the government through the UBE programme will do the following among other things. Government will establish special education schools. As at now, such schools are very few to adequately cater for such children. Therefore, through the UBE programme, if more of such schools are established, more physically and mentally challenged children and other forms of disabilities will have access to formal education. As people say, there is nobody that cannot be educated. Have you ever seen a deaf and dumb person write or the blind child read? That is what the UBE is after. Everybody irrespective of his location or condition should be able to read and write.

The government can only achieve this through cooperation from the parents, the various societies, International organizations, non-governmental organizations and the mass media among others. Parents and relations of handicapped children should not be ashamed to bring

their children to such schools. We should all do whatever we can do to assist them even if it is only by telling parents where such schools are available.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The UBE unlike the previous UPE programmes covers more levels of education and different groups of people. This is in the desire to eradicate illiteracy and all the ills that go with it in Nigeria. The introduction of the UBE program is therefore planned to cover early childhood education, primary education, the first three years of secondary education, basic and functional literacy for out-of-school children and adults. This is a remarkable step aimed at making education accessible to all Nigerians without any discrimination.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt the meaning, scope and objectives of the UBE programme. You have learnt in the unit how the Early Childhood, Primary and the Special Education Components of the UBE programme are to be executed. In the next unit, you will learn those things that could constitute obstacles to the successful achievement of the goals of the UBE generally.

#### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Explain the meaning and the purpose of the UBE programme.
2. How is the UBE programme different from the previous UPE Programmes?

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING AND OTHER SOURCES**

Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). Blueprint on Basic Education.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998). National Policy on Education 3rd Edition. Yaba: NERDC.

## **UNIT 13 MAJOR OBSTACLES FOR THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE)**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Personnel Administration
    - 3.1.1 The Quality of Teachers
    - 3.1.2 Lack of Dedication on the Part of Teachers
    - 3.1.3 Inadequate Planning and Supervision
  - 3.2 Instructional Materials and Facilities
    - 3.2.1 Inadequacy of Relevant Instructional Materials
    - 3.2.2 Poor Learning Environment
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Reading and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In one of the earlier units, you learnt how the UPE programmes were introduced in the old Western Region and the Eastern Region. You also learnt how they ran into difficulties as a result of inadequate planning, lack of funds, inadequacy of teachers, classrooms and other things. Later you learnt how the Federal Government introduced a National UPE programme in 1976 and the problems encountered. In this unit, we are going to discuss some obstacles that may prevent us from realizing the objectives of the UBE programme if they are not adequately taken care of.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- identify at least five obstacles that could prevent the realization of the UBE objectives.
- Suggest ways of removing the obstacles.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Personnel and Administration**

#### **3.1.1 The Quality of Teachers**

The importance of teachers in any educational system has been clearly explained in the National Policy on Education. In that document it is stated that, no system of education can rise above the quality of its teachers. Therefore, it is a fact that a well qualified teaching staff is the first step in any attempt to train a skilled man power in any society. In other words, there cannot be any appreciable progress in any system of education with poorly trained teachers.

One of the major problems of the previous UPE programmes in Nigeria centred on the quality and quantity of teachers. You will still remember how the lack of adequate number of trained teachers led to the appointment of untrained teachers to teach in our schools. In an attempt to produce the much needed trained teachers in large numbers, crash programmes were introduced. This was the case in the 1976 National UPE programme. As we once mentioned in one of the earlier units, the doors of our Teachers Colleges were thrown open to whoever cares to come in. This led to the admission of reluctant, school failures and those who had no other places to go, into the Teachers Colleges. As if this was not enough, the duration of courses was in some cases reduced while admission requirements were deliberately lowered. All these led to the production of half-baked, unsure, reluctant and undedicated teachers. Thus, the two major problems of teacher education for primary education in Nigeria as identified by Taiwo (1982) were experienced during the time. The problems are the poor quality of teachers produced from the Teachers Colleges and their low output. This is not to say however that all the teachers produced were bad. In fact, some of the primary school teachers were very good and dedicated. But, majority of them were not particularly professionally competent. This really affected the standard of teaching and learning in our schools. Thus, there were many primary school products of the UPE programmes that were not literate in either their mother tongues or English language. Although the poor quality of teachers may not be the only factor responsible for this, yet, it could be regarded as one of the most important factors.

So far, we have seen how poor teachers' preparation affected the quality and output of the UPE teachers. This shows that we should not just be after the mass production of teachers. As much as we need a large number of teachers to teach in our schools, we should also be careful not to throw quality into the winds. The question now is, has the UBE taken this into consideration? In other words, have we learnt anything from the

past mistakes of embarking on a crash programme of teacher education? There should have been a long term planning for the training of teachers before the introduction of the programme. The recently introduced 'emergency' training programme for the UBE teachers by NTI may not be the ideal thing. How are we sure that the people being recruited for the 'emergency' training programmes are not the reluctant ones like those trained for the UPE programme?

One other problem associated with the quality of teachers is the type of in-service programmes organized for them. For teachers to be up to date with new developments in the teaching and learning process, they have to be exposed to regular in-service programmes. It could be a long or short term courses. For example, there could be long vacation courses/workshops on different methods of teaching the various school subjects, classroom management and control, school community relationships and so on. Experts could be invited on the various areas while the teachers are given special allowances for the course. If in the UBE programme this has not been done, then it should start immediately.

Since teachers are central to the success of any educational programme, we must do all we can to improve their quality. Nothing is too much for us to do in order to raise the quality of our teachers. If we want to make any appreciable success in the UBE programme, the training and re-training of teachers is a must.

### **3.1.2 Lack of Dedication by Teachers**

We have just discussed the problem created by the crash programme introduced during the UPE programme. In an attempt to produce enough teachers for the programme, the admission requirements into the Teachers Colleges were relaxed. This made it possible for people who could not have been qualified to come in. Among those who came in we had the reluctant ones. That is, those who naturally did not want to become teachers but were forced to come into Teachers Colleges. So, these people became reluctant teachers. They had divided interest hence they could not give their best as teachers. In many cases, some of those who came into teaching then merely used teaching as a stepping stone. As soon as they were able to secure a better job or admission into a tertiary institution, they left the classrooms without any notice. There were even some of the teachers who were not regular in school. This is very peculiar to teachers in the rural areas. Many school teachers in the rural areas often make special attendance rosters among themselves. In other words, if there are four teachers in a rural school, two will be in school from Monday till Wednesday while the remaining two will come on Thursday and Friday. The following week, they will alternate the



arrangement. This makes the pupils to suffer as the two teachers in the school may not even be able to cover the whole days work for a class let alone all the classes in the school.

In the Urban schools, many of the teachers are engaged in some business activities. Some even come to school to sell their goods to their colleagues or pupils. The implication of this is that such teachers have little or no time to make adequate preparation for their lessons. There have been many cases of teachers who do not prepare any lesson notes at all while some use the school periods to write their notes. This lack of dedication on the part of teachers could sometimes not be their fault. In a situation where salaries were not paid regularly, or where their take home pay was not enough to take care of their family, naturally teachers would look for other sources of income. Similarly, the poor condition of service which also led to poor retirement benefits often forced many teachers to do some running around while in service. By so doing, they are sure of a fairly comfortable living after retirement even when their benefits are not paid. These and other problems often lead to teachers not being dedicated. The pupils as you will expect are always the worst for it as they will not be having the necessary teaching and learning activities to make them permanently literate.

If the UBE programme is not to have such undedicated teachers, the necessary precautions must be taken. First, the recruitment of teachers for our classrooms must be based on merit. That is, only those that are professionally qualified and suitable should be employed. This means that proper interviews should be conducted for those that applied for teaching after their qualification. I think if care is taken to conduct proper interviews for teachers before appointment, most of the bad ones would have been eliminated.

As regards teachers in the rural areas, efforts should be made to make them more comfortable. This can be done by providing them good accommodation in form of staff quarters. In the same way, they could be paid special rural allowances like it is done for some other professionals. If this is done, many people who often reject postings to the rural areas will not do so. Moreover, with good accommodation, they would be encouraged to stay there and work throughout the week.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Identify some of the teacher factors that could create obstacles in the achievement of the UBE goals and objectives.

Your answer should include the following:

- poor quality of teachers for training low output of teachers
- lack of dedication to duty by teachers
- absenteeism among teachers
- poor conditions of service, etc

### **3.1.3 Inadequate Planning and Supervision**

We have just talked about how the crash programmes have led to the poor quality of teachers produced for the UPE programmes. This idea of using crash programmes in the training of teachers could be regarded as part of the inadequate planning which led to the failure of the UPE program. If we know we are introducing a programme like the present UBE, at least, the first three or more years should have been devoted to planning. In this case, the training of the teachers could have been embarked upon. Therefore, by the time the programme is taking off, there would have been some good number of teachers on ground. It is not a good planning to start the programme before embarking on the training of teachers.

Another problem that made adequate planning difficult during the UPE programme was the lack of reliable statistical data. For example, in the 1955 UPE programme, arrangements were made for 492,000 pupils but over 800,000 showed up in the schools when it started. This problem came up again in the 1976 UPE programme. These problems arose mainly because of inadequate data about the number of primary school age children we have. Even now, I do not think we have an accurate statistical data for instance to show how many pre-school age children or primary school age children we are going to have next September.

Therefore, in order to have an accurate data on which the planning of the UBE is to be based, there is need for proper awareness campaign on the need to register all births and deaths. The officers in charge of such records should be more dedicated and should keep adequate records. It should be made compulsory for all health institutions to register all births and deaths and send same to the Department of Statistics at regular intervals of three months or six months. Moreover, officials of the statistics Division of the National Population Commission should go to the villages to register their new babies. No meaningful planning can be done without a reliable statistical data.

There is also the problem of inadequate supervision of schools in Nigeria in recent years. Those of us that are old enough can still remember that during the period immediately before and after independence, inspectors were frequent in schools. However, in the past two decades, things have not been the same again. Many schools in the rural areas are not visited by inspectors for years. In most cases, the head

teachers of such schools are merely asked to come to either the local government or state head quarters to supply some necessary information about their staff, students and available facilities. This arrangement often gives room for the falsification of figures being sent to the State and Federal Ministries of Education.

What do you think is responsible for this? Well, many Inspectors of Education have neither personal nor official cars with which they could pay regular visits to the schools. In some cases, most of the rural roads are not motorable for a greater part of the year. Therefore, the inspectors have no choice than to remain in their offices and rely on whatever information they receive from the head teachers. For the UBE to be successful there should be adequate supervision. The head teachers should be empowered to discipline any teacher who is found wanting in the performance of his or her duties. In recent years, many teachers tend to disobey their head teachers because of their special connections. This should not be so. The supervision of schools should even be encouraged more among the head-teachers who are always on ground.

They should be given the necessary powers to do so.

On the other hand, the school inspectors should be increased in number and given the necessary facilities to work with. They should be encouraged to visit schools at least twice a month. This will not only ensure that teachers do their work well, but also give them regular first hand information about each school. Moreover, they will also be able to interact with the local communities and encourage them to support their children in school. The UBE, with its wider coverage needs more supervision if the stated goals and objectives are to be realized.

## **3.2 Instructional Materials/Facilities**

### **3.2.1 Inadequacy of Relevant Instructional Materials**

As we are all aware, majority of children and those to benefit from the UBE program are from poor families. Therefore, most of them cannot even afford to buy ordinary school uniform for their children. This is why such parents often feel reluctant in sending their children to school. After they have been told that education is free, they usually send their children to school with the hope that government will supply all their needs. Unfortunately, such materials as textbooks, exercise books, writing materials where available are never sufficient to go round all the pupils. Even some essential materials such as attendance register, diary, chalk, duster including desks and chairs are also inadequate. This was the case during the national UPE programmes. There are still some

schools now in different parts of the country without adequate supply of such materials.

If the UBE programme is to achieve the goals and objectives set for it, there must be proper education of the parents. For example, they must be told right away what they are to provide for their children. We should not let them have the wrong impression that education is free hence they are to do nothing. Where they are to buy textbooks and other school materials for their children, government could make them available at highly subsidized rates. Similarly, adequate desks, chairs and tables should be provided for both teachers and the pupils.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Visit some public primary schools in your area and make a list of the materials that are available for teachers and pupils use. Are the following available there?

- Pupils individual textbook in all subjects
- Exercise books for each subject
- Writing material — pencils, pen etc.
- Desk and seat for all the pupils
- Teachers materials-such as tables and chairs chalk duster, etc
- School Records such as the attendance register, diary, textbooks for all the subjects, lesson notes etc.

### **3.2.2 Poor Learning Environment**

We discussed in one of the earlier units that during the UPE programmes, there were shortage of classrooms, tables and chairs. This was due to inadequate planning as the number of pupils that turned up for admission was much more than what was planned. There are still many schools around today without adequate classrooms. In some cases, rainstorms have removed the roof of many of the classrooms. Some of the classrooms have become so dilapidated that they are no longer habitable. The result is that the few rooms, available are overcrowded. In such a situation, the rooms become stuffy and too noisy for any effective teaching and learning to take place. Have you ever seen such a situation where about sixty or more pupils are packed in a room? They are common in the urban centres where there are usually inadequate classrooms. In fact, in some schools, children would have to sit on the floor or by the windows to receive lessons. Do you think learning can be effective in such situation?

There are also situations when the location of the school will not be particularly conducive to good academic work. There are some schools

that are either too close to or are located within the market places in the urban centres. The noise and other distractions often make it difficult for effective teaching and learning to take place in such places. In some other places, the schools are located in slums where pupils and teachers have to wade through refuse dumps, dirty stream and gutters before they can get into their classrooms. There are places where people even use the school compound as highways. All these things make the school compound not only dirty and unattractive but also not learner friendly. They even affect the ego and morale of both the teachers and their pupils. This may also be one of the reasons why teachers are looked down upon in the societies. Whereas their counterparts in the ministry or companies are working in beautiful and attractive offices with all modern amenities, here they are in slums without chairs and tables. Do you know that some used under the trees as their staff rooms? Unbelievable! You said? It happened during defunct UPE programme.

These are important area to be addressed in the UBE programme. Our primary school buildings and surroundings should be beautiful and attractive. The 19th and early 20th century school buildings should be replaced with modern ones. We should try to be more economical in the way we claim to spend millions of Naira on a few classrooms which would not last till the end of a session. There should be a very good but more cost - effective ways of constructing the classrooms that will serve the purpose of the 21th century. The school environment should be made more learner and also teacher- friendly. The type of environment where one works often affects the pride, the dignity and the productivity of the workers as well as that of the learners. The effect the environment could have on learners made some childhood educator to state that children environment is the 'third teacher.' So, the UBE should give us more to provide modern school buildings.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The previous UPE programmes in Nigeria had great plans of making education accessible to all children of school age in Nigeria. However, there were some obstacles which were not adequately taken care of in the programmes. As you have already learnt, the obstacles made it difficult to achieve the desired goals of the programmes. Since the current UBE programme has got some past programmes to learn from, it is expected that necessary steps will be taken to avoid the repeat of past mistakes.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt some factors which may serve as obstacles to the achievement of the UBE goals and objectives. You specially

learnt that poor teachers' preparation, lack of dedication on the part of the teachers, poor motivation of teachers, lack of adequate materials and facilities and inadequate supervision could affect the success of the UBE. We also discussed what can be done to prevent the repeat of the past programme failure.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. List five obstacles to the achievement of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria.
2. How can the obstacles be tackled?

## **7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING AND OTHER SOURCES**

Taiwo, C. G. (1982). *The Nigerian Education System: Past, Present and Future* Lagos: Thomas Nelson (Nig) Ltd.

## **UNIT 14 PROBLEMS OF PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Accessibility
    - 3.1.1 Urban centres
    - 3.1.2 Rural Areas
    - 3.1.3 Solution
  - 3.2 Human and Material Resources
    - 3.2.1 Staffing
    - 3.2.2 Facilities and Instructional Materials
    - 3.2.3 School Environment
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Reading and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In one of the earlier units, we discussed the development of pre-primary education in Nigeria. We mentioned the various factors that have influenced the growth of pre- primary education in Nigeria. In this unit, we are going to discuss the various problems confronting pre - primary education in Nigeria and see how we can do away with such problems.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit carefully, you should be able to:

- identify five problems of pre-primary education in nigeria.
- suggest ways of doing away with such problems.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Accessibility**

##### **3.1.1 Urban Centres**

We have discussed how pre – primary education was introduced into Nigeria first through the Christian Missionaries. We also discussed how the pre-school establishment started in GRAs in urban centres with large

concentration of foreigners. After some time, Nigerians who have travelled abroad and are now back home as well as those who are top civil servant started sending their children to pre- primary schools. I am sure you will remember what led to the expansion of pre-primary schools in Nigeria after independence and at the end of the Nigerian Civil War. For instance, after independence, there were new tertiary institutions such as the universities of Ibadan, Ife, Nsukka, Lagos and ABU. All these new universities had many foreigners and Nigerians who wanted pre-school education for their children. This in a way led to the increase in the number of pre-primary schools. Do not also forget that the rate of industrial development increased after independence. This also led to the coming of many foreigners and their families who needed pre- school educational institution for the children. After civil war in 1970, there was a higher rate of industrial activities with many Nigerian men and women securing good jobs. While the married working women needed places to keep their children, the men then had enough money to send their children to pre- primary schools.

As you have already learnt, the pre - primary schools were springing up mainly in the urban centres. Since the existing good ones were too few to take all those who were interested, many sub-standard pre- primary schools started to spring up. If you take time to go round some major cities in many parts of Nigeria today, you will see many of them in both completed and uncompleted residential buildings. We shall discuss this aspect of the problem later. The increase in the number of pre- primary schools should have been a thing of joy to all of us. However, as many as they are in the urban centres, many children of pre – school age still do not have access to such schools. In other words, the pre-school establishment is accessible only to families with incomes that are above average as a result of the high fees charged in the pre- primary schools. Many parents cannot afford to send their children. This is why the larger percentage of pre – school aged children even in the urban centres cannot receive pre – school education. For example, in a survey of some Local Government Areas by UNICEF, it was discovered that only about 2.0 percent of pre- school age children were attending pre- school establishments. This means that about 98 percent of pre- school age children are not having access to pre – school education in those LGAS. This means that majority of Nigerian pre – school children are not having the necessary stimulation and encouragement which they need for their proper development. Unfortunately, these children who have no access 'to pre – primary school establishments are mainly from home environment that are not only stimulating but also not child friendly. Although, we do not have a statistical data that covers the whole country, yet we can say that there may not be much difference from what we have for those Local Government Areas and other areas.



### 3.1.2 Rural Areas

In our discussion of the development of pre-primary education, we said they started first in the urban centres. Even the post independence expansions concentrated in the urban areas only. This means that right from the beginning, the rural areas have never been included in the list of places that were to be covered. Why do you think this should be so? Well, the answer is simple. It is because the people establishing them want to have the schools in the urban. They believe that only people in the urban centres can pay their fees. The rural children are therefore deprived the opportunity of receiving the early stimulation and encouragement which their counterpart in urban centres are enjoying. That is not all. Even the very few pre- primary schools available in some of the urban areas are not accessible to majority of the children.

In the UNICEF survey which we mentioned earlier on, only about 0.7 percent of normal children have access to pre- school education. That means 99.3 percent do not have access to pre-primary education. Since the majority of children in the rural areas have no access to pre- school education, we can say that majority of pre-school age children in Nigeria have no access to preschool education. This is based on the fact that the population of such children is greater in rural areas than in the urban areas. And by simple calculation it means that in the local government areas covered by UNICEF, only  $2.0 + 0.7$  (i.e .2.7%) (for urban and rural areas ) children of pre- schools age attend pre-primary schools in Nigeria. This is not a good thing for us in Nigeria. If we consider the fact that majority of people living in the rural areas are poor illiterates who cannot provide the necessary stimulation and encouragement for their children, then the absence of pre-school education to the children who need it most is a very serious problem. The implication is that majority of the rural pre-school age children will have their rate of motivation retarded during this important formative period of their lives. Thus, their chances of achieving their potential are greatly reduced. Such children who lack the right opportunities at home for their development should be the first to receive, pre-school education as an intervention programme as it is meant to be in this current UBE programme.

In one of the units, we discussed the FGN/UNICEF Initiatives in bringing low – cost pre-school education to these less privileged children. We also discussed how some on – Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been helping to make pre-school education accessible to many children. The problem is still there as such efforts are not actually reaching the majority of children who need such programmes.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Why are many children in Nigeria not having access to pre-school education?

Your answer should include the following

- The high fees charged in the schools
- Non availability of pre-school establishments in many of the rural areas
- Illiteracy and ignorance of some parents, etc.

### **3.1.3 Solution to the Problem of Access**

In our discussion of the development of pre-primary education we mentioned the Oyo State Primary Education Board's Initiative. If you still remember, we said that Oyo (SPEB) started a programme of running pre-school education as a section of the public primary school, Although this experiment is limited to a few schools in the State , yet we could say it is a right step in the attempt to make pre-school education accessible to all children . In other words, one of the ways of making pre-school education accessible to majority of all pre-school age children in Nigeria is for State and Local Government to make pre-school education a section of the public primary schools as it is categorically stated in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004).Even if it will just be a few schools in each Local Government Area, it will go a long way in helping the poor parent to give their children pre-school education.

Another alternative is for each local government council to establish at least a model pre-primary school which will be highly subsidized if it cannot be made free like the Oyo SPEB pre-primary schools. If the fees charged are limited, and affordable, many of the average parents may be encouraged to send their children there. If such model pre-primary schools are established, the staff should be professionally qualified to teach at the pre-primary level. Otherwise it will not produce the much needed stimulation and encouragement for the children.

The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should be further encouraged to established low-cost pre-primary schools particularly in the deprived areas. In our discussion earlier on, we discussed the activities of OMEP (Nigeria). We specifically mentioned the establishment of pre- primary schools near market places, and in the rural areas. Government as well as individuals, associations and communities can assist the NGO's with money and other materials. The NGOs have been doing a great work not only in Nigeria but throughout

the world. Any assistance therefore could further make it possible for them to reach out to more areas where children have been deprived of many things including early childhood education.

When we were discussing the UBE programmes and early childhood education we mentioned that Government will seek the support of NGOs, parents and guardians, the community and voluntary organizations. In fact, one of the specific steps to be taken by government is to encourage the establishment of more early childhood centres and community-based pre-primary schools in collaborations with grass root organizations. All these are good steps towards making pre-primary education accessible to all pre -school age children.

However, there is still the need for proper awareness programme for all our people. There are many parents in both urban and rural areas who do not know the importance of pre-school education for their children. Without adequate information given to the masses on the good things their children can derive from the pre-school establishment, many parents would still be keeping their children at home. Therefore, all the means at the disposal of the government should be used to educate, inform and enlighten parents and guardians on the importance of pre-school education. Apart from using the radio and television, the officials of the information unit in the Ministry of Information, and the Local Government should be sent out to do village to village visit or campaigns and pass the information across. This is necessary otherwise, even if the pre-primary schools are free; many parents may not send their children.

## **3.2 Human and Materials Resources**

### **3.2.1 Staffing**

As you are already aware, the National Policy on Education stipulated that private efforts will be encouraged to establish pre- primary schools in Nigeria. This means that government at all levels may not be directly involved in the establishment and management of pre-primary school. Therefore, since the private individuals and organizations involved want to make profit, they often do not employ the right calibre of teachers. In some cases, the numbers of staff employed are reduced to save cost. So it should not be a surprise if you get to a pre-primary school class in any part of Nigeria and find only a teacher without a helper. In some cases, non- professionally qualified teachers are appointed to teach in many of the pre-primary schools. Do you know why? It is simply because the untrained teachers could take any salary which the professionally qualified teachers may reject.

A survey conducted by the Situation and Policy Analysis of Basic Education in Nigeria (SAPA) sometimes ago showed that about 25% of teachers in the sampled schools had NCE. The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) is the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria. But let me quickly add here that it is not every NCE teacher or even University graduate in Education that are competent to teach at the pre-primary school. The various Ministries of Education which are in charge of the registration and supervision of pre- primary schools are not really doing much in this respect. I am not sure the ministry of education official conducts regular supervision of the school to find out the teachers' qualifications. So, the suggestion we can offer here is that the ministry, of education should insist on having professionally qualified and competent teachers for the pre-primary schools. If they only depend on the information supplied on their registration, the true situation would not be discovered. The only solution is for the officials to conduct regular inspection and personnel audits of the pre-primary school establishments. If the pre-primary schools are not having qualified teachers, the children will not be having what they need for their all around development. That will be as bad as not even going to the pre-primary school at all.

### **3.2.2 Facilities and Instructional Materials**

If you have seen many of the pre-primary school establishment around, you would have noticed that many are operating from private residential buildings. That is, many of the nursery schools are not operating in ideal school environments. You often see the so-called nursery and primary schools putting children in very badly ventilated rooms. Thus, the children hardly have open air and open spaces to play, run and jump. You may see a few swings or slide boards which are fixed outside. These few outdoor play materials are even fixed in dangerous places in most of the schools. So in a way, we can say that most of the pre-primary schools in Nigeria do not operate in conducive learning environment. If the schools that are operated in private residential buildings are in spacious places, it could have been manageable.

Apart from the unsuitable buildings many of the nursery schools lack other essential materials which should be available in such schools. For example, many schools do not have adequate chairs and tables, rest-rooms, and other play material. As you are aware children in pre-primary school should learn through play. However, where the necessary instructional materials are not available for the children, teachers often do not make any attempt to improvise in teaching process which is not good for this level of education. A study by SAPA has revealed that the chalkboard is the most commonly found material in our pre-primary schools which actually supports the claim that the pre-

primary schools engage mostly in formal teaching of the children. Again the Ministry of Education officials should intensify their inspection and supervision of the Nursery schools. It appears as if the Ministry of Education in the States concern themselves only with the collection of the registration fees and other levies. What goes on in the schools once they have been registered does not seem to be their concern again. This is not good for the overall growth and development of the children. The government should not be too much concerned with the financial benefits from the schools like the proprietors and proprietresses.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

As important as pre-primary education is, there are many problems confronting the level of education. Many children of pre- primary school age in Nigeria do not have the opportunity of receiving pre-primary education. Even some of them who attend preschool establishment are not having what they should be having in terms of early stimulation and encouragement. This therefore makes the problem more complex.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have discussed the various problems confronting pre-primary education in Nigeria. Many children do not attend pre-primary schools in Nigerian because the schools are not available in their areas. Some also cannot pay the high fees charged in the schools because their parents are poor. You also learnt what government at all levels should do to ensure that pre-school education is made available to all children no matter their socio-economic background. Finally you have learnt in the unit the inadequacy of competent teachers and facilities in most pre-primary schools in Nigeria and what should be done about it. In the next unit, you will learn how to start a nursery school.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS**

1. List five problems facing pre-primary education in Nigeria.
2. Suggests ways of overcoming the problem identified in question

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING AND OTHER SOURCES**

FGN (1993) SAPA National Report Lagos: Federal Ministry of Education and Youth Development.

## **UNIT 15 HOW TO START A PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 General Requirements
    - 3.1.1 Premises/Location
    - 3.1.2 Physical Facilities
    - 3.1.3 Learning/Play Materials
  - 3.2 Personnel Administration
    - 3.2.1 Teaching and Non-teaching Staff
    - 3.2.2 Finance/Administration
    - 3.2.3 Registration
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignments
- 7.0 References and Other Sources

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In Nigeria, the establishment and management of pre-primary schools is mainly done by private, individuals, groups and organizations except in the recent time that the government start showing positive attitude to it. This however does not mean there are no rules and regulations guiding the establishment of pre-primary schools. Therefore in order to receive the official permission to open a pre-school establishment, there are certain requirements that should be met. In this unit, we are going to examine those regulations guiding the establishment of pre-primary school in Nigeria. Although, there are minor variations from State to State particularly as they relate to the registration procedure, yet there are still some general requirements. If these requirements are known, then it will be easier for you to start a pre- primary school if you like.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After studying this unit carefully you should be able to:

- Explain the general requirement for starting a pre-primary school.
- Identify other human and material resources necessary for starting a pre- primary school.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 General Requirements**

#### **3.1.1 Premises/Location**

In some of the earlier units, we have discussed the problem of inadequacy in the number of pre-primary schools we have in Nigeria. This means that we still need more so that more Nigerian pre-school age children could have access to pre-school education. As a specialist in Earlier Childhood Education, you should be familiar with the necessary things to do in setting up a good pre-primary school. The first step in starting a pre-primary school is to make a feasibility study as the business people will say. That is, you must first of all find out the possibility of pre-primary school being required or needed in the particular areas. So, the first thing you should do is to find out the following:

What is the population density of the area? For instance, are there many families with many pre-school age children in the areas? If the answer is yes, the next thing is to find out the general level of education and occupation of the parents. This is necessary because if the area is a predominantly illiterate and agrarian community, it may have some implications for the number of children that will be allowed to attend the school.

Then you will need to find out the number of the existing pre-primary schools in the areas. If there is none or if the existing ones are deficient in certain ways, this might be a good reason for you to open a new school there. When you are satisfied that there is need for a pre-primary school in the areas, then the next thing is to look for the venue. The premises should be suitable and safe for children. For example, the place must be easily accessible to children and their parents. It must be safe in terms of not being too close to the highway, children being free from Kidnappers, dangerous animals and reptiles etc. Then, the premises must be well ventilated and the environment not polluted. It should be clean and not too close to a market or a factory.

The premises or location of pre-primary school is very important because the condition and size of the place among other things may affect many other things or subsequent decision about the school. After ensuring that the proposed location is suitable enough for the purpose, then you will have to take a decision on whether to make use of an existing building or to construct a new one. It all depends on the resources at your disposal. However, there are certain specific

requirements as regards physical facilities. This is what we shall try to discuss in the next sections of this unit.

### **3.1.2 Physical Facilities**

You have learnt that you could start a pre-primary school with an existing building such as big hall, or other big buildings. You may also start with a set of newly constructed classroom blocks. Whichever one you may prefer, there are certain guidelines to follow. The requirements as produced by the Federal Ministry of Education are reproduced below.

Building must conform to the following standards:

- (i) The classroom size should be 12m by 6.5m to accommodate about 25 children (30sq.ft).
- (ii) Each classroom should be cross- ventilated and well lighted
- (iii) Each classroom must have storage facilities and built-in cupboards for items of equipment.
- (iv) The classroom should have two access doorways to serve as alternative exits and a veranda on either side of the classroom
- (v) There must be a cloakroom, toilet and wash hand basins of appropriate height.
- (vi) There must be a separate staff room, office for the Head teachers, and First Aids Units with the provisions of two to four beds per class.
- (vii) A good source of water supply should be available.

From the above list, you may be thinking it is only the normal classroom buildings that can be used. This may be so for a start. All the things mentioned above are for the permanent site. A large hall or building can be partitioned appropriately to meet the needs. This is usually the case when the building has a large open hall. As regard the residential building, there are some that are not suitable. You will have to see to it yourself that whatever building you are using is well ventilated.

As regards the furniture, the guideline on pre-primary education stipulates that the chairs and tables should be suitable for the ages and sizes of the children. Moreover, such tables and chairs should be made of polished wood of Formica surface and should be light materials. There should be no sharp edges. Why do you think the materials should be light? In addition to these, there should be a large table with drawers for teachers use. Provision should be made for book racks and toy storage in every classroom.

The last thing as regard physical facilities is the play ground. Although most pre-primary school establishments particularly, those in residential



building often lack this .This is not good since children need much space to run and play. This is why the Federal Ministry of Education has specifically listed some items that should be available on the playground. These are:

1. A well-fenced-in playground varying in size according to the enrolment of school should be provided for security purpose. Where possible, provision should be made for further growth. In other words, there should be room for expansion of the play ground as the population of the school increases. This is necessary since most pre-primary schools later develop to include the primary sections.
2. The playground should be grassed and installed with facilities for climbing, Jumping, puffing, swinging, balancing etc. Why do you think such playground should be grassed when they are not used mainly as a football field?
3. A track of hard surface for pushing along wheeled toys should be provided

### **3.1.3 Learning/Play and Other Materials**

We have just identified some of the physical facilities that are expected in a standard pre- primary school. Just like I told you earlier on, for a start, you may not be able to provide all of them. However, this does not mean you can start pre-primary school without having some of the facilities. In fact, the State Ministry of Education may refuse the registration of your school for that simple reason of inadequate facilities. As much as the physical facilities are necessary, the play and others learning materials are equally important. For example, it is not enough to have all the physical facilities in place without the real materials that will be used to stimulate the children. If you will still remember, we said in another unit that play is one of the most natural needs of children. This is why Froebel and other child educators emphasized the need to provide the children with a wide variety of materials through which they can be actively engaged in play activities that will bring about the development of some concepts and skills. You will also still recall that formal learning or formal instruction has little place in the pre-primary school.

Therefore, since play is very fundamental to whatever learning that takes place with variety of materials. Such materials must include those that are necessary for the development of gross physical skills such as running, jumping, climbing etc. Similarly there are those that are needed for the development of fine motor skills that is fingers and wrist. We must not forget also that there are those that are needed for the intellectual, social and emotional development of the child among

others. Therefore, you can see that it is not just one or two materials but a wide variety of them that are needed to help children develop maximally. We shall only make an attempt here to indicate some of the materials. The list is not limited to those given here. You must find out more on your own.

(i) For gross motors skills

Materials to be provided here should include those that will provide opportunities for climbing, swinging, hopping, jumping and running and others. e.g Climbing frames, sliding boards, swings, rocking horse, seesaw, hoops and ropes etc.

(ii) Fine motor skills

Material here should include those that will encourage throwing catching, cutting, threading, painting, drawing etc. Such materials therefore school include small balls, bean bags, beads and stings for threading and counting , crayon, pencil and papers, weighing scales etc.

(iii) Intellectual Skills

This is probably where you need the most diversified material to provide the rich experience the child needs. In this regard, the following among others are necessary:-

Toys of various shapes, columns and sizes, for counting, modelling, construction etc; water and dry sand trough, children's literature, blocks, colour sorting and matching materials etc.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the factors you will take into consideration in selecting the location of a proposed pre-primary school.

Your answer should include the following:

- Population density
- Accessibility of the location
- Security/safety
- Open and airy
- Free from environmental pollution
- Not too close to a market, high way etc.

## 3.2 Personnel and Administration

### 3.2.1 Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

We have just identified some of the general requirements for the establishment of a pre-primary school. We identified some of the physical facilities, learning and play material. It is one thing to have all those materials and it is another thing to manage them effectively. In other words, even if you have the best of facilities and material, if there are no capable and professionally competent men and women to manage them, they will be useless. This is where the question of the teaching and non teaching staff comes in. Therefore, let us see what the requirements are in terms of the teaching staff.

First the Head Teachers, according to the guidelines from the Federal Ministry of Education, whoever is to become the Head Teacher of a pre-primary school should have received specialized training in pre-primary Education. The following are some of the qualification expected of the Head teachers of a pre-primary school. That is, he/she must be one of the following:

- (i) A trained qualified teacher with at least five years experience in lower primary classes, or the Montessori, Diploma certificate or Diploma of any Universities or Colleges of Education.
- (ii) A Grade II Teachers Certificate with Associateship Certificate in Education (ACE) of any recognized Nigerian University with specialization in Pre-primary Education
- (iii) A Grade II certificate with Montessori Diploma
- (iv) A Grade II Teacher with any of the following certificates or diplomas of any recognized university or college of education
  - (a) National Froebel Foundation course
  - (b) NCE Pre-primary/primary of any Nigerian or other university.
- (v) Ministry of Education Certificate in U. K – 2 – 3 years
- (vi) B.Ed, B.A (Education) with specialization in Pre-primary Education
- (vii) Any other qualification in early childhood education approved by the Federal Ministry of Education.

As regards the class teachers, the Federal Ministry of Education recommended that the qualifications listed for the Head teachers would also be appropriate for them. However, in addition, Grade I and Grade II teachers could be allowed to teach there. But now that the NCE has become the minimum teaching qualification, it may be necessary to limit the qualification of teachers for pre-primary school to NCE with specialization in early childhood education. I will personally not

recommend grade II teachers except those with not less than ten or fifteen years teaching experience. The non-teaching staff which we normally refer to as Nursery Helpers could have any of the following:- Modern III certificate holders, Pre 1976 standard six certificate holders, and Primary six certificate holders. May be we can include J.S III certificate holders or those who failed their SSC examinations.

The recommended teacher- pupil's ratio is 1:25. That is, no class in the pre-primary school should be more than 25 children. Even then, apart from the professionally qualified teachers, there must be at least a helper in the class. Why do you think this is so? Well, children are generally more difficult to teach than adults. It even becomes more difficult to teach the pre-school children. They require a lot of supervision and individual attention which may be too much for a single teacher to cope with. This is why in any good pre-primary school; you will always find at least a helper in each class.

### **3.2.2 Finance and Administration**

As we have mentioned earlier on, the establishment and management of pre-school institutions in Nigeria is a private affair. That is, government is not directly involved in the funding and the day to day administration of the schools. Therefore, it is the individual school proprietor/proprietress that generate the funds for running the schools. Sources of funding the pre-primary schools include:

- (i) Personal saving
- (ii) Loans
- (iii) School fees and other levies
- (iv) Donations/gift from individuals and groups.
- (v) Internally generated revenue through money collected on school property such as Bus, hall rented out etc.

Since, government is not directly involved; the management of the finances of the schools are their own problems. That is, they could do whatever they want with their money. However, for proper management, it is better for each school to open a bank account where all income and expenditure should pass through. Some schools employ the services of account clerks while the very big one even employs qualified Accountants.

To start a pre-primary school and to equip it adequately a big sum of money may be required. This is going by the present cost of living generally in Nigeria. This however will depend on whether you are starting with an existing building or newly constructed one. Therefore, it

is difficult to say exactly how much you will need. But just be sure that you need some reasonable amount of money to start.

In the day to day administration of the school, much depends on the proprietor and the Head teacher. In many cases, the Head teacher is in-charge of academic programmes while the proprietor/proprietress is in-charge of the other aspect of financial transaction. Whatever the situation, there must be a Board of Governors which will be responsible for taking major decisions on the affairs of the school generally. There should also be the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA). This body is purely in an advisory capacity. The membership is open to all parents and the guardians of children in the school as well as the teachers. On the other hand, the Board of Governors membership is based on the nomination by the proprietors of the school. They are usually men and women with great experience and interest in education.

In the day to day running of the school, the Head teacher needs certain records that must be available in the school. These are referred to as statutory records. They include the following:-

- Admission Register
- Attendance Register
- Log Book.
- Visitors' Book.
- Pupils' progress (Continuous Assessment) Cards.
- Diary of work
- Lesson Notes for teachers
- Time Book
- Movement Book etc

You should find out the use of each of the items listed above

### **3.2.3 Registration**

As mentioned earlier on, the registration of pre-primary school education centres is the responsibility of state government. Specifically, the State Ministry of Education is responsible for giving the final approval to open the school. The procedure as we said earlier on may vary a little from state to state. But generally speaking the following procedures are followed. First, the prospective proprietor will obtain the registration forms from the Ministry of Education at specified fees. The fees which vary from state to state are also subject to review from time to time. So, after collecting and returning the forms to the Ministry, the inspection of the site and the existing facilities will be carried out to ensure that they are adequate. In this regard, two others Ministries will also be involved in the inspections. These are the Ministry of Works and

Housing. This Ministry is to ensure that the buildings are put up in conformity with the specifications approved for that level of education. In addition, this Ministry will ensure that safety standards are complied with. The Ministry of Health on the other hand will see to the health aspect of the school. That is, are the necessary toilets and other health facilities provided? They will also ensure that the classrooms are well ventilated and there are no health hazards in the school environment generally. They will also look at the food vendors, etc. It is only when the Ministries are satisfied with the facilities in addition to the Ministry of Education's recommendation on the staff, the academic programme etc. that the approval can be given. The registration, is however not a once affair. That is, it has to be renewed yearly. Similarly, there will be regular inspection of the school. The school can be closed down at anytime by the Commissioner of Education if the school fails to meet the required standard.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

There is need for more pre-school establishments in Nigeria. Research findings have shown that majority of pre-school age children in Nigeria have no access to pre-primary schools. This means that children who are not having the necessary stimulation and encouragement even at home as a result of poor home background will not have the opportunity of receiving it in school. It has therefore become necessary for more pre-school establishments to be provided. Experts in early childhood education should take up the challenge to open more pre-primary schools particularly in areas where they are very few or not even available.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this chapter you have learnt the various steps to take in establishing a new pre-primary school. You were first told to do a feasibility study of the area in which you intend to open the school. This is to help you find out exactly whether it is needed in the areas or not. Then, you learnt the type of environment that is suitable as well as the human and material resources needed. Finally you learnt the steps to take in the registration of the school with your State Ministry of Education. There is no doubt at all that the knowledge acquired by you in this unit will be of great benefit to you in future.

#### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. What are the requirements for the buildings in a pre-primary school?
2. Explain the sources of funding pre-primary education in Nigeria

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING AND OTHER SOURCES**

Federal Republic of Nigeria (1987). Guideline on Pre-Primary Education. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Education.

Durojaiye, S. M. (1977). Practical Methods for Nursery Schools. Ibadan. Oxford University Press.

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