



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

COURSE CODE: ECE410

**COURSE TITLE: ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRIMARY
EDUCATION**



ECE410
ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRIMARY
EDUCATION

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Introduction

ECE410: Issues in Early Childhood and Primary Education is a second semester two-credit 400 level core course. It will be available for all students offering B. Ed. Early Childhood Education.

Education has become one of the most powerful means of reducing poverty and inequality as well as laying the foundation for sustainable growth and development. The global desire and support that every child in every country should have access to and complete at least primary education testifies to the importance of education.

Educational issues are now reflected in the discussion of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In fact, education has on its own become a goal to be achieved by individuals, communities and nations.

The role and benefit of primary education in developing the capacity of the individual to learn, to become literate and thereby reduce ignorance and poverty is not quantifiable. It has even been stated that the role of primary education in reducing poverty and income inequality is even more strongly established than its contribution to overall economic growth. Therefore, making good quality primary education accessible to all, irrespective of social, economic or cultural and ethnic background, as well as gender, is crucial to the social and economic empowerment of the individuals. If for whatever reason a large proportion of children do not have access to, or complete primary education, then the great potentials for knowledge-driven development of the economy will be greatly retarded.

What you will Learn in this Course

This course guide tells you briefly what to expect from reading the course material. Issues in Early Childhood and Primary Education are not only of academic importance, but primary education in particular is the gateway to other levels of education that develops in the individual the literacy necessary for acquiring and using information. Therefore, to be conversant with topical issues in primary education helps us to appreciate the need for making the level of education accessible to all. In addition, we shall be in a position to encourage the participation and support of individuals, groups, international organisations and governments in ensuring universal access to, and completion of good quality primary education.

Many people including governments particularly in the developing countries like Nigeria are yet to appreciate the contributions of early childhood education to the society. This therefore explains why

government has not been very much committed to the universality of access to this level of education.

Early childhood education is particularly desirable for children with various degrees of deprivations. The early years are very crucial to the intellectual, social, emotional and physical development of children. Any damage done at this age may be difficult, if not impossible, to remedy in later life. In this regard, an exposure to some topical issues in early childhood education will make it possible for us to appreciate more the contributions of this level of education to the success of the other levels of education.

Course Aims

The aim of the course is to provide understanding and appreciation of the contributions of early childhood and primary education to the individual and the society. It also aims at helping you to appreciate the need for total support and cooperation in making good quality primary education accessible to all citizens, boys and girls alike, irrespective of their backgrounds.

Course Objectives

After going through this course, you should be able to:

- explain the concepts of early childhood education and primary education
- list the benefits of early childhood education and primary education to the individual and the society generally
- state the reasons why primary education is regarded as the gateway to other levels of education
- explain how early childhood education could be made accessible to all children in Nigeria
- identify the group of children that needs early childhood education and why
- enumerate the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as they relate to primary education
- state the difference between gender parity and gender equality in primary education
- suggest ways of ensuring gender balance or parity in primary education in Nigeria
- identify the factors responsible for the globally acknowledged low quality of primary education.

In order to achieve the aims set out, the course sets overall objectives. Each study unit also has specific objectives. The unit objectives are always included at the beginning of a study unit; you should read them before you start working through the unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the unit to check on your progress.

You should always look at the unit objectives after completing a unit. In doing so, you will be sure that you have followed the instructions in the unit.

Below are the wider objectives of the course as a whole. By meeting these objectives, you should have achieved the aims of the course as a whole. On successful completion of the course, you should be able to answer the following questions:

What is early childhood education?

What do you understand by primary education?

What does research say about the benefits of early childhood education and primary education to the individual and the society at large?

Why is primary education regarded as the gateway to other levels of education?

Explain how early childhood education could be made accessible to all children in Nigeria.

Which group of children needs early childhood education most? Give reasons for your answer.

Enumerate the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as they relate to primary education.

What is the difference between gender parity and gender equality in primary education?

Suggest ways of ensuring gender balance or parity in primary education in Nigeria.

Identify the factors responsible for the globally acknowledged low quality of primary education.

Working through this Course

This course would require you to spend much of time to read the material. The content of the material is very comprehensive and requires that you take your time in studying it. It has been made easy to read and therefore learnable. You will however need to put in great effort to take advantage of attending the tutorial sessions when you will have the opportunity of sharing knowledge with your colleagues.

Course Materials

Major components of the course are:

Course Guide
 Study Units
 References
 Assignment File
 Presentation Schedule

In addition, the course carries with it a list of references and other reading materials which are not compulsory for you to buy. You will however, benefit from reading them and if possible buy them as supplements to the course material.

Study Units

The study units in this course are as follows:

Module 1 Issues in Early Childhood Education

- Unit 1 Meaning and Benefits of Early Childhood (Pre-primary) Education
- Unit 2 Universality of Access in Early Childhood Education
- Unit 3 Organisation and Management of Early Childhood Education
- Unit 4 Early Childhood Curriculum and Evaluation
- Unit 5 Pre-Primary School Learning Styles
- Unit 6 Teacher Education for Pre-Primary and Primary Education in Nigeria in the 21st Century
- Unit 7 Community Participation and Involvement in Pre-Primary and Primary Education

Module 2 Issues in Primary Education

- Unit 1 Meaning and Importance of Primary Education
- Unit 2 Global Challenges to Primary Education
- Unit 3 Gender Equality in Education
- Unit 4 Free Mid-day Meal in School
- Unit 5 Homework in Primary Education
- Unit 6 The Role of Primary Schools in Sustaining the Benefits of Early Childhood Education Programme
- Unit 7 Millennium Development Goals for Primary Education

Assignment File

There are 14 assignments in this course. The 14- course assignment will cover:

- (1) What is early childhood education?
- (2) What do you understand by primary education?
- (3) What does research says about the benefits of early childhood education and primary education to the individual and the society at large?
- (4) Why is primary education regarded as the gateway to other levels of education?
- (5) Explain how early childhood education could be made accessible to all children in Nigeria.
- (6) Which group of children needs early childhood education most? Give reasons for your answer.
- (7) Enumerate the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as they relate to primary education.
- (8) What is the difference between gender parity and gender equality in primary education?
- (9) Suggest ways of ensuring gender balance or parity in primary education in Nigeria.
- (10) Identify the factors responsible for the globally acknowledged low quality of primary education.

Presentation Schedule

The presentation schedule included in your course material gives you the important dates within the year for the completion of tutor-marked assignments and attendance at tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should guard against falling behind in your work.

Assessment

There are two aspects to the assessment of the course: first are the Tutor-Marked Assignments; and second, there is a written end of semester examination.

In tackling the assignments, you are advised to be sincere in attempting the exercises; you are expected to apply information, knowledge and techniques gathered during the course. The assignments must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the *Presentation Schedule* and the *Assignment File*. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total course mark.

At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final written examination of 'three hours' duration. This examination will also count for 70% of your total course mark.

Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)

There are Tutor-Marked Assignments in this course. You only need to submit four of the eight assignments. You are encouraged, however, to submit all assignments in which case the highest three of the marks will be counted. Each assignment counts 10% towards your total course mark.

Assignment questions for the units in this course are contained in the *Assignment File*. You will be able to complete your assignment from the information and materials contained in your reading, references and study units. However, it is desirable in all degree level education to demonstrate that you have read and researched more widely than the required minimum. Using other references will give you a broader viewpoint and may provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it together with a TMA (Tutor-Marked Assignment) form, to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given in the *Presentation Schedule* and *Assignment File*.

If for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is due to discuss the possibility of an extension. Extensions will not be granted after the due date unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination for ECE410 will be of three hours' duration and have a value of 70% of the total course grade.

The examination will consist of questions, which reflect the types of self-testing, practice exercise and Tutor-Marked Assignments you have previously encountered. All areas of the course will be assessed.

Spend the time between finishing the last study unit and sitting for the examination to revise the entire course. You might find it useful to review your Tutor-Marked Assignments and comments on them before the examination.

The final examination covers information from all parts of the course.

Course Marking Scheme

Total Course Marking Scheme

ASSESSMENT	MARKS
Assignment 1 – 14	Four assignments, best three marks of the nine count @ 10% each = 30% of course marks
Final Examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

Course Overview

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them and the assignment that follow them.

Unit	Title of work	Weeks activity	Assessment (end of unit)
	Module 1: Issues in Early Childhood Education		
1	Meaning and Benefits of Early Childhood (Pre-primary) Education	1	Assignment 1
2	Universality of Access in Early Childhood Education	1	Assignment 2
3	Organisation and Management of Early Childhood Education	1	Assignment 3
4	Community Participation/Involvement in Early Childhood Education	1	Assignment 4
5	Pre-School Children's Learning Styles	1	Assignment 5
6	Curriculum and Assessment in Early Childhood Education	1	Assignment 6
7	Teacher Education for Early Childhood Education		Assignment 7
	Module 2: Issues in Primary Education		
1	Meaning and Importance of Primary Education	1	Assignment 8
2	Global Challenges to Primary Education		Assignment 9
3	Gender Equality in Education	1	Assignment 10
4	Free Mid-day Meal in School	1	Assignment 11
5	Homework in Primary Education	1	Assignment 12

6	The Role of Primary Schools in Sustaining the Benefits of Early Childhood Education Programme	1	Assignment 13
7	Millennium Development Goals for Primary Education	1	Assignment 14
	Revision		
	Total		

How to Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning. You can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as the lecture. A lecturer might set you some reading to do; the study unit will tell you when to read your other materials. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit, and how a particular unit is integrated with the others and with the course as a whole.

Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the unit, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this, you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from a *Reading Section* of some other sources.

Self-tests are interspersed throughout the end of units. Working through these tests will help you to achieve the objectives of the unit and prepare you for the assignments and the examination. You should do each self-test as you come to it in the study unit. There will also be numerous examples given in the study units, work through these when you come to them too.

The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read this course guide thoroughly.
2. Organise a study schedule. Refer to the course overview for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Important information e.g. details of your tutorials, and the date of the first day of the semester will be made available. You need to gather all this information in one place, such as your diary or a wall calendar. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates for working on each unit.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they get behind with their coursework. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.
4. Turn to unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your references, on your desk at the same time.
6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the units, you will be instructed to read sections from your other sources. Use the unit to guide your reading.
7. Well before the relevant due date, check your Assignment File and make sure you attend to the next required assignment. Keep in mind that you will learn a lot by doing the assignments carefully.

They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and, therefore, will help you pass the exam. Submit all assignments not later than the due date.

8. Review of the objectives for each study unit confirms that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.
9. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by

unit through the course and try to face your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.

10. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also written on the assignment. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
11. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the Course Guide).

Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

There are 17 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, time and location of these tutorials, together with the names and phone numbers of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required).

They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible. Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary.

Contact your tutor if you:

- do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings
- have difficulty with the self-test or exercise.
- have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comment on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face-to-face contact with your tutor and to ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study.

To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

Summary

ECE410 intends to introduce the meaning, benefits and other concepts of Early Childhood (Pre-primary) Education and Primary Education respectively. Upon completing the course, you will be equipped with the basic knowledge of the important concepts and types of tools that would assist the bringing up of young children to acquire early childhood and primary education respectively. You will be able to answer these kinds of questions:

What is early childhood education?

What do you understand by primary education?

What are research results on the benefits of early childhood education and primary education to the individual and the society at large?

Why is primary education regarded as the gateway to other levels of education?

Explain how early childhood education could be made accessible to all children in Nigeria.

Which group of children needs early childhood education most? Give reasons for your answer.

Enumerate the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as they relate to primary education.

What is the difference between gender parity and gender equality in primary education?

Suggest ways of ensuring gender balance or parity in primary education in Nigeria.

Identify the factors responsible for the globally acknowledged low quality of primary education.

Of course, the list of questions that you can answer is not limited to the above list. In order to gain the most from this course, you should try to apply the principles and concepts to your daily life and practice of media use in educational settings.

We hope you enjoy your acquaintances with the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). We wish you success in your studies.

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MODULE 1 ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Unit 1	Meaning and Benefits of Early Childhood (Pre-primary) Education
Unit 2	Universality of Access in Early Childhood Education
Unit 3	Organisation and Management of Early Childhood Education
Unit 4	Community Participation/Involvement in Early Childhood Education
Unit 5	Pre-School Children's Learning Styles
Unit 6	Teacher Education for Pre-Primary and Primary Education in Nigeria in the 21st Century
Unit 7	Community Participation and Involvement in Pre-Primary and Primary Education

UNIT 1 MEANING AND BENEFITS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD (PRE-PRIMARY) EDUCATION

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The early childhood period is generally regarded as a very significant period in the life of an individual. Although the environment plays an important role in encouraging or discouraging the child to attain his optimum development, yet the child should not be viewed as a passive recipient of environmental influences. Rather, he should be viewed as an active producer of and participant in the environmental influences that affect his/her optimum development.

All aspects of a child's growth and development are so interdependent that they should be adequately taken care of by both parents and teachers, particularly from birth till about six years. This is a period

when lifelong habits of thought, physical expression, social and emotional responsiveness are laid. Therefore an understanding of the child's all-round development will help the parents and teachers to promote rather than hinder it.

In this unit, you are going to learn the meaning, types and the benefits of pre-school education to the child, the parents and the society generally.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the meaning of pre-school education
- identify the different types of pre-school education
- enumerate the benefits of pre-school education to the child, the parents and the society at large.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Meaning of Pre-School Education

Pre-school education is a very broad term which we need to explain very well. This is because of the mix up usually observed in the discussion of the education of children before the official primary school age, which is six years in Nigeria.

Pre-school refers to the period before the official school age of six years. Pre-school education could therefore be taken to mean all forms of education given to children from birth till about the age of six years when formal schooling begins. This could be in the various well-organised establishments such as: schools and centres or in the traditional settings. For the purpose of clarity therefore, the next section will focus on the various types of pre-school education.

3.2 Types of Pre-School Education

We shall discuss four types of pre-school education as follows:

(a) Pre-School Education

Let us start the discussion of pre-school education with that type of education given to children from birth till about the age of six years in traditional African societies. Pre-school education in traditional African societies is also referred to as indigenous education or parental education. According to Akinpelu (2005), the first distinctive element in this system of education is its comprehensive and integrated nature. It

is a complete and lifelong education which is well integrated in its parts and the whole is well integrated with living.

Since we are discussing the education of children below the age of six years, it will be enough for us to say here that the education is practical and the whole community actively participates in moulding and educating the child in general and social behaviour, toilet training as well as intellectual and physical development. In other words, the education of the child is not left to the biological parents of the child alone. You can read more on traditional African education from the list of references provided at the end of this unit.

(b) Pre-Primary Education

This is the education given to children of ages from three to five years plus in an educational institution. It is usually well organised and coordinated with regular and trained teachers and other professionals who help to promote the child's all-round development. It helps in preparing children for the primary level of education. This is popularly referred to in Nigeria as nursery school.

It is usually registered with the state ministry of education which supervises the activities of such establishments. We shall discuss more about this under the section on benefits of pre-school education. You can also read more on pre-primary education in the National Policy on Education (2004) and other references at the end of this unit.

(c) Crèche

A crèche is a child- minding place or centre for children from a few months till about three years. It is mainly established to provide custodial care for children of working mothers. The physical, mental, social and emotional needs of children at the crèche are usually adequately taken care of by trained teachers/nurses.

A crèche is usually located within the same venue where the mothers of the children are working. Therefore, a crèche is usually a kind of cooperative pre-school centre managed and run by working mothers within an establishment. For example, there is one within the University of Ibadan managed by the University Women's Society.

(d) Play Group/Day Care Centre

This is also a child minding centre for children below the age of three years. The day care or play group performs the same function as the crèche. The only difference is that while the crèche is located within the

same environment/premises where the mothers of the children are working, the day care or play group centre may be located far away from the mother's place of work. In most urban centres in Nigeria, the play group or day care centres are located in private residential apartments, church/mosque premises, halls or community centres. They could be run by private individuals, religious organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations like UNICEF, OMEP, etc.

You must have seen some of such centres around you even if you have never patronised them. The major concern about such centres is that many of them are not registered with the appropriate government agencies. In fact, the level of hygiene of many of them particularly those in private residential buildings is poor. Moreover, some old, jobless and sometimes, illiterate women are the owners of such centres.

At any rate, the day care centres as they are popularly called, have been helping some working mothers both in urban and rural areas to keep their children 'safe' while they are away at work. A few of such centres have in actual fact graduated into pre-primary and primary schools in different parts of the country.

Can you identify any of such centres in your town or village?

3.3 The Benefits of Pre-School Education

The Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) stated that, learning begins at birth. This implies that all countries of the world should not only expand access to early childhood education, but also ensure that the quality of services provided at the various pre-school education centres do not inhibit or affect negatively in any way the overall development and well being of the children. It has been observed that while government pays attention to the 'education' of children from the age of three years up to the age of their entry into primary school, little or nothing is done for those below the age of three years.

According to UNESCO (2006), in many developing countries, early childhood education is not a priority of the governments. This is probably so because many of the countries are already almost too overburdened with the responsibilities for other levels of education. The urgent need for the development of the much needed manpower for the various sectors of the economy has made it difficult for many of the countries to spare some funds and attention for the development of early childhood education. This is most unfortunate because even where pre-primary education is given an attention, they are completely left in the

hands of private individuals and organisations. The profit motive of such proprietors/proprietresses leading to high fees could not allow many pre-school children access to the existing pre-primary schools. The issue of access will be discussed in the next section.

Now let us discuss some of the benefits or purposes of pre-primary education:

The major purpose of pre-primary education is the holistic development of the child. That is to say, it should promote an all round development of the child. This is particularly necessary in a developing country like ours where many parents, for social and economic reasons, could no longer provide the needed stimulating environment for the child's holistic development. The ideal pre-primary school establishment should therefore take care, not only of the intellectual aspect of the child's development, but also the health, nutrition, social and emotional as well as the physical aspects of the child in a child-friendly environment. No matter how brief the pre-primary education lasts, it must promote the all round development of the child.

The pre-primary establishment also provides custodial care for the children while their parents are away at work in the offices, markets, schools, hospitals and other places. As you are aware, the days when grandmothers, mother-in-laws, aunties and other relations come to stay with the young couples are gone. Even now, the grandmothers, mother-in-laws no longer have the time to stay with their children. This is because they are themselves sometimes too busy to have the time to come and stay for months. Similarly, reliable house helps are difficult to get these days. Those available are either too expensive for the average family or they constitute security risks to the family. Therefore, for social and security reasons, the pre-primary school establishments have become safe havens for the children while their parents are at work (Akinbote, *et al.*, 2001).

As once argued by Kent and cited by Akinbote *et al.* (2001), the chances of a child fulfilling his full potentials could be affected by the standard of living and the level of stimulation and encouragement received at home. Many families in Nigeria today, including the wealthy ones, are not providing the much needed stimulating environment that is good enough for the all round development of their children. The social and economic activities parents engage in hardly allow them time to provide the kind of stimulating environment needed for the optimum development of the children. In addition, we must realise that

there is no home, however wealthy can provide the kind of child-friendly environment which a good pre-primary school provides for example, no home can provide 20 children of approximately the same age, or an array of experts in childhood education to take care of different aspects of the child's growth and development. Therefore, since children do not develop automatically without help from their environment, it is better to keep the young ones under the care of specialists and professionally qualified teachers who can provide and sustain the much needed stimulus for the child's optimum development.

The pre-primary school establishments also help to identify children who are handicapped in some less obvious ways for early treatment. Many parents, as a result of their not spending much time with children at home, may not notice such 'minor' disabilities in their children. When such children are in good pre-primary school establishments, they could be identified and thus taken to the appropriate place for treatment at this tender age when the chances of their complete care are greatest.

There is also the most widely acknowledged role of pre-primary school, which as mentioned earlier, should not be the major purpose of taking care of children, that is, preparation for primary education. Research findings have revealed that pre-primary education has some effects on children's intelligent quotient (IQ) and cognitive achievements. Moreover, children who attend good pre-primary schools are less often repeaters in school and they often complete secondary education at the required period of time (Entrisie, 1995). In other words, attending pre-primary schools is important for success in the early grades which constitute a critical period for children's adjustment as students. Therefore, since pre-primary education may change children directly by building their skills or encouraging their abilities, it is necessary to make it accessible to all children. The present situation in Nigeria whereby majority of children from the poor homes have no access to pre-primary education may be one of the factors for the relatively poor performance of pupils in the public primary schools in Nigeria.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In order to provide young children with the necessary stimulation and encouragement as well as equal educational opportunities for their optimum development, all children need pre-primary education.

Pre-primary education is not a luxury but an avenue for helping children to have a holistic development that could have a lifelong effect on their schooling in later life.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

pre-school education refers to all forms of education given to children before entering into primary school

pre-school education include, traditional (home) education, pre-primary education, crèche, play group or day care centres

pre-primary education helps children to have a holistic development which positively affects their academic achievements.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1(a) Explain what you understand by pre-school education
 - (b) Identify the different types of pre-school establishments with their similarities and differences.
2. What are the benefits of pre-primary education for:
- (i) the child
 - (ii) the parents
 - (iii) the society generally?

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UNIT 2 UNIVERSALITY OF ACCESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

CONTENTS

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 - 3.3 Making Pre-Primary Education Accessible to All Children in Nigeria
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we discussed the meaning, types and importance of pre-school education.

In this unit, we are going to discuss how and why pre-primary education should be made accessible to all children irrespective of their parental social and economic status. We shall also look at other areas you need to know in this study unit as specified in the study unit objectives.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain why every child should have access to pre-primary education
- list the various ways of making pre-primary education accessible to all children in Nigeria.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What Does Making Pre-Primary Education Accessible to All Children Mean?

You must have heard something like Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Basic Education (UBE). The common word in the two programmes is ‘universal’. The word universal simply means for all. That is, something that is made available or accessible to all without

difficulty or discrimination. Therefore, the UPE programme which was introduced at the National level in Nigeria in 1976 was limited to primary education. In other words, primary education was made free for all Nigerian children of school age from that year. All children from the age of six years could attend public primary schools without paying school fees. I am sure many of us reading this course material or undergoing this course must have benefitted from the UPE programme directly or indirectly.

On the other hand, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) which was introduced in 1999 has extended the free education programme from the primary school level to the junior secondary school (JSS) level. This means that all JSS students in public secondary schools in Nigeria will no longer pay school fees. Moreover, it is open to all children who have completed primary school education irrespective of their parent's socio-economic status.

Although the UBE programme includes pre-primary education as one of the levels of education covered, there is not much that could be seen on ground in this area. In other words, government has not done much to make pre-primary education as available to all children as it is the case with primary and junior secondary education. Why is this so? Why is it necessary for government to make pre-primary school available to all children like those other levels of education in Nigeria?

These are some of the issues we shall be discussing in the next section of this unit.

3.2 The Need for Pre-Primary Education

In the last unit, we discussed briefly the importance of pre-primary education. Let us again review some of the important roles which pre-primary education can play in the life of an individual, parents/teachers and the society generally.

The All-Round (Holistic) Development of the Individual

Although pre-primary education is included in the coverage area of the present UBE programme, yet it is not made compulsory like the primary and junior secondary education. Nevertheless, the important role of pre-school education has been acknowledged all over the world. The Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) assented that learning begins at birth. This implies that the education of the child should start as early as possible and it should not be left to chances. As mentioned in the previous unit, the focus of pre-primary education should be on helping children to develop the psychological and social

foundations necessary for them to undertake abstract learning later in the primary school. When the child is given a good foundation at the tender age, through a very stimulating school environment, he/she will surely get up to a good start when eventually he/she gets to the primary school.

Preparation for Primary Education

Research findings have shown that children with pre-primary educational background are less often retained in primary classes. That is, they do not often repeat classes like children who did not attend pre-primary school. Pre-primary education has also been found to boost the intelligent quotient (IQ) test scores of children by about five points. Another research finding has indicated that pre-primary education children usually complete secondary education and that their parents are usually more satisfied with their performance than other children.

The summary of all these is that pre-primary education helps children to do better in the early grade of primary education. This is considered very important for long-term success because the early grades in primary schools constitute a critical period for children's adjustment as students (Enwitsle 1995). As psychologists have made it known, children's experiences during the early periods of life often have lasting consequences. Therefore, whatever they learn or acquire during their early years in school can help or hinder their overall performance for years to come.

Language Development

One of the greatest benefits of pre-primary education to children is the development of their spoken language. As you are aware, the style of living of many families these days do not give their children much opportunity to interact with many other children. The pre-primary school therefore exposes children to many other children from different social, economic, religious and cultural backgrounds. If you have ever moved very close to children, you would have realised that some of these factors may constitute some barriers to their interaction. They play together, and communicate freely and in the process learn new words, ideas and ways of doing things. In Nigeria, for instance, where English is our second language, pre-primary school exposes children to English language early enough to make them speak it fluently. Invariably, they have less difficulty in learning English at the primary and even secondary school level.

Development of Self Confidence

Fafunwa (1967) once argued that the African child below the age of six is often shy, timid and afraid to talk to elders. This is as a result of the African philosophy which believes that the child must be seen and not heard. Many Africans even after the completion of secondary or university education still face this problem of timidity. The pre-primary school establishments have helped through their various activities and specialist care and attention to develop self confidence in our children below the age of six years through talking. Singing and acting in different plays in the presence of a large crowd. They now radiate self confidence, fluency in speaking and boldness in their discussions. The stimulating and child friendly environments often provided by the pre-primary schools generate such development. The self confidence and boldness which children acquire during the pre-school years go a long way in shaping their adult life. Many Nigerian products of pre-primary school education are now eloquent speakers and self confident ladies and gentlemen in various callings.

Inculcating the Spirit of Cooperation, Enquiry and Creativity

Children are naturally self-centred (egocentric), inquisitive and creative. The pre-primary school helps to inculcate in the child the spirit of cooperation. They are taught to share things like toys and other play materials with other children. Moreover, they are encouraged to satisfy their intellectual curiosity through the provision of different learning materials, explanation of their environment and visits to places of interest. They are given the opportunity to manipulate different objects, draw and paint among other things. All these activities help in no small way in enhancing not only their socialization, but also their intellectual and creative abilities. Once these skills are developed in them, they usually carry them up to adulthood.

We can conclude this section on the importance of pre-primary education by saying that it is not a luxury at all. Pre-primary education 'is desirable not only on educational grounds, but also for social, health and welfare considerations. This explains why pre-primary education is a must for all Nigerian children.

3.3 Making Pre-Primary Education Accessible to All Children in Nigeria

Despite the universally agreed fact that learning begins at birth and the Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All (EFA), very few countries have made any appreciable expansion in pre-primary education. The emphasis of most countries, particularly the developing

countries is centred on universal primary education. Even in Nigeria where early childhood education is an integral part of the UBE programme, little or no attention is given to the expansion of pre-primary education. In other words, in the developing countries, pre-primary education is not a priority of the education sector as the developing countries are already burdened with the enormous responsibility for other levels of education. As a result, they cannot afford to add the responsibility of funding pre-primary education in order to make it universal and accessible to their already 'heavy' education bill. The pre-primary education is therefore left in the hands of individuals, groups and organisations who naturally charge high fees to meet their running costs.

Invariably, the children from poor or low income families are denied this all-important early stimulation for optimum development. This therefore explains the relatively poor quality of primary education in Nigeria. According to UNESCO (2001), the quality of primary education has not kept abreast of the expansion in enrolment. This has been a global concern which was high on the agenda for the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in the year 2000.

There is abundant evidence to show that pre-primary education prepares young children socially, emotionally and academically for primary education. In other words, the successful completion of pre-primary education is associated with greater success in the primary school. Children with good pre-primary educational background do not usually repeat classes or drop out of school.

Therefore, since research into early childhood education has not only confirmed better performance and high quality in primary education, it is necessary to make this level of education accessible to all Nigerian children. The Nigerian pre-school child who is deprived in many ways through the poor standard of living of their parents need pre-primary education even more than their more favoured counterparts from the well to do families. These categories of deprived children are the ones mostly found in our public primary schools. By the time they complete primary education, if they do not dropout, they are usually not sufficiently literate and numerate to be useful to themselves and the society generally (Yoloye, 1999).

Let us summarise the benefits of early childhood education by highlighting what research says about it, as documented by the Department of Education, Western Australia in the year 2000:

Students who participate in a high quality early childhood education programme make better transition from home to school

and from school to community and ultimately, gain lasting benefits as socially responsible adults.

High quality early childhood programmes are more effective in helping children to learn. They are more beneficial than remedial (coaching classes) programmes in later school life.

Experiences in the early years of life are more influential on the development of the brain than experiences at any other time in life. Early brain development has a profound effect on a person's learning, behaviour and health throughout life.

Children's well being, emotional maturity, language development, thinking skills, creative skills, and social and physical skills are all established and strengthened.

Children develop initiative and responsibility and the ability to analyse, to question, to make decisions and to solve problems. They learn how to be friendly, share and cooperate with others. They develop the ability to act with confidence and they gain independence.

With this revelation, it is absolutely clear that we need to make pre-primary education accessible to all Nigerian pre-school age children. This we can do by:

(a) **Making Pre-Primary Education an Adjunct of the Existing Public Primary Schools**

That is, a section of the public primary school could be used for that purpose. This will save cost particularly in the area of providing new school buildings and other infrastructures. Only a few adjustments may be necessary to make the environment more suitable to the pre-schoolers. The advantage here is that many children in the local communities who could not afford the high fees charged in the private pre-primary schools will have the opportunity of benefiting from the tremendous opportunities for their optimum development free of charge.

It is interesting to note that some of the South Western States of Nigeria have been experimenting with this idea. Although it has been done to check the drift from public to private schools, yet it is a step in the right direction. All the states that have introduced pre-primary education into their primary school system need to do is to improve on the quality of facilities, instructional materials and teachers to make them more suitable and relevant to the pre-schoolers.

(b) Local Government-Owned Pre-Primary Schools

Each local government should establish at least one model pre-primary school in a centrally located place that will be accessible to all children in the area. The supply of appropriate facilities and high quality and specialist teachers in early childhood education and other categories of workers should be the responsibility of the local government. It is important to note that the establishment and management of the school should not be based on political patronage.

As a matter of policy, there should be a constitutional provision making pre-primary education the responsibility of the local government. This will ensure that there is an annual statutory allocation of funds to this level of education.

(c) Grants in Aid to Private Pre-Primary Schools

Since the private sector participation in the provision of pre-primary education has gained prominence in Nigeria, all we can do is to assist them. The assistance could be in form of free registration of such schools with the appropriate government agency. The annual provision of grant to each private pre-primary school establishment should be on the basis of enrolment figures, quality of teachers and the provision of facilities. This assistance will make it possible for the private schools to expand their facilities in order to admit more children at relatively low fees.

We should not forget to add here that government should intensify efforts at regular monitoring and supervision of pre-primary school establishments. This will ensure high quality in the services provided by the schools. It is not just providing high quality schools that are needed, research findings have, in fact, indicated that only high quality early childhood education programmes can benefit our children in the various ways highlighted earlier on.

4.0 CONCLUSION

High quality pre-primary education programmes have positive long-term advantages for children and the society in general. Therefore, this level of education should be made accessible to all children for their all round development.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

pre-primary education is essential for all round development of the child

high quality pre-primary education enhances the academic achievement of pupils in the primary school

high quality pre-primary education prevents repetition of classes and school dropout

pre-primary education is not a luxury hence all children particularly those from poor homes need it

government should be directly involved in the provision of high quality pre-primary schools to all Nigerian children.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Why do you think Nigerian children need pre-primary education?
2. How can pre-primary education be made readily accessible to all children like primary education?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

CONTENTS

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
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 - 3.2 Importance of Effective Organisation and Management of Schools
 - 3.3 Components of a School Organisation
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- 5.0 Summary
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit we studied universality of access in early childhood education. In this unit we will discuss the **organisation and management of early childhood education**.

Effective organisation and management of educational institutions is important to the success of any nation's educational system.

In this unit, you are going to learn the importance of effective organisation and management of pre-primary education. You will also learn some of the factors that affect the organisation and administration of schools generally.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the meaning of organisation and management
- mention the importance of the effective organisation and management of schools
- identify the major components of a school organisation.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Meaning of Organisation and Management

The word, 'organisation' has been described in different ways by sociologists and administrators. For instance, Ezewu (1983) quoting Etzioni refers to an organisation as "social unit that pursues specific goals which they are structured to serve. Example of this includes the school, the prison, churches among others.

Nwankwo (1982), on the other hand, refers to an organisation as:

- (i) a group of persons working together for a common purpose
- (ii) a network of relationships among individuals and activities
- (iii) a process of executive functions aimed at ensuring that resources, activities and authority relationships are so coordinated to achieve specified goals.

For the purpose of our discussion, we shall make use of Nwankwo's second definition. That is, a school organisation is a network of relationships among individuals and activities through which the curriculum objectives of schools are achieved.

Management on the other hand refers to the totality of all the processes through which human, material and financial resources are made available, organised and directed towards the realisation of the objectives of an organisation (Adeyemi, 2000).

3.2 Importance of Effective Organisation and Management of Schools

As mentioned in the introduction, effective organisation and management of educational institutions is essential to the successful realisation of the nation's educational goals and objectives. Let us now consider some of the advantages of effective organisation and management of schools.

- (i) Effective organisation and management provides the essential structure upon which policy makers, and educators build school standards and policies. For example, school standards such as the number of pupils in a class, teachers professional qualification, teachers workload etc. are all affected by the decisions which policy makers take on the school. Similarly, school practices such as teachers' role in school decision making and their influence over school and classroom policies are affected by the decisions policy makers make about the school.

- (ii) Effective organisation and management also promotes good discipline among staff and pupils in the school. As you must have heard before, order is the first law in Heaven. A well organised and managed school will not give room for misbehaviour on the part of the learners and the teachers. If all the required facilities are provided and are well utilised, there will be no discontentment in the school. This means both the learners and their teachers will be happy and will go about their daily activities with great dedication.
- (iii) Effective organisation and management will also promote good academic achievement of the learners. When all facilities are adequate, and they are well organised and used appropriately, effective teaching and learning will take place. This will therefore help the pupils to perform well in their class tests and examinations.
- (iv) Effective organisation and management also prevents wastage. When the available resources are well organised and managed, there will be no room for wastage of either materials or time. Teachers and pupils will learn to make the best use of the materials given to them and they will not waste their time. This is because, they are always purposefully engaged.
- (v) With effective organisation and administration, there will be peace and harmony in the school. Teachers will be respected by the learners since they will be kind and helpful to the pupils. There will also be cooperation between the teachers and the school on one hand and between the staff and the parents on the other hand. All these will make things work well in the school and the overall effect will be the successful achievement of the goals and objectives for which the schools were set up.

In concluding this section of the unit, it is necessary to call your attention to certain things. The first is that parents always like to send their children to schools that are well organised and managed. They are, in many cases, ready to pay very high school fees for their children in such schools. On the other hand, badly organised and managed schools will not attract the interest of parents. This is why you find parents taking their children to schools that are very far away from their homes even when there are schools around them.

In the same way, children are always very happy to attend good schools. That is, well organised and managed schools. They are always very proud of the schools and will do all things they can to remain in the school. Children of such schools always try to do well academically and

behave well too so as to keep the good image and prestige of their schools

Can you mention some schools that are very popular in your town or local government area? Find out why the schools are popular and what it takes parents to keep their children there.

3.3 Components of a School Organisation

Akinbote *et al.* (2001) have identified six major components of a school organisation. It is through the effective planning, organisation and management of these components that can ensure the smooth running of the school. Let us now discuss the components.

(i) The Duration of the Course

This refers to the length of the course or programme. For example, the duration of pre-primary education in Nigeria is between two and three years. That is, a child starts pre-primary school at the age of three years and remains there till he/she is old enough to go to the primary school at the age of six years.

The duration for the primary school is six years. That is, a child remains in the primary school from the age of six to 11 years plus. There are some physiological, social and psychological reasons for fixing the duration of schools in different parts of the world. Why do you think the pre-primary school age in Nigeria is fixed between three and five years plus?

(ii) Length of School Year

This refers to the number of weeks or months children keep in the school. The length of pre-primary and primary school year in Nigeria is about 36 weeks. The 36 weeks are divided into three terms of 12 weeks each. However, for various reasons ranging from climatic, political and social, the length of the school year varies from time to time and from state to state. It is the state ministry of education that fixes length of the school year in Nigeria. This is what they often refer to as the school calendar for the year.

As mentioned above, the 36 weeks are broken into three terms of approximately 12 weeks each. Thus, the first term is usually from September to December while the second term is usually from January to April; and the third term is usually from April to July. There is usually a break of not less than two weeks between the terms. The long

vacation is from seven to nine weeks. It always comes up from July to September each year.

Find out why the long vacation is fixed from July to September in Nigeria.

(iii) The School Timetable

This is the planned daily school routine which shows the sequence of activities for any particular period of the day. It is the general guide for both the teachers and learners. It is one of the statutory records that must be kept in every school and every classroom. It is usually prepared by the head teacher and or the most senior teachers in the school. There are some factors to take into consideration when preparing the school timetable. These are:

- (a) Government Policy** – There is always a government policy as to what to teach in each school, when the schools should open and close each day. The head teacher must keep strictly to the policy. However, if for whatever reason, there is to be some deviation from the policy, there must be an approval from the state's ministry of education.
- (b) The Length of Each Period** – From our knowledge of child psychology, we know that the younger a child is, the shorter is the attention span. Therefore, the timetable should take this into consideration by not making the lesson periods longer than necessary. For instance, in the nursery and junior primary classes, the period in the morning should be between 20 and 25 minutes and between 15 and 20 minutes in the afternoon. As for the senior primary classes, it should be between 30 and 35 minutes in the morning periods and between 25 and 30 minutes in the afternoon.
- (c) Nature of the Subjects** – Although all subjects in the school curriculum are important, yet some are more important and difficult than others. Therefore, such subjects like mathematics, English language, and science subjects should have more periods on the timetable weekly than other subjects. In the same way, some subjects that require much mental or physical energy should come up in the morning when the pupils are still full of energy. This is why at the pre-primary and primary school levels, mathematics, English language and physical and health education will not be slated for the afternoon periods. Rather, the subject that require less of mental energy should be slated for the afternoon when as a result of our hot climate, the children easily

get tired. Therefore, you will always find on a good school timetable subjects like storytelling, handwriting, cultural and creative arts (CCA) coming up in the afternoon.

(iv) The School Subject

The classification of teaching and learning activities into specific branch of knowledge being studied in the school is referred to as school subject. Although formal teaching is not recommended for the pre-primary level of education, yet they are still exposed to some 'subjects, which help to prepare them for formal schooling at the primary and secondary levels. However, at the primary school level, there are about 16 subjects open to the primary level of education in Nigeria. Even if not all the 16 subjects, yet there are the core subjects that must be taught and learnt in all primary schools irrespective of their location or ownership. Such subjects include mathematics, English language, social studies, physical science, physical and health education, cultural and creative arts, family living.

(v) Classes, Grades/Streams

The grouping of pupils into classes according to their age is the most popular mention in Nigeria. This however, does not mean that pupils are not grouped according to their abilities. Whatever the method of grouping of pupils into classes, there are situations when you have more than the required number of pupils enrolling into a class. For example, the ideal teacher-pupil ratio in nursery and junior primary classes is 1:25 and in the upper primary 1:35. If you now have about 50 or more pupils for either nursery 1 or primary 1, you can now divide them into two classes. This is how we often find Classes 1A, 1B, etc. in some schools.

In the urban centres where there is usually a high population density, schools are often broken into two schools or more. In a situation where there is adequate space for building more classrooms within the school compound, there could be School A and School B. However, where there is no sufficient space, there could be the shift system whereby we have one school coming for the morning session and the other for afternoon session. This system is now being phased out of the school system.

(vi) Staffing

The type of school often determines the type of teaching to employ. The teacher remains the most expensive and also the most indispensable factor in the school system. Without good teachers, no system of education can function effectively. However, individual public schools

in particular cannot train or recruit its teachers. This is done by the government who through the appropriate agency, recruits and sends teachers to the schools. There is not much school heads can do here since they are not involved in the process.

The area where individual school heads can exercise their discretion is in respect of assigning teachers to classes or subjects. The head teachers need to be very careful so that the right person is assigned to the right class. Therefore, there are certain factors to take into consideration when assigning teachers to classes at the pre-primary/primary school levels. Let us briefly discuss them.

Gender

It is a globally recognised fact that women are usually the best teachers of young children. Therefore, the first person to consider for teaching the nursery classes or the junior primary classes is a lady. If there are however many women in the school, the head teacher can apply other factors which we shall now discuss.

Teaching Experience

When we have many qualified women for instance, their teaching experience may be used to select who will teach the nursery or junior primary classes. For instance, if there are three women with NCE in primary education, the one with the longest teaching experience could be assigned to primary 1.

Interest

This is another factor that may be used in assigning teachers to teach a particular class in the pre-primary and primary schools. In the example of the three NCE/primary education specialists mentioned above, the most experienced teacher may not be particularly interested in teaching very young children. The head teacher should consider this so that he does not assign a reluctant teacher to teach a particular class. Since primary one is the foundation class in the primary school, only people who can help to lay a solid foundation there should be assigned to teach them.

Professional Qualification

Generally speaking, the most professionally qualified teachers should be assigned to teach in the upper classes. If you have an array of Grade II, NCE and B.Ed. specialists in pre-primary education, except for some

other reasons, the B.Ed. degree holders should be assigned to teach the upper primary classes.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is only through effective organisation and management of school that the desired educational goals can be achieved. It is therefore necessary to put in place, in each school, the right caliber of teachers and the necessary facilities so that effective teaching and learning can take place through proper organisation and management of the available resources.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

an organisation can be described in many ways

an organisation refers to a network of relationships among individuals and activities through which the curriculum objectives are achieved

management is the totality of all processes through which human, material and financial resources are made available, organised and channeled towards the realisation of the objectives of an organisation

there are six major components of a school organisation

effective organisation and management is essential for the successful realisation of the goals of education.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is an organisation?
2. Enumerate the major components of a school organisation.

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UNIT 4 EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM AND EVALUATION

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 - 3.2 Guidelines for Pre-Primary School Curriculum
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you learnt the meaning and importance of effective organisation and management of pre-primary education.

In this unit you are going to learn the basic principles involved in curriculum and evaluation in pre-primary education.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the concepts of curriculum and evaluation
- identify the basic principles necessary for pre-primary education curriculum development
- explain the evaluation procedures in pre-primary education.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Meaning of Curriculum

Curriculum has been defined in different ways by different people. For our purpose in this unit, we shall make use of Olivers' definition cited in Akinbote, *et al* (2001). According to him, curriculum refers to the school educational programmes which include programmes of studies, programme of activities and programme of guidance. This definition of curriculum shows that the curriculum is not limited to school subjects such as Mathematics and English Language etc. It also includes some

other activities which may take place inside or outside the school as well as the guidance and counselling services provided by teachers to the learners and their parents.

At the pre-primary education level, many people do not know whether or not a curriculum exists. Even among practitioners who are aware of the existence of a pre-primary curriculum, their thinking is always on the traditional type of curriculum found in primary schools. That is, the type of curriculum with its emphasis on drilling and the practice of isolated academic skills. Such a curriculum does not reflect the current trends about how children learn.

Therefore, we have not been able to produce learners who possess the higher order thinking and problem-solving abilities that will be needed on the 21st century (Bredekamp, *et al.*, 1992).

Emphasis in pre-primary and primary school curriculum is now on:

Active hands-on learning

Conceptual learning that leads to understanding along with the acquisition of basic skills

Meaningful, relevant learning experiences

Interactive teaching and cooperative learning

A broad range of relevant content, integrated across traditional subject matter divisions.

3.2 Guidelines for Pre-Primary School Curriculum

We have just mentioned in the preceding section that pre-primary and primary school curriculum should de-emphasise drilling and the practice of isolated academic skills. The current thinking about the school curriculum as noted by Bredekamp *et al.* (1992) is that:

Curriculum is an organised framework that delineates the content children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve the identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur.

Therefore, for any pre-primary school curriculum to achieve the goals of giving children an all-round development there is need to note certain basic principles of child development and learning. These principles are very crucial to the development of appropriate curriculum for our children.

- (a) Children learn best when their physical needs are met and they feel psychologically safe and secure. Therefore, children should not be made to sit down and listen to their teachers for a long time. Rather they should be actively involved in their learning. They should be allowed freedom of action in a child- friendly, safe and secure environment.
- (b) Children construct their own knowledge. This is done through their dynamic interactions with their physical and social environment. Since children discover new knowledge through active involvement and experimentation, they should be given opportunity to form their own hypothesis. In addition to this, they should be encouraged to keep testing their hypotheses through mental actions, physical manipulations, observing what happens, comparing their findings, asking questions and discovering answers etc.
- (c) Children learn through social interactions with other adults and other children around. There should be good relationship between the child and the teacher as well as with peers and others. The teacher is to support and guide the children in their effort to have good relationship with people around him including the parents until they can function independently.
- (d) Children learn through play. This is one of the most natural way of learning for children. Play provides them the necessary opportunities to explore, experiment and manipulate things in order to construct knowledge. It is also important to note that during play, children have the opportunity to examine and refine their learning as a result of the feedback they get from their environment. All these play activities help children to develop their imaginations and creativity.
- (e) Children's interests and their need to know (curiosity) motivate learning. Since children need to make sense out of their experience, the teacher should identify what interests them and allow them to solve problems together. We should remember that activities that are based on children's interests provide them the motivation for learning. This eventually promotes their love for learning curiosity, attention and self-direction.
- (f) Human development and learning are characterised by individual differences. The most important element in all of education is that of individual differences. Individual differences among people is the reason for variation in cognitive styles and functioning. Some are fast learners some are slow while others are convergent.

There are extroverts and introverts. (Alhassan, 2000: 61-62). There are no two people that are exactly alike in all things; not even identical twins. This is normal and it should be expected among the school children. This implies that every learner is unique and has individual pattern and timing of growth and development as well as styles of learning.

All these principles are based on the work of great psychologists such as Piaget, Vygotsky and Erikson among others. They should be taken into consideration when developing school curriculum that will be appropriate for the growth and development of the child. Anything short of this will not only violate the natural inclinations of the child but will also hinder his higher-order thinking, problem-solving and creative abilities.

3.3 Evaluation in Early Childhood Education

Just as the traditional approach to curriculum development has become a great source of worry and concern, so has the traditional method of evaluation.

It is not enough to have a developmentally appropriate curriculum. It is especially important to have a more performance-based assessment that falls in line with or reflect children's learning.

Before discussing the appropriate evaluation procedures for early childhood education, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of certain concepts such as evaluation, assessment, and testing.

(a) Evaluation

Educational evaluation may be regarded as a process of gathering, analysing and interpreting data to be used in taking decisions. According to Regan and Shepherd cited in Akinbote *et al.* (2001), the decision could be about the learner's progress, pacing instruction, providing guidance or determining the effectiveness of methods and materials.

The major purposes of evaluation in pre-primary and primary education could be summarised as follows:

(i) Evaluation can be used for course improvement

That is, it could be used to find out which instructional materials and methods are satisfactory and where changes are necessary.

(ii) Evaluation can also be used to take decisions about individuals

For example, it could be used to identify the particular needs of the learners for the sake of planning the instruction, judging pupils' merit for the purpose of selection or grouping and giving the pupils feedback about their individual performances – that is, their strengths and weaknesses.

(iii) Evaluation could also be used for administrative regulations

That is, judging how good the school system is, how good individual teachers are and the deficiencies in facilities.

Let us round off this discussion on the purpose of evaluation by stating that it helps to motivate the learners to do better in their study. It also helps the teachers to know their pupils' weaknesses and how to help them. Moreover, teachers need evaluation to know their own areas of deficiency either in the use of instructional materials or methods of teaching.

(b) Assessment

Teachers and pupils are very familiar with this concept as they make use of it regularly. Both teachers and pupils often talk about having a continuous assessment (CA) test on the assessment record book. However, not many of them know what assessment is. You may even find many taking it to be the tests given in the various class subjects.

Assessment is the ongoing process of observing, recording and determining the work children do and how they do it to provide a basis for a variety of educational decisions that affect the child.

Assessment can also be described as the process of organising test data into interpretable forms on a number of facts. That is, assessment uses the data (information) obtained from various ways including tests, observations and the use of records. Therefore, to get a complete assessment of a learner's performance, different test instruments could be used to assess different aspects of the learners such as the cognitive, psychomotor and affective.

The assessment of learning outcome thus focuses on different aspects of the learner using various techniques in order to arrive at a particular grade or judgment in respect of the learner's ability, attitude and

progress in any specific area of learning. This therefore implies that assessment is part of the evaluation practice.

Assessment is integrated into curriculum and instruction in early childhood education programmes to provide a basis for:

- (i) Planning instruction and communicating with parents;
- (ii) Identifying children with special abilities and therefore special needs.
- (iii) Evaluating programmes and demonstrating accountability.

(c) **Testing**

We are all familiar with tests in our various school subjects. A test can therefore be described as an instrument or a procedure used for measuring a sample of behaviours or performance in a given situation. In other words, tests may come up on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

Before we discuss the purpose of tests, it is necessary to point out the difference between a test and an examination. As have just been stated, tests come up on a more frequent or regular basis: daily, weekly or monthly.

An examination on the other hand comes up only at the end of a term or course. While tests may be limited to a class or subject in the school, an examination usually covers all the subjects or classes in a school, state or the country.

Purpose of Testing

At the pre-primary school level, the traditional paper and pencil test may not be particularly very appropriate. You should remember that testing and learning at this level should not be too formal.

Therefore, it will not be of much benefit if we insist on giving the children paper and pencil test like those in the upper primary classes. We should be discussing the mode of evaluation most suitable to them later.

The purpose of testing is not different from those already discussed under evaluation. However, for the purpose of revision, let us quickly go over them with you again.

- (i) Tests can be used to find out whether the learners have mastered certain topic or skill well enough to go ahead to another one.

- (ii) Tests can be also used to find out the learner's area of weakness or whether the method of teaching is suitable for them or not.
- (iii) Tests can also be used to place the learners in the most suitable group for the purpose of receiving adequate attention.
- (iv) Tests are also used for guidance either to the learners or the parents on how to make progress or the next step to take.

3.4 Evaluation and Assessment Techniques in Pre-Primary and Primary Schools

Teachers are expected to evaluate learning in the areas of knowledge and understanding based on school activities, social relationships, emotional adjustment habits, manipulative skills and the general lifestyles of the young learners. You surely cannot effectively carry out the evaluation of these aspects of knowledge learning and attitude by just the paper and pencil tests. There are many other techniques of evaluating the learning outcomes in addition to the written tests. These include oral interview, practical tests, class work, and observation, self-report (interview, questionnaire etc.).

Since helping the individual learners to develop a positive self-image and to develop effective relationship with others are important objectives of pre-primary and primary education, we must use the most appropriate evaluation technique. At times, we may use personality tests and rating scales to encourage the children to examine their own characteristics. Sociograms could also be used to discover the relation of any one child to the class as a whole.

Successful school work depends among other things, on such characteristics as the pupil's personal adjustment, attitudes, and social or group skills. It is important that teachers know how to measure and interpret these personal and social factors and to use the test results in planning classroom activities. Sociometry is the study of patterns of interrelationship existing in a group of people. The teacher could generate sociometric data by asking the pupils different questions. For example; the teacher can ask the children to "list the person you would like to sit next to in class" "whom do you prefer as the class monitor?" The children may be requested to make a single choice or two choices.

The teacher then transfers the information by the children to a sociogram. A sociogram allows you to see how the cliques in the class are distributed A Star, (most popular), isolate (least popular) a rejectee (no one makes a choice of him/her and he/she makes none)

Other curriculum areas where evaluation of achievement can take place include the physical growth, growth in interests and attitude, growth in creative and critical thinking. Most teachers and parents of pre-primary and primary school children tend to be more concerned with the evaluation of academic achievement. There is nothing wrong in evaluating academic achievement, but evaluation of social adjustment, physical development, habits, interest, attitude, special aptitudes, growth in creative ability are also very important. The evidences of growth in these other areas are necessary for the school to do its job of fostering the wholesome growth and development of the children and prepare them for effective living in the society.

Therefore, until teachers learn to evaluate pupils' progress in three other important aspects of the education of the young ones, the children will continue to be neglected.

4.0 CONCLUSION

There has been a call for a review of the prevailing curriculum content and evaluation methods in pre-primary education. The emphasis on drill and practice of isolated academic skills does not reflect the current knowledge of human learning. It has thus failed to produce learners who possess the kind of higher-order thinking and problem-solving abilities that will be needed in the 21st Century.

Any curriculum and evaluation methods in early children education must take into consideration the theoretical principles of child development and learning. The principles are crucial to the developmentally appropriate curriculum and evaluation practices.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

curriculum refers to the school educational programmes of studies, activities, and guidance

curriculum in early childhood education should emphasise active hands on learning:

- conceptual learning that leads to understanding
- meaningful, relevant learning experiences
- interactive teaching and cooperative learning
- a broad range of relevant content, integrated across traditional subject matter divisions.

evaluation is a process of gathering, analysing and interpreting data to be used in taking decisions about the learners-teachers method of teaching, and materials

assessment is the ongoing process of observing, recording and documenting the work children do and how they do it so as to provide a basis for some educational decisions that affect the child

a test is an instrument used for measuring the performance in a given situation

evaluation methods in every childhood education must take not only the academic achievement, but also the social adjustment, physical development, interests, attitudes and the creativity of the learners into consideration.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain what you understand by school curriculum.
2. Enumerate the principles of child development and learning that any pre-primary and primary school curriculum should take into consideration.
3. Why should the evaluation of pre-primary and primary education go beyond academic achievement?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 5 PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNING STYLES

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Pre-School Learning Theories
 - 3.2 Other Learning Styles of Pre-School Children
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you have learnt what pre-primary school curriculum and evaluation should take into consideration.

In this unit, you are going to learn the pre-primary school children's learning styles. In other words, you are going to learn how children learn and how teachers can guide and facilitate their learning. Let us look at other areas you need to know in this study unit as specified in the study unit objectives below.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- mention and explain pre-primary school children's learning styles
- explain how the teacher can best guide pre-primary school children for effective learning.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Pre-School Learning Theories

In one of the previous units, you learnt some of the factors to be taken into consideration when preparing pre-primary school curriculum. This is based on the nature of children and how they learn. Children tend to learn better than grownups, and better than they themselves will when they are older. This is because they use their minds in special ways.

Therefore, since children learn in special ways, certain theories have been put up as basic to the facilitation of pre-school children's learning. These theories of teaching and learning in early childhood education are derived from the practical experiences of great child educators and psychologists like Froebel and Montessori among others.

The two major theories of learning from where the sub-theories of learning by children are derived are the Stimulus-Response (S – R) and the Cognitive Theories of Learning.

We shall now discuss some of the sub-theories of learning from each of the two major theories that are related to pre-school learning and education.

(A) S – R Theory of Learning

The sub-theories relevant to pre-school child's learning as identified by Onibokun *et al.* (1987) are:

(i) Learning by Doing

There is a popular saying that "what I do I understand". This is very true of children generally. Therefore, when a child is exposed to a particular experience (Stimulus), the child will react to the experience by responding either positively or negatively (Response). When the pre-school child is allowed to do things by himself or herself, and is reinforced by what he or she does, the child will continue to do it. In the process, the child will develop the skills needed for doing what he/she does. In other words, the child acquires the special skill of doing certain things through practice.

This implies therefore that children should be given the opportunity to do things themselves. There must be a variety of play and learning materials which could be bought or improvised by the teacher or parents.

(ii) Curiosity and Interest

This sub-theory is well known to parents and teachers that children are always eager to know. Their desires to find out (Curiosity) always bring about their interest in learning. In other words, curiosity generates interest and interest assists learning.

The implication of this sub-theory for teaching pre-school children is that we must always make their learning tasks and environment stimulating and interesting to the children. Monotony kills interest.

Always introduce new materials, and ideas to children so as to ginger up their curiosity and interest in whatever they are to learn.

(iii) Inquiry

In their natural desire to find out or know certain things, children generally ask fundamental questions beginning with 'why', 'when', 'what', and 'how'. By asking these questions, children acquire the large volume of facts and knowledge about anything in their environment. Therefore, we should never be tired of answering their questions.

One of the reasons why African children below the age of six are at a disadvantage when compared to their American and European counterparts is the philosophy that African children should only be seen and not heard. In many places, it is even considered as bad manners for children to talk or ask questions when elders are around (Akinbote, *et al.*, 2001).

We must learn to allow children to ask questions as freely as they want to. In the same way, we should ask them questions to stimulate their interest and or curiosity. Teachers should ask well planned questions that can evoke deep thinking, curiosity and even creativity among the children.

(iv) Learning through Stories

Children like to tell stories and listen to stories. They are never tired of listening to interesting stories. In the Traditional African societies, parents and other adult members of the society take time to tell their young stories either folklores or those of their ancestors. Such stories are used to teach morals, correct wrong attitudes and behaviours among other things.

In the pre-primary schools, teachers could make the learning of children interesting and meaningful by the use of carefully selected stories. Such stories must not only be relevant to the topic for discussion, it must also contain some important messages for the children. Teachers can also use rhymes and songs to help children learn certain concepts or principles.

(B) Cognitive Theories of Learning

The sub-theories derived from the cognitive theory of learning are now going to be discussed:

(i) Metamorphic Change and Environment

This sub-theory states that children are in a constant state of growth, change and interest more effectively with stimulating environment.

You must have observed children that they are naturally more able to interact with their social and physical environment than adults. Except a child is ill, he or she cannot remain idle in a place for a long time. Children are always very active.

The implication of this sub-theory is that we must always provide stimulating environment for children to interact with freely. In the same vein, children must be given the opportunity to observe, move around, experiment and discover things by themselves in the environment.

Moreover, we must help the children to see the relationship or similarities between certain things in the environment.

(ii) Movement

This sub-theory is very similar to the above one in that children always like to move. As mentioned earlier on, they are always on the move and except something is wrong, they cannot remain quiet in a place for long. They often like to explore their environment to discover new things. The children could be taken out on visits to the school garden to observe plants with their peculiar characteristics. Visits to other interesting places within the school or the immediate community will be of much interest to the children.

At home, you must have seen how excited children are whenever you take them out on a visit to a family friend and other places. For many days after the visits, they still recollect some of the interesting things they saw, did or enjoyed. This implies that if children are allowed to move around, they will not only enjoy but acquire some new knowledge about different things and places.

(iii) Learning through Perception

This sub-theory implies that children's learning and experiences come through perception. In other words, they perceive or derive meaning from things they see or hear. In order to train them to perceive things

well, we should allow them to play different games where they are trained to observe details. Questions could be used to guide their perception of certain situations or things. For example, showing them two similar things and asking them to identify the differences between them. They may even be given some puzzles to supply the missing parts, numbers, letters or words and so on.

3.2 Other Learning Styles of Pre-School Children

In the previous units where we discussed the early childhood education curriculum, we mentioned certain ways through which children learn. We may have to go over them again here for the sake of emphasis, particularly since they could still be meaningfully explained under the learning styles of pre-school children. You will recall that we said children construct their own knowledge. This they do through interaction with their environment. Let us now see the various ways children do their own learning.

(i) Play

This is one of the most natural things with children. Children can play anywhere and at any time. The main reason why children enjoy playing is that play provides them the opportunity for exploration, experimentation and manipulation of things. During play, they take their time to examine and refine their learning based on the immediate feedback they receive from the environment and other people they interact with. Above all, it is through play that children develop their imagination and creativity.

Therefore, we must always allow the children time to play with other children as much as possible. Their play must be well directed so that they can make the best out of their playing. There must be many materials for them to play with and there must always be opportunity for them to move around as they play. They like to change from one activity to the other as frequently as possible.

(ii) Hands-on Activity

Children like to experiment and manipulate things as mentioned above. This implies that young children in the pre-primary and junior primary classes should learn by handling some objects. They are too young for any abstract thinking. For example, when they are being introduced to numerals, it is absolutely necessary to give them physical objects to represent the figures e.g. two oranges, one ball etc. If it is addition, subtraction, multiplication or division they are being taught, there

should always be some materials for them to count. Clay modelling is also essential to develop their manipulative and creative skills.

(iii) Learning through Rhymes/Songs

Many of us will still remember certain things we learnt in the junior primary classes which we are still using now. For example, I still easily fall back to the rhyme in the number of days in each month to say how many months of the year have thirty or thirty-one days. If this can help an adult to remember well, it will do greater things for the young learners. There are different rhymes that can be used to help children learning.

In addition, the question technique is another useful technique of fostering meaningful learning among children. Since they themselves ask a lot of questions to acquire new information or knowledge, they will naturally respond to questions that stimulate their interests. Such questions we ask them must however be simple, clear and well-directed to achieve some desirable instructional/educational objectives.

(iv) Learning through Social Interactions with other Adults and Children

It is essential to note this important and natural way of learning for children. The teacher should therefore encourage interaction among the children and adults on opening days for instance. For instance, you must always allow them to interact with other children in other classes during break. Group activities inside and outside the classroom also promotes good relationship among children. Research findings have shown that children learn better from other children what they may find difficult to learn from either their parents or teachers.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Children have their own special ways of learning which may not often be in line with those of adults. Since children do their best learning during the early years, everything possible should be done to support them.

Research findings and practical experience have shown that when children's learning is tailored along their natural inclination, they do not only learn better and faster, but their learning becomes more meaningful and permanent.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

The two major learning theories on which the sub-theories of learning by pre-school children are based are:

- the S – R theory of learning
- the cognitive theory of learning.

Some of the sub-theories of learning for children discussed in this unit are:

- learning by doing/hands-on activity
- curiosity and interest
- inquiry
- learning through stories
- metamorphic change and environment
- movement
- play
- perception.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Mention and describe five pre-school children's learning styles derived from the S – R and Cognitive theories of learning.
2. Explain how the teacher can make use of these styles of learning to promote affective learning among pre-school children.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 6 TEACHER EDUCATION FOR PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Preparing Teachers for Nigerian Pre-Primary and Primary Schools in the 21st Century
 - 3.2 Teacher Preparation for Effective Performance in Schools
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit we discussed pre primary school learning styles. In this unit, we are going to discuss teacher education for pre-primary and primary education. This is because of the important role teacher's play in the successful implementation of any school curriculum.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the role of teachers in the effective implementation of school programmes
- identify the major weaknesses in the Teacher Education programmes in Nigeria
- suggest ways of training effective and efficient teachers for pre-primary and primary education in Nigeria.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Preparing Teachers for Nigerian Pre-Primary and Primary Schools in the 21st Century

The professional competence of teachers is central to the education of children. The veracity of this assertion is embedded in the National Policy on Education (2004) where it is clearly stated in the section on Teacher Education that, no system of education can rise above the quality of its teachers.

In other words, the level of commitment, competence and creativity of teachers are central to the success of the school children and the whole education programme. Therefore, in modern societies, the quality and caliber of teachers that service the educational system could serve as a valid index of that country's development and progress.

It would seem as if Government has long recognised the important contributions of teachers to national development. This was evident in the setting up the Ashby Commission by the Federal Government in 1959 to among other things look into Nigeria's needs in the area of teacher education for a period of twenty years. The recommendations of the commission led to the establishment of the Advanced Teachers Colleges (ATCs) now known as Colleges of Education (COEs). As you are aware, the Colleges of Education produce non-graduate, professionally qualified, Nigeria Certificate in Education teachers (NCE) which is now the basic/minimum teaching qualification approved for our primary schools. Thus, the Colleges of Education are now charged with the responsibility of producing teachers for our primary schools. This is in addition to the degree programmes now available in the Faculties and Institutes of Education of some Federal and State Universities in Nigeria (Akinbote, 1999) that train teachers for pre-primary and primary education.

However, in spite of all the efforts made at improving the quality of teachers through the introduction of pre-primary and primary education into the NCE and University Teacher education programmes, the problem of poor quality of teachers in schools has persisted. It is therefore necessary for us here to highlight what an effective teacher education programme for pre-primary and primary education entails. This we shall discuss in the next section.

3.2 Teacher Preparation for Effective Performance in Schools

In the last section of this unit, we discussed that government has made NCE the minimum teaching qualification in our primary schools. We also learnt that there are some Faculties and Institutes of Education in some Nigerian Universities producing graduate teachers who specialise in pre-primary and primary education. These are good efforts aimed at improving the quality of teachers and in teaching and learning in our pre-primary and primary schools. The question some people are asking now is why has the quality of our primary school products not kept abreast of this development?

Although this poor quality of primary education is a global concern (UNESCO, 2001), yet, it is strongly believed that teachers competence

through an efficient teacher education programme is central to the education of children. The traditional role of the teacher being at the centre of pupils learning is no longer regarded as adequate for meeting the challenges of the 21st century. Teacher education programme is now seen as the one in which learners take ownership of their learning.

In order to get teachers who can fit well into the new expectations, Reynolds (1992) suggested that teacher education programme for beginning teachers should include the following:

- knowledge of subject matter
- disposition to find out about students and schools including the skills to do so
- knowledge of strategies, techniques and tools to create and sustain a learning environment/community, and the ability to employ the above
- knowledge of content specific pedagogy.

For the teacher education programmes to adequately take care of the points listed above, the following areas must be reviewed:

(i) Entry Qualification

As at now, the number of credits required for entry into the Colleges of Education is three credits at the SSCE/GCE Ordinary Level. Although those admitted into the degree programmes for teacher education require five credits, yet they are not usually of the same quality as those for other professions. In most cases, as noted by Akinbote (1999), such students that enroll for the teacher education programme generally and those for pre-primary and primary education in particular, are those who have not been offered admission to the other 'choice' professions. In other words, they are the reluctant ones. You may therefore not expect much commitment, high degree of efficiency and effectiveness from such teachers if they eventually find their ways into the classroom.

Therefore, in order to attract the right caliber of recruits into the various teacher education programmes, there are some things we can do. These include:

- (a) making the teaching profession attractive through improved condition of service and an enabling work environment for teachers. There is also the need to ensure that the programmes are of good quality. They must not be inferior to the recruits into other professions in sister institutions/faculties;
- (b) providing bursary and scholarship awards to all qualified students who are specializing in pre-primary and primary education. In-

- service programmes such as study-leave with pay for primary school teachers who must go for further studies in teaching;
- (c) making the school learning environment attractive with an appropriate level of personnel, materials and facilities.

(ii) A More Pragmatic Teacher Education Curriculum

One of the causes of poor quality in the output of primary school teachers, as once observed by Taiwo (1981) may not lie only in the quality of recruits into the various teacher education programmes. At times, the traditional scope and sequence, approach to curriculum with emphasis on drilling and paper qualification could be the cause. Sometimes, what we do or don't do as individual teacher educators or as government and collectively as a people (society) may impede the professional competence of the student teachers. For example, the teacher educators in some of the institutions might themselves not be current and up-to-date in the new trends and developments in the methods and techniques of teaching. Since we teach the way we are taught, some of the products of the teachers colleges will only give what they have. Some of the teacher educators are themselves not professionally qualified.

On the part of the government, the inconsistency in policy and the inadequacy of the necessary materials, equipment and facilities as a result of inadequate funding may make it difficult for any meaningful and effective education of the student teachers to take place. In the same vein, the general attitude of our people to leave everything to government even when some wealthy individuals, groups or community can provide some of those things lacking in the institutions.

Therefore, the curriculum of the various teacher education programmes for pre-primary and primary schools should be improved upon to include the following areas:

Sound knowledge of the subject area of specialisation e.g.

Mathematics, Science, English Language, Social Studies etc.

Adequate exposure to the basic principles of teaching and learning, initiation in autonomous learning, motivation of learners, knowledge of new technologies, training in tutorial guidance and in research action methodologies.

Instructional materials production and utilisation. Teachers should be resourceful enough to develop, improvise and utilise instructional materials. Pre-primary and primary school teachers should be creative about what is to be done in the face of difficulties in getting support from the government. Therefore,

student teachers should be exposed to and adequately guided on the production and use of instructional materials.

Adequate exposure to classroom practice. This aspect of the teacher education programme is no longer taken seriously by both the students and the school authorities. Without adequate exposure, the student teachers will not be able to effectively manage the classroom situation. Therefore, it will be more appropriate if student teachers are allowed to go out on teaching practice for a whole year in pre-primary and primary school classrooms.

(iii) Provision of Adequate Facilities and an Enabling Environment

Although there has been a massive expansion in teacher education and other levels of education generally in the last two decades, yet there has been no commensurate increase in facilities. The enrolment figures of Colleges of Education and Universities with Faculties of Education have increased tremendously over the years. The lecture halls, laboratories and even furniture are not enough. Moreover, the number of academic staff in certain areas is grossly inadequate. Therefore, it has not been possible to produce high quality teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for teaching at the pre-primary and primary schools.

There is need for adequate provision of the basic facilities in our institutions. Lecture halls and laboratories should not only be made available in quantity, but also quality. The laboratories should be well-equipped to give the student teachers the much needed practical experience to effectively teach later.

The learning environment in all the institutions should be very conducive to learning. Adequate recreation facilities for both students and staff of the institutions should be provided. A healthy body is essential for effective teaching and learning. There is a need for recreation after some serious mental activity in the lecture room and laboratories.

(iv) Adequate Funding of Teacher Education

Although this is implied in the provision of adequate human and materials in the various institutions involved in Teacher Education in the country, it is not adequate. Apart from the grossly inadequate facilities and inadequate personnel, it is also obvious that the funding of teacher education is to say the least inadequate. Since the teacher is the heart of any system of education, nothing is too much to spend so that only the best quality of teachers is produced for our schools. As once observed

by Lewis cited in Akinbote (2006), no system of education can function effectively without capable men and women to serve as teachers in schools and colleges.

The capable men and women who are to be teachers cannot drop from the sky. They have to be trained and this requires a lot of capital. No amount of money invested in teacher education can be too much or wasted. The effective and efficient teacher education is particularly necessary for primary education because it is the core of development and progress in modern societies.

Therefore, government should make adequate funding of teacher education for primary education a priority in the yearly budgets. Money is required not only for the provision of infrastructure and facilities, but also for the development, recruitment and retention of the high quality teachers in our schools.

(v) In-Service Education

In-service education is an important means of developing and improving teachers' efficiency and effectiveness. It could be in form of study leave for a period of time. In the case of study leave, it could be with pay or without pay. It could also be part-time or full time course in a tertiary institution.

The other form of in-service education for teachers is by inviting some specialists in certain aspects of education to talk to the teachers. It could be on how to improve their teaching, school administration, curriculum planning and implementation among others. The teacher needs constant interaction with other professional colleagues in order to keep abreast of development in education.

The competence of teachers is central to the education of children. Whatever we want teachers to be able to do is related to the great aspirations we hold for our children. Therefore, to make our teachers relevant in the 21st century, their education both pre-service and in-service should expose them to scientific theories of teaching and learning, curriculum planning and evaluation, school administration and the design of instructional materials. This would not only improve the knowledge and professional competence in teachers, but also command respect and honour among the pupils, parents and the general public.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In the 21st century, our educational system will require the preparation of teachers who understand the purpose of education. It also requires

those who have the skills needed to employ the most appropriate methods of teaching and evaluation in the classroom.

Pre-primary and primary teacher education in Nigeria should emphasise more on programmes in which the learners take greater ownership of their own learning. The traditional role of the teacher at the centre of pupils learning is no longer deemed adequate to meet new demands in education.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the following:

That effective teacher education is central to the education of children.

Teacher education for effective performance in the 21st century should enable the learners to take ownership of their own learning.

Four areas are crucial for the effective education of beginner teachers. These are:

- knowledge of the subject matter
- disposition to find out more about the learners and the school
- knowledge of strategies, techniques and tools to create and sustain learner friendly environment
- knowledge of content of specific pedagogy.

For these to be made possible, certain things must be looked into, such as:

- the admission requirement/entry qualification
- a more pragmatic teacher education curriculum
- provision of adequate facilities
- adequate funding.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Why is teacher education at the core of any education system?
2. Identify and explain four major areas for inclusion in the teacher education programme for beginners.
3. Suggest ways of achieving effectiveness in the four major areas of teacher education programme for pre-primary and primary schools in Nigeria.

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UNIT 7 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT IN PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY EDUCATION

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Nature and Purpose of a Community
 - 3.2 The Nature and Purpose of School
 - 3.3 School/Community Linkages
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you are going to learn why and how the community can participate actively in pre-primary and primary education.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the nature and significance of community participation and involvement in pre-primary and primary education
- identify the various ways by which the community can participate actively in pre-primary and primary education
- suggest ways of good school/community relations.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Nature and Purpose of a Community

Since no one is an island, every man or woman therefore belongs to a community of people. According to Berns (2004), a community is created because no individual is self-sufficient; hence he turns to others to help satisfy some of his needs. This then leads us to the definition of a community.

A community is a group of people living in the same geographical area under common laws e.g. neighbourhood, town or city. It can also be described as a group of people having fellowship, a friendly association, a mutual sharing and common interests. The crucial components of a community are the relationship of people to one another and the sense of belongingness and of obligation to the group. Communities are structured to perform the following functions as listed by Warren and cited in Berns (2004):

- (i) **Production, Distribution, Consumption** – the community provides its members with a means of living.
- (ii) **Socialisation** – the community instills its norms and values in its members through tradition, modelling and/or formal education.
- (iii) **Social Control** – the community has the means to enforce adherence to community values through group pressure to conform to state laws.
- (iv) **Social Participation** – the community fulfills the need for companionship e.g. in churches, mosques, businesses etc.
- (v) **Mutual Support** – the community enables its members to cooperate to perform tasks too large or too urgent to be handled by a single person.

From these functions of the community, we can see that the basic reason for their living together is to provide support for one another. For instance, communities can provide informal support to families or individuals when neighbours watch each other's children or share things. They can also provide formal support through publicly or privately funded community services such as schools, hospitals, etc.

Our concern in this unit is community participation and involvement in pre-primary and primary education. We shall see how this is done in another section of this unit. But let us first discuss the structure and function of the school.

3.2 The Nature and Purpose of School

The school is a creation of the society where formal learning takes place. The school's basic function in society is therefore to develop future contributing citizens. It serves as a socializing agent by providing the intellectual and social experiences from which children develop the skills, knowledge, interest and attitudes that make them individuals and which shape their abilities to perform adult roles (Bern, 2004).

We can also add that the schools exist in order to provide services which parents unaided cannot provide. In this regard, the parents are the consumer or client and as such their wishes carry great weight.

The schools have been accused of progressively limiting the intellectual, creative and social development of children by restricting the range of human contacts available to them. There is therefore a new idea now that parents as well as other adult members of the community should come into the school not only as sight-seers on open days. Rather, they should be involved in the affairs of the school. In other words, community participation and involvement in school activities is a must for effective and efficient school management.

The expectation of the society which are expressed in goals of the school include academic, vocational, social, civic, cultural and personal. These are explained below.

Academic Goals

The mastery of basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy as well as the fundamental processes of communication and use of information.

Vocational Goals

The vocational/career education which enables the individual to select an occupation that is based on ability and interest. It also develops appropriate work habits and attitudes that make the individual productive and economically independent.

Social and Personal Goals

The schools help individuals to acquire attitudes and values necessary for interpersonal relationship, good citizenship, cultural appreciation, development of moral integrity.

Personal goals have to do with the emotional and physical well being of the individual as well as development of creatively aesthetic expression and self-realisation.

Now that you have known what a community is as well as what a school is and their purposes, let us discuss why and how the community could participate and be actively involved in the school.

3.3 School/Community Linkages

In the previous sections of this unit, you learnt that the school is a creation of the society. In other words, the school is not created by God hence it is a man-made institution. The society establishes the school in order to perform specific roles which we have already discussed. Therefore, for the school to effectively carry out the responsibilities

assigned to it by the society, the family and the community must be involved in the education of their children.

The progressive isolation of the school from the community has led to the limited intellectual, imaginative and social development of children. As explained earlier, adult members of the community other than the parents should come to the schools not only for sight-seeing on Open Days, they should come also so as to be involved in the affairs and activities of the school.

The schools must no longer be a fortress heavily guarded against members of the community. The schools must 'open' their doors to the community so as to get the people more actively involved and participate in the school activities.

The community on the other hand should stop looking at the school as a government property which in the Nigerian context (parlance) is nobody's property. There are many things the community can do for the school if they are given the opportunity to be involved. The first thing on the part of the school head is to develop what is known as 'Good school-community relations'.

(i) School-Community Relations

The school, as an artificial institution set up by society for certain purposes must have relations with the community. This is because, members of the community, whether immediate or distant, control the forms and the means of the education provided (Morrish, 1992).

Therefore, school-community relationship is "a process of developing and maintaining relationship with the community". It should be a two-way structure of giving and receiving. Thus, while schools should maintain good relations with the community in order to gain support for its projects and activities, it should also aim at giving the community (public) a good account of what the school stands for, in terms of its efforts towards building a good society.

The building of good relationship should start from the staff members of the school. In this regard, both the teaching and non-teaching staff should be carried along in the day-to-day administration of the school. Through regular meetings and consultations on matters affecting their general welfare and those of the learners, there will be enhanced cordial relationship necessary for progress and success of the school.

With good relationship within the school itself, this could now be extended to the community. From here, the regular communication with

parents of the children will then become a necessity. It is the best means of receiving support from the parents apart from the regular Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) meetings, there is need to communicate directly with individual parents as the need arises.

There are other community members who do not have children in the school. They should also be receiving accurate information about and from the school. They should also be given the opportunity to communicate with the school. We must remember that among these community members are senior citizens, different categories of professionals with wide experiences of life. They could be interested in certain activities of the school such as the performance of the pupils, discipline, security and so on.

To keep them informed, parents could be encouraged to share the school newsletters with their neighbours. At times, some newsletters may be sent to them through the community centres, religious centres, the library etc. The newsletters may also be shared with newspapers publishers, radio and television stations. Any other available opportunity to communicate with the community members on the affairs of the school should not be left out. It could even be person-to-person discussion with them by any member of staff.

(ii) Securing Community Participation/Involvement in School Activities

With good school-community relations well established through regular communications, it will not be difficult to get them involved in school activities. As a matter of fact, many of them would have been showing up in the school to ask questions about certain things or make suggestions on how to improve on certain things. Some may even on their own donate money or some other things to the school.

Some of the ways by which the community could be involved in the school activities will now be discussed:

(a) Serving as Resource Persons

Many parents and community members are experts in various fields of human endeavour. They could be invited to give a talk on certain topics which are of interest to children. This will particularly be interesting to the children who probably have heard about that person but had no opportunity of meeting him. They could also be used as guest speakers in the school on special occasions.

(b) As Volunteers

In some of the developed countries, many parents and community members often volunteer to come and work in the pre-primary schools in various capacities. Some serve as medical experts to help attend to the health needs of the children. They could be medical doctors or nurses.

There are also those who could come to take turns in teaching the children. In the United States of America, the Head start project has benefited many children through volunteers. We need to encourage parents and community members to do similar things in Nigerian pre-primary and primary schools. It is no longer fashionable for community members to see the school as an outcast or a closed system. Teachers should no longer look down on community members as people who are selfish, ignorant or uneducated. Let us give our children the opportunity to understand the connection between school learning and the world of work.

(c) Donating Resources and Time

Individuals or groups within the community can donate buildings, equipment, teaching and learning materials to schools. They could even offer scholarship award to some pupils. In addition, they could sponsor or host fieldtrips for the children. As you know, there are many places of historical, political, economic, educational, social and religious significance within and outside the community. It is usually a great thing for children to be taken on a visit to such places. The schools could not have the financial resources to go on such a trip. Some may not even be aware of the existence of such places. Moreover, some schools may be aware of the existence of such place and even have the resources to visit the places.

However, for one reason or the other, the school authorities may not have access to the place. In such cases, the community members may be in a position not only to know the people there but also facilitate the fieldtrip to the place.

(d) Invitation of the School to Participate in some Community-Organised Activities

For example, the school band or cultural group could be invited to perform at community events. The children could be asked to come and observe how certain things are done etc. This could also involve asking the community to explain the nature, purpose or the working of certain machines, festivals and so on.

4.0 CONCLUSION

When the community participate and is actively involved in the school activities, both parties will benefit for it. The children in particular stand to gain much from such linkage with the community. As briefly mentioned earlier on, the supportive linkages between the school and the community enable children to understand the community better. They are also able to understand the connection between school learning and the world of work and to discover new role models to emulate.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt:

that a community is a group of people living in the same geographical area under common laws

a school is an artificial institution set up by society for certain purposes

the expectations of the society expressed in goals include academic, vocational, social, civic, cultural and personal

through effective school-community relations, the community could be adequately involved in its activities

the areas where the community could be made to participate actively in school activities include:

- serving as resource persons and guest speakers
- serving as volunteers
- donating resources and time.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain what you understand by community and school.
2. In what ways can the community be involved in the school activities?
3. How can Nigerian schools secure the active participation and involvement of the community in their activities?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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MODULE 2 ISSUES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Unit 1	Meaning and Importance of Primary Education
Unit 2	Global Challenges to Primary Education
Unit 3	Gender Equality in Education
Unit 4	Free Mid-Day Meal in School
Unit 5	Homework in Primary Education
Unit 6	The Role of Primary Schools in Sustaining the Benefits of Early Childhood Education Programme
Unit 7	Millennium Development Goals for Primary Education

UNIT 1 MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

CONTENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you are going to learn more about the meaning and importance of primary education. You will know why Nigeria, like many other countries of the world, have been trying to make primary education free since 1976.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

explain the meaning of primary education
 enumerate the benefits of primary education to the individual, the community and the nation.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Meaning of Primary Education

The word primary means first. Thus, one could simply refer to primary education as the first level of education where formal teaching and learning in the acquisition of permanent literacy and numeracy skills takes place. This actually distinguishes primary education from pre-primary education and other levels of education.

As you must be aware, in most pre-primary schools in Nigeria today, they try to focus on teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy to the children. You should however note that whatever the children have learnt at the pre-primary school level is still to be perfected at the primary school level.

As the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) has clearly indicated, the objectives of pre-primary education include teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours etc. through play. That is to say, the children are just to be introduced to numbers and letters, may be for the purpose of recognition and not for any permanent learning.

The primary school level is the only level of education recognised for the development of permanent literacy and numeracy skills in the learners. What the other levels of the education, from the secondary school to the university do is to build on the foundations level at the primary school level. Therefore, primary education could be regarded as the most important level of education which the other levels cannot do away with.

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), primary education is the education given in an institution to children aged 6 to 11⁺ years. This means that in Nigeria, a child must be at least six years old before he/she can start receiving the first formal education. In addition, the child must remain in school for six years to complete this very important level of education.

In the next section, we are going to consider the purpose of primary education.

3.2 The Purpose/Importance of Primary Education

The importance of primary education has been recognised over the ages. This is an event in the various declarations and assertions by groups and individuals on primary education across the globe. At the global level, the United Nations General Assembly, as far back as 1948, stated among

other things, made the Declaration that everyone has the right to education, which shall be free and compulsory at the primary level. Similarly, African leaders that met at Addis Ababa in 1961 on the development of education on the continent agreed that all governments must work towards the provision of free and compulsory six years primary education to all their citizens latest by 1980.

Plato, who lived between (427 – 348 B.C), stated that the process of education should start as early as possible since it is during the early childhood period that any impression which one may desire to communicate is most easily stamped and taken. Others who have through their writings, pronouncements and actions demonstrated the need for education to be made accessible to all children include, Comenius (1592 -1670), Obafemi Awolowo and Julius Nyerere. All these efforts at making primary education accessible to all testify to the fact that, primary education is essential for laying the foundation for sustainable growth and development of any modern society.

Let us now discuss some of the benefits of primary education to the individual and the society generally.

(i) Development of Numeracy and Literacy Skills

Primary education develops the capacity learn, to read and use mathematics. Primary education is the level of education recognised all over the world for developing the young learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Without effectively helping the child to read and write at the primary school level, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the other levels of education to do so. In fact, the other levels of education merely build on the foundation laid at the primary school.

You must have seen many men and women in different areas of human endeavour who had only the primary school leaving certificate and are very successful. On the other hand, if you see a secondary school student who cannot read and write well, find out what his or her primary education was like. You may even see university students with very poor handwriting. The problem must have started from the primary school where the writing skill has not been fully developed in the individual. Since the other levels of education – the secondary and tertiary levels are not designed for that purpose; they could not do anything about it. Therefore, the individual will have to go on with the poor illegible handwriting for life. This shows that it is at the primary school level that this writing skill can be developed in the learner.

(ii) Primary Education as a Gateway to Other Levels of Education

This is another importance of primary education. All the scientists, engineers, teachers, doctors and other highly skilled professionals needed in all countries are products of secondary schools and tertiary institutions. The point however remains that all these highly skilled professionals passed through the primary school. In other words, it is not possible to go to the secondary school or the university without first passing through the primary school. I have seen many university professors and lecturers who did not attend secondary schools. I have however not seen anyone who did not attend primary school and has become a professor, lecturer or lawyer. Therefore, it is correct to state that primary education is the gateway to all other higher levels of education that produce all the professionals in any country.

(iii) Primary Education Helps People to Acquire Information and to Think Critically

You must have heard the popular saying that illiteracy is a disease. This is because illiteracy does not open the eyes of the individual to the happenings in different parts of the world. It does not allow the individual to know the different ways of doing things. The mind of the illiterate person is closed and therefore becomes superstitious in all his ways.

Research findings have shown that primary education contributes to better natural resources management including conservation of the environment, and more rapid technological adaptation and innovation (Godoy and Contreras as cited in World Bank, 2003). In other words, people with at least primary education will be better able to manage their environment well and prevent the indiscriminate destruction of vegetation and other natural resources. Similarly, the ability of people to make use of the various technological inventions to improve their living and productivity is enhanced with the acquisition of the basic skills of literacy right from the primary school.

(iv) Poverty Reduction

According to the World Bank (2003), the role of primary education is to reduce poverty; and income inequality is even more strongly established than its contribution to overall economic growth. Research findings have also shown that primary education is an asset against poverty among individuals in the society who are most likely to be poor. These people include girls, ethnic minorities, orphans, people with disabilities and people living in rural areas.

This implies that primary education provides people with the essential and individual power to reflect, make better choices, seek a voice in society and enjoy a better life (Amartya Sen as cited in World Bank, 2003). Primary education can therefore be referred to as human capacity builder. In this regard, primary education also promotes the achievement of poverty reduction, gender equity, child health, maternal health and lower other communicable diseases but promotes environmental sustainability.

(v) Political and Civil Education

A French philosopher, Voltaire was once quoted as saying that “only those who know how to read and write will lead mankind”. Thomas Jefferson was also quoted as saying, “people who can read can be free because reading banishes ignorance” (Akinbote, *et al.*, 2001). The assertions have been supported by Chief Obafemi Awolowo when he argued that “a literate society is easier to be governed than an illiterate society”. As you yourself will testify, there is nowhere in Nigeria today where illiterates, however, powerful or wealthy can again be allowed to become even a Local Government Chairman. Also, very few communities, if any, will now appoint an illiterate as their traditional rulers. At least, they will expect such a person to be able to read and write and communicate in English with others. This shows that primary education, as mentioned in the preceding section, helps to build the capacity of individuals for social, political and economic advancement.

(iv) Providing Support Staff

There is no private or government establishment that would like to recruit illiterates even as drivers, cleaners, messengers and so on now. This is because of the popular belief that a good primary education will enhance the efficacy and effectiveness of every category of the unskilled labour which constitute the bulk of the labour force in the society. Since we cannot all be masters or experts, it follows that experts in various fields will always require the services of the artisans, drivers, cleaners and messengers. Those who have attained at least the primary level of education will thus be more useful in those capacities.

3.3 Expansion of Primary Education

The various research findings on primary education have confirmed the importance of primary education in developing the capacity and equipping the individual to contribute to and benefit from the economic growth of the society. You have also learnt in the preceding section that primary education is the gateway to all higher levels of education that

train the various categories of high level manpower needed by all countries of the world.

However, when a large number of children do not have access to primary education or do not complete primary education, there is danger ahead for the country. According to the World Bank (2003), it means that, the productivity of the labour force, the potential for knowledge-driven development and the reservoir of human potential from which society and the economy can draw are fundamentally constrained. Therefore, many countries of the world, particularly the developing countries have made efforts at making this very important level of education accessible to all.

In Nigeria, the expansion of primary education has been receiving the attention of government at different periods of our political history. The introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme in the old Western Region by the Obafemi Awolowo's administration in 1955 was the first bold step at expanding primary education in Nigeria.

At the national level, there have been efforts aimed at making education accessible to all. The Federal Government introduced the National UPE programme in 1976. This scheme brought about an increase in school enrolment from 3.5 million in 1970 to 11.2 million in 1980. The national UPE scheme also brought about a uniform curriculum for all primary schools in Nigeria in addition to making primary education a six year programme.

The current Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme which was introduced in 1999 was also aimed at further expansion of access to basic education. The objectives of the UBE programme include:

- increase in enrolment, retention and completion in basic education
- reduce gender access and equity disparities in basic education
- enhance the quality of basic education
- strengthen partnerships in the provision of basic education through collaboration, cooperation and coordination.

As one should expect, the expansion of access to primary education has led to a corresponding expansion of secondary education in Nigeria. This is a natural follow up from the demand for secondary education by those who have completed their primary education. In order to make secondary education accessible to all primary school leavers, the Federal Government through the UBE programme has made the first three year of secondary education free and compulsory. That is, there is a place for every child who completed primary education in the Junior Secondary

School. Therefore, the expansion of access to the junior secondary school level is designed to further strengthen the individual capacity to reflect, make better choices and enjoy a better life.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Primary education is the gateway to all higher levels of education and also equips the individual with the human capabilities to enjoy better life. It is therefore necessary to make it accessible to all citizens.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that primary education:

is the first level of education where formal teaching and learning in the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills take place is the gateway to other higher levels of education that train the scientists, teachers, doctors and other professionals needed in all countries
helps to empower the individual to make better choices and enjoy a better life
provides political and civil education so as to become better citizens and leaders
also provides effective and efficient support staff to the various experts and leaders in both the public and private sectors of the economy, and
should be made accessible to all so that we may not lack the potential for knowledge-driven development and the reservoir of human potential for the overall growth and development of the country.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain fully what you understand by primary education.
2. Why is primary education necessary for every child in the society?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 GLOBAL CHALLENGES TO PRIMARY EDUCATION

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
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- 3.0 Main Content
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 - 3.2 Poor Performance of Primary Education
 - 3.3 Meeting the Challenges of Primary Education
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you learnt the meaning and the importance of primary education. In this unit, you are going to learn the various challenges facing primary education globally.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- identify and explain the challenges of primary education in Nigeria
- suggest ways of meeting the challenges as they affect Nigerian primary schools.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Major Challenges to Primary Education

One of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at eradicating extreme poverty and improving the welfare of the people by the year 2015 is to achieve Universal Primary Education. This implies that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

As noted by Burns, *et al.* (2003), this echoes the commitment by the countries that met in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 to achieve universal primary education by the year 2000. However, for some unforeseen problems, this was not possible hence the commitment was reaffirmed

and extended to 2015 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in the year 2000.

The findings of EFA 2000 Assessment that preceded the Dakar Conference identified a number of challenges for primary education in the world. Let us now discuss the one that is considered the most important of them all.

3.2 Poor Performance of Primary Education

According to the UNESCO (2001) report, the performance of primary education fell below the desired level in many countries. In spite of the huge resources committed to primary education by many countries, the gains in primary education had either diminished or are yet to be realised. The reasons for the poor quality of primary education include the following:

(a) National and International Conflicts

The various conflicts, be it local, national or international, particularly in the developing countries, have had adverse effects on primary education. Such conflicts often make regular attendance at school impossible thereby affecting the academic achievement of the pupils. Similarly, the destruction of available facilities and infrastructures which have to be replaced means the money which could have been spent in primary education will be diverted to other areas. This has often left many primary schools without adequate classrooms, furniture for teachers and pupils as well as instructional materials. In Nigeria for example, it is not difficult to find school children in such areas sitting on the floor and learning outside under the shade of trees.

Can you mention at least one local government area where such a thing has happened? No effective teaching and learning can take place under such conditions.

(b) Natural Disasters

There are some natural disasters which may destroy school facilities and thereby disrupt effective teaching and learning. In Nigeria, we have experienced some natural disasters such as flooding and rainstorms which destroyed school facilities. In some instances, the pupils and teachers are cut-off for days from their schools, while in others; there is nowhere for them to stay as the roof of the school buildings must have been blown off. In all these circumstances, no effective teaching and learning can take place.

(c) Extreme Poverty

Although there is free primary education, many parents in the third world countries, including Nigeria cannot afford to send their children to school. In a situation where the parents cannot provide adequate feeding and clothing for their children, it is impossible for such parents to provide school materials. As such, many school children are often asked to help in supplementing the income of the parents by engaging in some economic activities. Many of the school children therefore do not attend classes regularly. Where they even attend classes, they are usually unable to concentrate and do any meaningful learning.

Research findings have shown that children who take breakfast to school do better academically than those who do not eat anything at all. Even among those who take breakfast, it has been found that those who take balanced diet do better than those who take just only carbohydrates. Therefore, the poverty of many parents often affects the academic and all round development of their children in primary schools.

(d) Impact of HIV/AIDS and Other Preventable Diseases

Thousands of parents have died of HIV/AIDS thereby making schooling difficult for their children. In the same way, many teachers and educational personnel have died or destabilised by AIDS. This have in various ways affected the effective teaching and learning in schools. We may not be having the impact of HIV/AIDS as much as some other countries do, yet this does not mean it does not happen in Nigeria.

In addition, there are many preventable diseases like malaria, guinea-worm, and other chronic diseases which often keep children away from school. When children are not regular in school, it will be difficult for such children to be the best of what they are to become in terms of academic achievement.

(e) Too Large Classes

The ideal teacher-pupils ratio for the primary school is 1:35. That is, a class should not be more than 35 pupils. However, in some situations, as a result of man-made or national problems, there are insufficient classrooms or teachers, which make 50 or more pupils to be packed in a class for a teacher to teach. In such classes, the teachers will not be able to give individual attention to the pupils. Moreover, proper supervision and assessment of pupils' work in mathematics, English language and other subjects will be difficult. The end result will be that effective teaching and learning cannot take place.

(f) Lack of Adequate Materials

A situation where majority of the pupils in the class have no textbooks in all the subjects and have no writing materials is not the best for effective teaching and learning to take place. This, in many cases, is due to the poverty of the parents. However, there are a few cases where the parents' misplaced priorities have made it difficult or impossible for them to provide their children with the necessary school materials. Such children will not be able to participate actively in the classroom activities.

There are instances where teachers have no copies of the recommended textbooks and some instructional materials. Some teachers in the past had to buy their own exercise books for writing their lesson notes.

(g) Inadequate Teacher Education Programme

It is not an overstatement that many teachers in the primary schools have not been appropriately trained. Many of the primary school teachers are deficient not only in the use of appropriate methods of teaching, but also lack adequate knowledge of the subject matter. In Nigeria, for instance, the number of Colleges of Education running both the regular and sandwich programmes have risen considerably in the last decade. This is due to the policy of making the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) the minimum teaching qualification in our primary schools. Therefore, to cope with the increase in the demand for places in the Colleges of Education, Study Centres were created in different places. This is without due consideration to available facilities and the qualified manpower to teach the various courses. As a matter of fact, many individuals have seen this as a money making venture. They just open centres in collaboration with the colleges and recruit whoever cares to come to the centres as lecturers. We are all witnesses to the poor quality of teaching and learning taking place at such centres. As noted by Akinbote (1999), products of such programmes are half-baked teachers who often go to the classroom to mis-educate and confuse the learners.

(h) Inconsistency in Government Policy

This could be traced to the political and socio-economic instability in many of the developing countries. The frequent changes in government policy has done much harm to the education system generally, and primary education in particular. The experience of Nigerian primary education between 1988 and 1993 is a good example of how inconsistency in government policy can destroy any level of education. The public primary schools in Nigeria are yet to fully recover from the damage done to them during the period in question. In many states of

the country today, the population of the public primary schools has not improved appreciably as a result of the loss of confidence in it by the general public.

3.3 Meeting the Challenges of Primary Education

Primary education, as you learnt in the previous unit, is the foundation upon which all other levels of education are built. That is, it is the gateway to all other levels of education. Therefore, if there is deficiency of any kind at this level of education, it will be carried over to the other levels of education. As you may expect, this will slow down the rate of growth and development of the country generally. In this connection, certain steps must be taken in order to meet the various challenges for primary education. Such steps that could be taken to ensure the full realisation of the goals of primary education are now to be discussed.

(i) Teachers

The teachers are at the heart of any effort at improving the quality and performance of primary education. This implies therefore that adequate steps should be taken by government to improve the teachers' competence, creativity and commitment. No matter how much is spent on primary education, if there are no competent and dedicated men and women to teach in the schools, all will just be a waste.

In this regard, the education of teachers should be taken more seriously. At both the pre-service and in-service levels, efforts must be made to ensure high standards. The indiscriminate opening of teacher education centres now all over the country (Nigeria) should be stopped. The recognised institutions for preparing teachers for the primary schools should be adequately equipped with both human and material resources required for the primary schools. In addition, the general welfare of the teachers should be improved so as to give them self-confidence with which to discharge their responsibilities well. In other words, the teachers' preparation and continuing support are fundamental to the achievement of primary education goals.

(ii) An Enabling Learning Environment

For children to learn effectively, it is necessary to provide them a child-friendly school environment. There should be appropriate personnel, materials and facilities as well as a conducive social and political climate. As observed by UNESCO (2001), hardly do we have any resources left to provide teaching and learning materials after paying teachers' salaries. This is not good enough. There must be adequate facilities and materials for children's performance to remain

unhampered. There should be collaboration between the school and the communities so that they can provide some of the needed materials. As it is now known, government alone cannot do it hence the cooperation and assistance of individuals, groups and communities will go a long way in making our primary schools learner friendly. We must create a favourable and enabling environment where all children can learn in our schools.

(iii) Government's Commitment to Educational Quality

It is one thing to have a good curriculum, but it is another thing to ensure efficient delivery system. Therefore, government should design and implement effective monitoring mechanisms to support learning and ensure the attainment of the goals of primary education. There should be some level of consistency in government policy so as to strengthen commitment to effective teaching and learning in schools.

(iv) Ensuring Adequate Support Systems for Education

It is not enough to provide adequate teaching and learning materials in the school. It is equally important to provide adequate support systems in form of guidance and counselling, health and nutrition services and co-curricular activities in the learners.

The teachers, both at the pre-service and in-service stages, should be given adequate support by the community, the inspectorate and the private sector. They should be exposed to new technologies such as ICT for enhancing their learning and teaching.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Primary education is the core of development and progress in modern societies. The goals of primary education will not be realised except the challenges posed by teachers, support systems, governance and learning environment among others are adequately addressed.

7.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt some of the challenges for achieving the goals of primary education. The global challenges which have not allowed the quality of primary education to keep abreast of the expansion include:

- Conflicts at the local, national and international levels
- Natural disasters
- Extreme poverty

The impact of HIV/AIDS and other chronic diseases

Too large classes

Lack of adequate materials

Teachers' ineffectiveness and lack of dedication.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain five challenges for primary education and their implications for the achievement of the goals of education in Nigeria.
2. Suggest ways of overcoming any three of the challenges for the attainment of the goals of primary education.

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UNIT 3 GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Concept of Gender Parity and Equality in Education
 - 3.2 Gender Disparity in Education
 - 3.3 Eliminating Gender Disparity in Education
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the first unit of this module, some of the reasons why primary education is necessary for everybody were mentioned. You were also told that the government has been trying to make it accessible to all citizens. However, despite the universalisation of access to education, there is still the problem of gender inequality in primary education. That is, there are still some areas where, for one reason or the other, some children are still not having access to primary education.

Therefore, in this unit, you will learn what gender equality in education means and what are the nature and causes of gender inequality in primary education.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain what is meant by gender equality in education
- identify the types and causes of gender inequality in primary education
- suggest ways of ensuring gender balance in primary education in Nigeria.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Concept of Gender Parity and Equality in Education

As you are already aware, God created (Adam) man and woman (Eve). That is, the world is populated by men and women, boys and girls. It is this psychological attributes of human beings as male and female that is

referred to as gender. Sex on the other hand refers to the biological attributes of males and females (Burns, 2003).

According to UNESCO (2006), gender parity and gender equality in education mean different things.

Gender Parity is a purely numerical concept which implies that the same proportion of boys – and girls relative to their respective age groups – would enter the education system and participate in its different cycles.

Gender Equality means that boys and girls would experience the same advantages or disadvantages in education access, treatment and outcomes. In other words, the achievement of full gender equality in education would imply:

Equality of opportunities in the sense that boys and girls are offered the same chances to access school without gender-based attitudes by parents, teachers and society

Equality in the learning process – that is, boys and girls receive the same treatment and attention, follow the same curriculum, enjoy teaching methods and tools free of stereotypes and gender bias, they are offered counselling not affected by gender biases, profit from the same quantity and quality.

The idea of gender inequality in education could be traced to both the cultural and religious ways of regarding males as not only being stronger than females, but also as being superior in all ways. Therefore, many cultural and religious practices often relegate women to the background either in the family, community or religious activities.

It is usually a question of the males first. Even in most people's desire and prayer for children, it is the male child that is preferred for various reasons. This practice is not peculiar to any culture as elements of discrimination against the females are present in Europe, Asia, Americas and Africa. What may differ is the level or degree of such discriminations.

It is probably in realisation of the danger which the various discriminations pose against the optimum development of our women and girls generally that brought about the declaration of human rights by the United Nations Organisation (UNO). As far back as 1948, the UN has, among other things, stated in the Declaration of Human Rights that, everyone has the right to education. In the declaration of children's rights, which many member nations of the UN including Nigeria has signed, it is clearly stated that every child has:

- a. the right to special care if handicapped
- b. the right to free education
- c. the right to develop their abilities
- d. the right to be a useful member of the society
- e. the right to enjoy full opportunity for play and recreation.

These rights of the child are aimed at giving all children, irrespective of their gender, social or economic background or physical state of health, equal chances to develop their potentialities.

One of the cardinal Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is the promotion of gender equality. Specifically, it is to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and at all levels of education not later than 2015. On the other hand, one of the goals of the Global Education For All (EFA) is to ensure that by 2015, all children, particularly girls have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Despite the UN Declarations, EFA and MDG desires for equal education opportunities for all, there are still many cases of disparity in education. The causes of this disparity in the enrolment figures of boys and girls in primary education will be discussed in the next section.

3.2 Gender Disparity in Education

As mentioned in the last section, different societies and cultures in the world view males and females differently. This is particularly noticeable in the expectations of what males and females are to do in the society. This is what some people refer to as gender roles. According to Berns (2004), gender roles are qualities that individuals understand and that characterise males and females in their culture.

There is no doubt that males and females differ in their physiological make up. They also differ in the social roles they play based on societal expectations. For example, in many cultures, children are socialized to assume behaviours, values and attitudes considered appropriate for them. For instance, as noted by Berns (2004), the family, the peer group, school, the mass media and the community influence the development of gender roles in different ways. Right from the names considered appropriate for boys and girls, parents often treat sons and daughters differently. Similarly peers exert some influence right from the childhood period to play with appropriate toys. The schools on the other hand sometimes treat males and females differently either intentionally or unintentionally. The mass media and the community also influence gender role development through their attitude to what is

appropriate for males and females. You can give examples of such influences from your personal experiences.

Let us now discuss some of the reasons for educational disparity between males and females in Nigeria in particular:

(i) Culture on Inheritance

We mentioned earlier on that many Africans even now prefer male to female children. They can do anything to have a male child. You must have heard stories about men who either divorced their wives or married another one in their quest for male children. This desire to have male children is based on the popular belief that “it is the male children who will carry on with the family name and traditions when the parents are dead”. Whereas, the female children will move to another family or town after marriage, the males will not only retain the family name, but also bring others to the family.

Therefore, when western education became popular, the males were the preferred ones. That is, parents prefer to invest their money and resources only on the males who will project the family name after becoming successful. So, many female children were denied the opportunity to receive western education.

Can you give an example of some homes/families where many of their female children were not sent to school?

(ii) The Threat to Female Chastity

Females particularly in African societies are expected to abstain from all forms of sexual intercourse before marriage. That is, they are expected to remain pure, simple and virtuous. Therefore, they are to be protected from anything that will expose them to all forms of activities that will make them lose their chastity. It is not surprising therefore to find many Africans preventing their female children from going to school. They believe that the schools through their academic and extra curricula activities could open up their daughters to immoral activities.

(iii) Women’s Economic Value in Bride Wealth

There are some communities in Nigeria where early marriage is encouraged among the females because of certain cultural and economic reasons. Culturally, some believe that as soon as the girl child attains puberty, she has no business staying with the parents again. That is, she should go to her husband. In such communities, such children are often withdrawn from school for marriage. This perception finds succinct

expression in Alhassan (1990; 44-45). In some Muslim communities in Nigeria, it is the custom that girls marry at puberty, and therefore are withdrawn from school. A girl is considered nubile once she is 12 years old. A girl who remains unmarried after 14 may not find a male partner. Parents do not want their girls left on the shelf so that even ages below 10 are given away in marriage usually against their wishes. Child marriage used to be the norm among the Igbos, Yorubas and Ibibios until the demands of western education pushed up the age of girls eligible for marriage. The practice is still common in some African countries till today

On the other hand, because of poverty, some parents give out their children in early marriage for material gains. The dowry paid and the other gifts from the husband's family serve as good source of income to the girl's family. In such communities, the more female children a family could give out in marriage, the more income and other gifts they receive.

(iv) Fear of Insurbordination to Male Authority

As mentioned earlier, there are certain cultural and religious beliefs which emphasise that the woman must be subjective (obedient) to the husband. However, when girls receive western education, there is always the fear and apprehension that such ladies will not be submissive to their husbands again; that they will become very proud and will not be subservient to their husbands or male authority generally. This fear among many Nigerians has often not been helped by the attitude of some educated married women, who unfortunately cannot distinguished between their home and office

Can you give an example of an educated woman who is not submissive to her husband in your community?

3.3 Eliminating Gender Disparity in Education

We have just discussed, in a section of this unit, the EFA and MDG goals on the elimination of gender disparities in education. In the same section, you have been told the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child to Education. The education for girls and boys in Africa, according to the World Bank, reported in Bruns *et al.* (2003) may be the single most effective preventive weapon against HIV/AIDS, poverty and resources mismanagement in Africa.

In a bid to eliminate gender inequality and discrimination in education, the UBE programme in Nigeria has made the reduction in gender, access and equity disparities in basic education its objectives. Moreover, the

National Policy on Education (NPE) Blueprint (1999) has specified certain steps to be taken to reduce, and if possible, eradicate gender disparity in education. These include:

- (a) Awakening the awareness of all citizens to the fact that equal educational opportunity is the right of all citizens irrespective of sex, age, locality and creed
- (b) Eradicate parents and the general public belief so as to bring about a change in attitude towards women educational programmes and development
- (c) Re-orientate the attitude of all females irrespective of age, towards education
- (d) Awaken the consciousness of all women to the need for the development of a positive change.

The problem of discrimination against girl-child education and withdrawal from school which has become endemic in certain parts of Nigeria has to be vigorously tackled. It is true government has made certain policy statements on the issue. However, more concrete efforts could still be made to ensure the complete eradication of discrimination in the education of all citizens. Some of such steps to be taken include the following:

(i) Legislation on Girl-Child Education

It has now become necessary to enact laws that will make it an offence for parents to refuse their female children access to western education. Similarly, it should be a punishable offence for parents to withdraw their female children for whatever reasons before the completion of the UBE programme. Such laws should be passed by each States House of Assembly so as to ensure compliance. The enforcement of such laws should be jointly monitored by the State and Local Governments.

(ii) Special Incentives for Girl Education

In addition to making primary and secondary education free and compulsory, special incentives could be given to the girls in those areas notorious for limited female participation in education. This could be in form of free uniform to all girls from primary to secondary level. Those in tertiary institutions should be given special bursary or scholarship awards irrespective of the course of study.

(iii) Empowerment of Indigent Parents

We mentioned earlier that poverty sometimes force many parents to withdraw their female children from school or prevent them from going

altogether. A way out of this is to empower such parents through the provision of soft loans to support their businesses or occupations. The granting of such loans should not be tied to anything such as religions, political or ethnic considerations. In addition, the loans which should be a revolving one should be interest free and without too stringent conditions.

(iv) **Celebration of Successful Women**

All women in positions of authority should in addition to being role models to the school girls be publicly celebrated. Those in politics, commerce, government, education and other professions should not be discriminated against in any way. They should be given opportunities to become leaders/heads in their various occupations and positions. In addition, important places such as educational institutions, buildings and streets among others could be named after such noble women. This should be done at the National, State and Local Government levels.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Education is a right and not a privilege. It is one of the most powerful instruments known for reducing poverty, inequality and for laying the basis for sustained economic growth and development. When majority of children do not go to school or complete basic education, the productivity of the labour force, and the reservoir of human potential from which society and the economy can draw are reduced. In fact, education for girls in particular is one of the best means for the improvement of fertility, health and nutrition.

Therefore, extending basic education to all children and particularly girls is to equip them sufficiently to contribute to and benefit from economic growth (Bruns, *et al.* 2003).

6.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

gender refers to the psychological attributes of human beings as females and males

gender equality in education means equal educational opportunities to boys and girls alike

the causes of gender discrimination in education could be due to:

- a. cultural and religious practices
- b. threat to female chastity
- c. women economic value in bride wealth
- d. fear of girls getting out of hand.

the problem of discrimination against female education could be eliminated through:

- a. special legislation
- b. special incentives for girls in schools
- c. empowerment of indigent female students
- d. celebration of successful women.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain the concept gender and gender equality in education.
2. Identify the causes of gender inequality in education in Nigeria.
3. Suggest solutions to the problems of discrimination against female education in Nigeria.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 FREE MID-DAY MEAL IN SCHOOL

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Importance of Mid-Day Meal for School Children
 - 3.2 Implementing the Mid-Day Meal Programme
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you learnt the causes of gender inequality in education, and how to eliminate gender inequality in education.

In this unit, you are going to learn the importance of balanced and regular feeding for effective schooling. You will also learn why government should introduce free mid-day meal in schools.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the importance of balance mid-day meal for school children
- suggest ways of making free meal available to school children in Nigeria.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Importance of Mid-Day Meal for School Children

It is universally agreed that the environment plays an important role in the all round development of the child. The environment, as you must be aware, consists of both the social and physical aspects. Among the physical aspects of the environment is the food we eat. We all need good food to be in good health. Children need balanced diet more than the adults because they are still growing in all parts of their body. As a result of this, regular and balanced food (nutrition) will help them to develop well and be in good health. It is only when children are healthy that they can do well academically.

In Nigeria, many children, as reported by Akinbote (2000), are either not in school or they are not regular in attendance because of ill-health. So, children that are not regular in school cannot be expected to always perform well in all the school activities. Research findings have also proved that children who take balanced diet to school every day perform better in their academic activities than the children who either do not take breakfast at all or those who take mainly carbohydrate meals to school (Hussein, 1998). Similarly, research findings in India have reported the positive impact of mid-day meal on primary education. Mid-day meal refers to school programme which involves provision of free lunch to school children on all working school days.

Let us now discuss the importance of mid-day meal.

(i) Enhancement of Educational Achievement of School Children

I have just told you that research findings by Hussein (1998) have proved that children who take balanced diet to school usually perform better in their academic activities than children who do not take breakfast to school. It does not end there. The findings also showed that taking a balanced meal is more beneficial to children's academic performance than just taking carbohydrate meals to school. In other words, good nutrition is essential to good health just as good health is essential to good academic achievement.

Therefore, if the children from economically marginalized families could be provided mid-day meals in school, their nutrition level could be upgraded. This will, to a reasonable extent, help to enhance their educational achievement. As you have been told in one of the earlier units, the academic achievement of primary school children has, according to UNESCO, fallen below expectation in many of the developing countries. Poverty has been identified as one of the major factors responsible for the poor quality of primary education. When parents are too poor to provide the basic needs like good nutrition of their school children, it will be difficult for the children to excel in their school activities. In such circumstances, the provision of free mid-day meal to children in all public primary schools will help the children from classroom hunger.

(ii) Increasing School Enrolment and Attendance

One of the ways of ensuring minimal wastage in primary education is to sustain the enrolment and attendance of pupils. As mentioned earlier on, there are many school-age children who are not in school as a result of the poverty of their parents. Similarly many of those who are enrolled

in school are not regular in attendance. A former Minister of Education in India was once quoted as asking some boys busy with their cows and goats why they did not go to school? One of the boys was said to have answered by saying, if I go to school, will you give me food? This boy's answer sparked the process of establishing the mid-day meal programme in Indian public primary schools.

Available reports from India have indicated an increase in school enrolment and a tremendous improvement in the rate of regular attendance at school. In other words, the introduction of free meal into primary schools could help in increasing school enrolment and attendance particularly among the poor people in both the rural and urban communities in the developing countries. Therefore, if we want to make primary education accessible to all by 2015, it may be necessary to introduce free mid-day meal in all public primary schools where most of the malnourished children in the developing countries attend.

(iii) Reduction of Child Labour and Child Abuse

In India where the school mid-day meal has long been established, the incidence of child labour and child abuse has reduced considerably. This, as you could imagine, is as a result of more children attending school more regularly. Children who would have been engaged in various activities at home, in the farm, market or streets are kept in school for a good part of the school day.

If the free meal is introduced in Nigerian public primary schools, there is also the possibility of a great reduction in the various forms of child labour and child abuse now common in the society. There are many children out of school because of the poverty of their parents. Since their parents were too poor to give them even a good meal in a day, they have to fend for themselves. Many children even resort to begging for food in many of our cities.

(iv) Social and Economic Empowerment

The provision of free mid-day meal in school could also serve as a veritable means of poverty alleviation, particularly among the local women. For instance, some women will have to be employed to cook the food for the children. In the same way, some people will be employed to produce and or supply the food items to be cooked for the children. By so doing, many people will be gainfully employed and have a legitimate source of income. Thus, the people will be empowered to perform some of their social and economic roles in their families and communities.

(v) **Promotion of Good Practices in Food Consumption and Health**

The free mid-day meal in schools will, in addition to protecting children from classroom hunger, also increase the educational level of parents and their children's who are given good and balanced nutrition. In addition, it will also promote good health practices among the pupils and their parents. For instance, a survey carried out in 2005 by the Ministry of Health in India revealed that the malnourishment of 21 percent of school children was due to their parents' poor knowledge about nutrition and negligence of the importance of taking regular meals.

Therefore, the provision of free mid-day meal will go a long way in helping to change the feeding habits of people in the rural areas in particular. As the community members are employed and trained to prepare nutritious food from the locally produced crops, they will be in a position to transfer the knowledge to the local populace. They will also learn the importance of regular feeding while the children will benefit from the rules of hygiene associated with eating.

In concluding this discussion on the advantages of free mid-day meal in primary schools, we must not forget that such a programme will help in producing healthy and active younger generation who will get maximum benefits from primary school education. The children from economically marginalised families will be able to participate actively in education activities. They will be more regular in attendance at school and receive proper guidance in obtaining balanced diet.

3.2 Implementing the Mid-Day Meal Programme

You have just learnt some of the benefits of the free mid-day meal programme. In order to achieve the desired results, the implementation of the school mid-day meal programme has to be properly planned and implemented. If it is not well-planned, managed and supervised, there may be nothing to show for it in terms of benefits to the individual, the community and the government. Some of the factors to planning, management and supervision of the programme include:

- a. **Implementation** – The implementation of the free-mid-day meal programme should be the responsibility of the state governments. However, the local governments that are closer to the rural schools should be actively involved. First, there should be a separate board like health board or nutrition board manned only by health and nutrition experts. There should be local government offices to be in charge of preparation and distribution of food to the schools in each local government area. The local

government offices should equally be manned by health and nutrition officers who will not only supervise the preparation of the food but also ensure its quality in terms of following:

hygienic preparation of the meal

adherence to the menu

sufficiency in terms of quantity to go round all the children for whom it is intended

nutritional value of the meal to ensure that whatever is given to the children is a balanced diet

practicing good food habits by ensuring that children keep to the rules of hygiene before, during and after the meal

prevention of wastage at both the points of preparation and serving to the children

proper methods of waste disposal.

- b. The preparation of the meal** - Since it will be too expensive in terms of time, money and men to prepare the food in each school, a central kitchen system could be introduced. For example in a city such as Ibadan, with about six local government areas within the city, there could be two central kitchens strategically located to serve three local governments each. Each kitchen should be able to cater for about 50 to 70 thousand children. This may be adequate for easy management. There is the world's largest central kitchen at Hyderabad in India (spread over two acres with built up area of 14,000 square feet) which prepares mid-day meal for 880 schools in twin cities benefiting 1.3 million children daily. This may be difficult for a start in Nigeria where the programme has yet to gain popularity and acceptance. In some other areas, a local government area with about 30,000 to 50,000 school children could have a separate kitchen of its own. Other local government areas with smaller population could team up to have a central kitchen for the preparation of school mid-day meals.
- c. Funding** – The mid-day meal is a capital intensive programme. Therefore, the funding should not be left to the state governments alone. The federal government should be responsible for at least 50 to 70 per cent of the total cost. In fact, there could be a statutory allocation for this programme from the federation account. The state and local governments are also to contribute towards the project.

Other sources of funding the project could be the international organisations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, African Development Bank (ADB) etc. Non-Governmental Organisations

(NGOs), business groups, communities and other philanthropists could also participate in the funding.

- d. Staffing** – The state boards should recruit and train the health and nutrition experts as well as the kitchen staff for all the centres. It must however be emphasised that the local communities should be given special preference in the recruitment of the kitchen staff and the food suppliers. This, as we discussed earlier on, is to empower them socially and economically.
- e. Transportation** – There must be an effective and efficient transportation system to ensure prompt distribution of food to all the schools. It will be meaningless if the food does not get to the schools at the right time when the children are ready for it. In the same way, the food must not only get to the pupils warm but also under good hygienic conditions.
- f. Monitoring** – There is need for effective monitoring of the preparation, distribution and the eating of the mid-day meals. In this regard, trained officials should be assigned to supervise the cooking at the various locations. There should also be another set of officials to accompany and monitor the transportation of the food to each of the schools. The Head teachers of each school should thereafter take up the responsibility of ensuring that each child gets his/her own share of the food without discrimination.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The mid-day meal involves the provision of free meal to all public primary school children throughout the school year. It is a programme aimed at protecting the children from classroom hunger, increasing school enrolment, attendance and retention. It is a programme that targets school children in difficult areas, children in economically marginalized families and pupils in schools where over 30 percent of the children are malnourished.

It is an expensive programme which is worth embarking upon for the sake of enabling the children to get maximum benefits from the school education.

6.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

Mid-day meal involves providing free meal to all public primary school children on school days throughout the year

The advantages of the mid-day meal include:

- a) enhancement of educational achievement of school children
- b) increasing school enrolment, attendance and completion rate
- c) reduction of child labour and child abuse
- d) social and economic empowerment
- e) promotion of good practices in food consumption and health;

The implementation of the programme should be done by the state governments and the local governments after proper planning with respect to the:

- a) recruitment and training of personnel
- b) establishment of central kitchens
- c) preparation of the meals
- d) monitoring and supervision of the programme

The financing of the project should be done mainly by the federal government with contributions from the state, local governments, international organisations, NGOs, local communities and philanthropists.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain the meaning and importance of mid-day meal in schools.
2. Do we need such a mid-day meal programme for Nigerian schools? Give reasons for your answers.
3. How can we make the programme effective in Nigeria?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 5 HOMEWORK IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Meaning and Importance of Homework
 - 3.2 Types of Homework
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you are going to learn how to use homework as a veritable means of enhancing the academic achievement of your pupils.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the meaning and importance of homework in primary education
- identify the different types of homework
- use each of the homework modes effectively.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Meaning and Importance of Homework

Homework is a tool that teachers use to help learners review and practice what they have learnt in the school. It is an aspect of home learning that has been found to be very effective in promoting success in children's school work (Ogunsanwo, 2003).

It has also been referred to as instructionally based out-of-classroom task assigned as an extension of class work. The importance of homework has been identified by Forster (cited in Ogunsanwo, 2003) as follows:

- (i) **Extending student exploration of topics more fully than class time permits.** As you are aware, the duration of a lesson period in the primary school is 35 minutes. This therefore means that the teacher must do all his teaching and explanation within the

period. There are however some topics which may require more time to complete, but which the teacher may not be able to do since other subjects have to come up. In order not to abandon the topic at that point, the teacher could give the pupils more exercises to do on it from home. This will give them the opportunity of further exploring other things to learn and do on the topic or subject.

- (ii) **Helping students gain skill in self-directed learning and using resources such as libraries and reference materials.** One of the important philosophies of teaching for every teacher is that a good teacher must not tell his students everything. This is to help the learners find out things on their own. Psychology of learning makes it clear to us that whatever a learner discovers on his own remains long in his memory than what he is told. Moreover, whatever the learner discovers, he understands better. Therefore, when teachers give homework to the learners, it helps to promote the inquiry and self-learning skills of the learners. It also encourages the learners to make use of the library and the internet in their quest for knowledge.
- (iii) **Helping students review what has been learned.** There are many children whose home background will not allow them to read at home. Some help their parents in their domestic or economic activities. Others engage in playing with their peers all day without having time for studying. However, when such children are given homework to do by their teachers, they will always find time to do it. This is particularly so when they know that their teachers will punish them if they fail to do the assignments. You must have heard your children or those of your relations or neighbours saying, “I am going to do my homework”. Or sometimes, “I have not done my homework”. The homework, in a way, helps the children to go over what they have learnt in the school. This goes a long way in helping children to understand and remember better all they learnt in school.
- (iv) **Helping learners to remember and understand their school work.** When children practise something they have learnt in school at home, it promotes retention and better understanding of the principles, facts or skills learnt. We can give an illustration of this in pupils who have been taught some aspects of English grammar in the school. If they are given some exercises to do at home, they will be able to practice the use of the rules of grammar with their friends, relations or neighbours at home. In the process, they would gain more practical knowledge about

those skills in grammar. Above all, through regular practice at home, they will always remember what they have been taught.

- (v) **Helping teachers to monitor pupils' progress and diagnose their problems.** When pupils are given homework to do and teachers grade them, it will give teachers an opportunity to monitor the pupils' level of understanding of the topic or subject. It will also help the teachers to ensure that the pupils practice whatever they have learnt in school at home. In addition, the individual pupil's area of difficulty or peculiar problem could be identified by the teacher. This will give the teachers the opportunity of helping the individual learners to overcome the problems.
- (vi) **Helping learners to prepare for the next class.** This is another good reason why homework should be given to pupils. When a new topic is to be taught, the teacher could ask the pupils to bring some materials needed from home. The teacher could also ask them to find out certain things on the new topic from home. For example, in a social studies lesson, the teacher is to teach a topic like Transportation next week. He could ask the pupils to:
- (a) find out the different means of transportation by land, water and air
 - (b) find out where camels, donkeys and horses are mostly used as means of transportation in Nigeria etc.

By doing so, the pupils must have got a good knowledge of the topic by the time they get to the class the following week. This will not only promote better understanding of the topic but also provide the spirit of inquiry among the pupils.

- (vii) **Getting parents involved in their children's school work:** Many parents do not have the time to either come to the school to find out how their children are doing or have a look at their exercise books at home. Research findings by Ogunsanwo (2003) have shown that pupils whose parents are involved in their homework perform better in their class work than pupils whose parents are not involved in their homework. In other words, parents' active involvement in their children's homework helps them to do better. This is quite understandable since it will give the children some psychological and social support which they need to do well academically.

There are many parents who are illiterates, but when their children come home with homework, they are sometimes forced to engage the services of those who could help the children. As you may have observed, some children will not allow their parents to rest until their assignments have been done. This is a good thing for the parents to be involved in their children's homework. If the teacher discovers that a particular child does not always do the homework, he could invite the parents for counselling on the importance of helping the child with the homework. However, if it is a general problem in the school, the Head teacher could discuss it with the parents at the PTA meetings.

You must have observed from the various points discussed earlier that the homework is very necessary in our schools. However, as important as homework is, there is no consensus yet as to which particular homework mode is the best. I am not going to tell you which one is the best either.

It is nevertheless necessary for you to know the various types of homework. This will help you to decide which one will be most suitable for your class or subject. We shall discuss this in the next section of this unit.

3.2 Types of Homework

There are four types of homework that have been identified and used by educators in different parts of the world. Research findings have indicated that Nigerian primary school teachers have a good knowledge of the importance of homework. However, their knowledge and use of the different homework modes as a means of enhancing teaching and learning is yet to be investigated (Shoyinka, 2003). The four types of homework as identified by Ogunsanwo (2003) are:

(i) Practice Homework

This type of homework is aimed at giving the pupils more practice on a given topic. It may involve asking the pupils to do some exercises usually given at the end of the chapter in the pupils textbook. It may also involve the teacher giving other exercises relevant to the topic as homework to the pupils.

The goal of this type of homework, no matter from where it is given, is to give the pupils more exercises to practice on the topic taught in class. It is the most commonly given by teachers in our primary schools. It may therefore be the most abused as lazy teachers may use it as a cover up.

(ii) Preparation Homework

This refers to the type of assignments usually given before a new topic is taught. In other words, the pupils have not been exposed to the topic before the homework is given. It is only aimed at preparing the learners for the lesson. If you remember the example I gave you in discussion of the advantages of homework, I said it could be by asking the learners to bring some materials to be used for the new topic. It could also be asking them to find out certain things which they probably may have seen, heard or used before in a different setting without paying attention to its educational significance.

Such an assignment usually gives the learners a good start with the topic when it is eventually taught in the class. The teacher requires a great mastery of the topic so that he does not give irrelevant things to the pupils. In the same way, the teacher must ensure that what he is asking the learners to do as homework on the new topic is relevant, interesting and learnable for the pupils.

(iii) Extension Homework

As the name suggests, this type of homework is aimed at expanding the learner's knowledge of a particular topic. The school syllabus may suggest teaching a limited fact on a topic bearing in mind the available time and resources. The teacher with a good knowledge of the pupils' needs, interest and ability may decide to go beyond that. He may not have enough time in the class to do this hence it could be given to them as homework.

Care must however be taken here so that the teacher does not over-task the pupils. He must remember that in whatever we teach the pupils, the factors of relevance, need, interest and learn ability must be taken into consideration. Similarly, the teacher must never use this type of homework as punishment for some pupils.

The main purpose of this type of assignment should be to help the pupils acquire skills in self-directed learning and the use of different resources such as the library, computer and other reference materials.

(iv) Creative Homework

Someone once said that children's creative learning stops the day they start formal schooling. This is as a result of the restrictions placed on the child in the school. For example, he must remain in the classroom unless he is asked to go out. He must learn only the things introduced to him by the teacher at a particular time of the day and so on. In other words, the various limitations placed on the child in the school do not always allow him to exercise his creativity.

This type of homework is therefore aimed at helping children to use their creative skills adequately. This gives the learners the opportunity to combine their existing skills and knowledge of a particular topic or subject with their imagination with a considerable degree of independence. In such cases, the creative ability of each learner is put to work and the results are always interesting and marvelous. An example of this homework could be in a subject like social studies, cultural and creative arts (CCA), primary science or mathematics where, for instance, the teacher could ask the children to use locally found materials to make or design anything e.g. a canoe, an instructional material to be used in teaching a subject or topic etc.

The teacher must however be careful not to over-task the learners. He must not ask them to do what is not within their reach or capability so as not to lead to frustrations and disappointments.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Homework is an important tool that teachers use to make their pupils learn at home. Although there is no agreement as to the best or most effective homework, yet it is agreed that it helps pupils to review and practice what they have learned. It is also agreed that whatever homework we give to the pupils must have the following:

- a. specific purpose
- b. clear instructions for the pupils to follow
- c. fit well to the pupils' interest and ability
- d. it must aim at helping to develop pupils' knowledge and skills.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

Homework is a tool that teachers use to help learners study at home to review and practice what they have learned in school;
The importance of homework includes:

- extending students' exploration of topics fully
- helping students gain skills in self-directed learning
- helping students review what they have learned in school
- helping learners to remember and understand the school work
- helping teachers to monitor their pupils' progress
- helping the learners to prepare for the next class
- encouraging parents' involvement in their children's school work.

There are four types of homework, namely:

- practice homework
- preparation homework
- extension homework
- creative homework.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1(a) What do you understand by homework?
 - (b) Why do you think homework is necessary for Nigerian school children?
-
- 2(a) Identify the different types of homework.
 - (b) What are the factors to be taken into consideration when giving homework to the pupils?

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UNIT 6 THE ROLE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SUSTAINING THE BENEFITS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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- 3.0 Main Content
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 - 3.2 Sustaining the Benefits of Pre-Primary Education in Primary Schools
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you are going to learn how the primary schools could build on the benefits derived from pre-primary education in the achievement of Education for All (EFA) goals.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- identify the benefits of early childhood education
- explain how the primary school can sustain and build on these benefits.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Benefits of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education or pre-primary education as it is popularly referred to in the National Policy on Education is the education given in an educational institution to children from ages three to five years prior to their entering primary schools.

The advantages or benefits of pre-primary education are many. We have discussed some of them in Module 1.

Research findings have indicated many benefits of high quality early childhood education for children and the community in general. Some of the benefits are discussed here as given in the Early Childhood Education Website (2006):

- (i) Students who participate in high caliber early childhood education programme make a better transition from home to school and to community and ultimately gain lasting benefits as socially-responsible adults
- (ii) High quality early childhood education programmes are more effective in helping children to learn. They are more beneficial than remedial programmes in later school life
- (iii) Experiences in the early years of life are more influential on the development of the brain than experiences at any other time in life. Early brain development has a profound effect on a person's learning, behaviour and health throughout life
- (iv) Children's well-being, emotional maturity, language development, thinking skills, creative skills and social and physical skills are all established and strengthened
- (v) Children develop initiative and responsibility and the ability to analyse, to question, to make decisions and to solve problems. They learn how to be friendly, share and cooperate with others. They develop the ability to act with confidence and they gain independence.

Other benefits of early childhood education as noted by Enturisie (1995) include boosting the IQ test scores by five points. Although, the IQ gains are said to fade out in the first three years of primary education, yet it is associated with greater success in school. In other words, a good pre-primary education programme helps to improve the academic performance of pupils in the primary school.

One of the identified long term benefits of pre-primary education is that children with good pre-primary education do not usually repeat primary classes as such children are less often referred for special education. Parents of primary school children with pre-school education background are often more satisfied with their children's performance than other mothers.

Increasing evidence testifies to the powerful effects that pre-primary education can have on children's life chances and ultimate well being. It has become expedient therefore to make pre-primary education accessible to children from poor background. In fact, the benefits of pre-primary education are most evident among children from poor home backgrounds. Therefore, if the desire to improve performance in primary education, particularly in the developing countries is to be fully

met, there must be a conscious effort to make pre-primary education accessible to all.

In Nigeria, for example, majority of children in the public primary schools are children without pre-primary education background. If they could have access to good pre-primary education programme and derive all its benefits, it could be said that the quality of their primary education will improve.

3.2 Sustaining the Benefits of Pre-Primary Education in Primary Schools

Primary education as the largest subsector of the entire education system offers the most unique opportunity to contribute to the transformation of societies through the education of the young ones (UNESCO, 2006). However, one of the findings of the EFA 2000 Assessment was that the performance of primary education fell below the desired levels. In other words, the quality of primary education has not kept abreast of the expansion in enrolment in many countries.

In the previous section of this unit, I highlighted the benefits of pre-primary education to the individual and the society generally. One of such benefits is that children who had good pre-primary education do better academically in the primary school. One of the indicators of this benefit is that children with pre-primary education do not usually repeat classes. This is an important benefit of primary education among others which has been confirmed by research.

How then can the primary school retain and build on the benefits of pre-primary education? This is what we shall now be discussing in this section.

(i) Creating a Child-Friendly Environment in the Primary Schools

It is not an overstatement to say that the classroom and the school environment generally are crucial to a successful teaching and learning process. You must have observed the deplorable condition of physical facilities such as school buildings, library and furniture for both teachers and pupils in our public primary schools. This is in addition to the grossly inadequate teaching and learning materials necessary for creating and encouraging a learning culture among the pupils.

Most of the good pre-primary school establishments in Nigeria are privately-owned and they provide a better learning environment than what is obtainable in public schools. Therefore, if the kind of

stimulation that gives children in pre-primary schools a smooth transition from home to full-time formal schooling is to be sustained, the schools' learning environment should be improved. Since all children can learn and will learn if given adequate opportunities, our public primary schools must be made more child/learner-friendly. In this regard, appropriate personnel, materials and facilities must be made available to accompany the teaching and learning process.

The national UBE programme which incorporates early childhood education is aimed at making this level of education accessible to all. However, if all our children could receive good pre-primary education without a corresponding good quality primary education, the benefits of pre-school education will be short-lived. So, the problem of providing an enabling environment in our primary schools must be vigorously addressed if the schools are to sustain the benefits of pre-primary education.

(ii) Effective and Efficient Teachers

It has been asserted that teachers are at the heart of any move to improve the performance of primary education. Their commitment, competence and creativity are central to the success of children (UNESCO, 2001). It is not enough to say N.C.E. or a first degree in Education is the minimum teaching qualification in our primary schools. One basic fact which may have eluded our policy makers is that it is not every NCE or graduate teachers that are fit to teach at the primary school level. The training and recruitment of teachers for primary education should take the peculiarity and the strategic significance of this level of education into consideration.

Therefore, as argued by Akinbote (2006), all primary school teachers should be intellectually good enough to teach school children with diverse interests and capabilities. They are responsible for selecting relevant materials for the learners, provide adequate time and opportunity for learning and pace instruction according to the ability of the learners. Teachers will only be able to do these efficiently and effectively if they update their content knowledge and pedagogical practices regularly.

The traditional methods of teaching with its emphasis on drilling which do not take into consideration the knowledge of human learning can no longer work in our schools. Our schools, through the activities of effective and efficient teachers should now produce students who possess the kind of higher-order thinking and problem-solving abilities needed in this 21st Century. It is only when we have such highly

committed, competent and creative teachers that the primary schools can sustain the gains and benefits of early childhood education.

(iii) Parental Support

Primary education is more than cognitive learning. Emphasis is now on all round development of children. Recent research on achievement in primary education shows that differences in economic resources of families matter for children's performance (Entrisie, 1995). There are many parents who believe that once they allow their children to go to school, the government will provide all the necessary materials. They therefore fail to provide the necessary support to their children's education either as a result of poverty or ignorance or both.

On the other hand, there are some parents who are able to provide the necessary school materials but who fail to provide the necessary social and emotional support to their children. Thus, the psychological and social dimensions of their children's education are ignored.

The children need parental love, guidance and counselling, good health and nutrition to succeed in school. Therefore, it is not enough to provide favourable and enabling environment in which all children can learn. Adequate parental support in terms of provision of necessary school materials, good food, interest in their children's school work among other things are essential for effective schooling. The values, attitudes, social and emotional problems which are not often adequately addressed by parents have great repercussions on pupils' performance in school.

Efforts should be intensified by all stakeholders in the welfare of children to get parents to be more supportive of their children's education. Regular enlightenment, social and economic empowerment programmes, could help parents appreciate and support their children's education.

(iv) Adequate Funding

Education is a capital intensive venture. Therefore, no appreciable degree of success can be attained in the goals of education with poor or inadequate funding. To benefit fully from educational opportunities, there must be adequate and judicious use of funds. The provision of a favourable environment for learning as well as sufficient and high quality human and material resources to service primary education requires adequate funding. The government alone should not be left with the great burden of funding education. Communities, religious and non-governmental organisations should cooperate with the government in the funding of education. One should however add that, the available

funds should be judiciously managed. Probably one of the problems of primary education in Nigeria is mismanagement of funds. The inordinate desire by individuals has led to the misappropriation of funds meant for primary education. Adequate steps should be taken to ensure proper monitoring of funds allocated to primary education. Anybody found to have misappropriated education funds should be punished accordingly.

If the available funds are judiciously used on the provision of the necessary school facilities, equipment and materials, there is the possibility of having a learner-friendly school environment. When the environment is conducive to learning and the teachers are efficient, effective and committed with adequate parental support, it will not be difficult to sustain the benefits of pre-primary education in our schools.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Studies have indicated that pre-school education is associated with greater success in school. It has great effects on children, their parents and the society generally. However, the benefits of pre-school education will not last if primary schools are not well positioned to sustain the benefits.

Therefore, by creating a child-friendly school environment, with effective and efficient teachers backed by adequate funding and parental support, the primary school will not only sustain the gains of pre-school education but also build on it.

6.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the following:

The benefits of pre-school education, supported by research findings include:

- better transition from home to school
- helping children to learn better than remedial programmes in later school life
- help to establish and strengthen children's emotional maturity, language development, thinking, creative, social and physical skills
- prevent repetition of classes in primary schools.

The gains of pre-primary education can be sustained in primary schools through:

- creating a child friendly school environment
- having effective, efficient and committed teachers
- adequate parental support
- adequate funding.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Briefly explain what research has found to be the major benefits of pre-primary education.
2. How can the public primary schools in Nigeria sustain the benefits of pre-primary education?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 7 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION

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 - 3.2 Global Education for All Goals
 - 3.3 Universal Access, Retention and Completion Rate in Primary Education
 - 3.4 Achieving Universal Primary Completion by 2015
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to discuss the MDGs as they relate to primary education and how they can be achieved in Nigeria.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the Millennium Development Goals as they affect primary education
- discuss ways of achieving the goals in Nigeria.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Millennium Development Goals

The eight Millennium Development Goals as listed by Bruns, *et al.* (2003) are:

- Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieving universal primary education
- Promoting gender equity and empower women
- Reducing child mortality
- Improving maternal health
- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensuring environmental sustainability
- Developing a global partnership for development.

These eight Millennium Development Goals to which 189 countries have committed themselves are aimed at eradicating extreme poverty and improving their peoples' welfare by the year 2015. As you can see from the listed goals, they all have one thing or the other to do with how to make human beings comfortable, happy and enjoy life in whatever place they are living.

We are going to concern ourselves with only the aspects of MDGs that relate to primary education. Therefore, our concern shall be on the second of the eight goals. That is, Achieve Universal Primary Education. The Dakar World Education Forum held in the year 2000 has set up what is popularly referred to as Global Education for All goals. This goes a long way to explain the important role which education can play in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Since the concern of the whole world is for the attainment of the Goals of Education for All, we have to discuss the goals in the next section of this unit.

3.2 Global Education for All Goals

We have just discussed the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in the year 2000 set some goals which are grouped into six. They are:

- (a) Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. In Module 1, we have discussed the importance of early childhood education and how to make it accessible to all children in Nigeria.
- (b) Ensuring that by 2015, all children, particularly girl children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. This is in line with the MDGs which is to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. We shall discuss this fully in the next section of this unit.
- (c) Ensuring that the learning needs of young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes. The current UBE programme in Nigeria has this goal as one of its coverage areas. Since our focus here is on primary education, we shall not discuss this EFA goal here. There may be another avenue to discuss it in this course.

- (d) Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. This goal is also covered by the present UBE programme in Nigeria.
- (e) Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015 and achieve gender equality in education, which is a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality. As you must have observed in the MDGs stated earlier on in this unit, this is goal number three. We have discussed this in one of the units in this Module under gender equality in education. You may go over it again.
- (f) Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensure excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The achievement of these goals of Education for All (EFA) by the year 2015 has now taken the central stage in the minds of all countries that participated at the Dakar World Education Forum. I would like to remind you here that the Dakar Forum acknowledged the fact that the Jomtien goals on EFA were not met. The Jomtien Conference had set the 2000 for meeting the goals of EFA, which could not be met by the 189 countries that agreed on that date. It is now clear that the countries are more determined to achieve the goals of EFA by 2015. This is based on the realisation of the fact that education is one of the most powerful instruments known for reducing poverty and inequality as well as laying the foundation for sustained economic growth (Bruns, *et al.*, 2003).

In the next section, we shall discuss how universal access to, retention and completion of primary education goal is being pursued in Nigeria.

3.3 Universal Access, Retention and Completion Rate in Primary Education

You may have been wondering why so much attention is now being focused on primary education globally. This has to be so if you still remember what we said in one of the earlier units of this module. Primary education is the level of education that develops in the individual the capacity to learn, to read and write. It is the largest subsector of any education system which offers the unique opportunity of contributing to the transformation of societies through the education of the young. Primary education is the gateway to all higher levels of

education that train the scientists, teachers, doctors and other highly skilled professionals that every country requires.

However, when for whatever reasons, a large percentage of children do not have access to or do not complete primary education, the productivity of the labour force, the potential for knowledge-driven development and the reservoir of human potential from which society and economy can draw are naturally restricted (Bruns *et. al.* 2003). Therefore, to provide an appropriate base for a sustainable growth and development, different countries have been making efforts to ensure that, in addition to making primary education accessible, pupils are encouraged to attend school regularly and complete the programme. Let us see what the situation is as far as access, retention and completion rate in primary education is concerned.

(a) Making Primary Education Accessible

As far as making primary education accessible to all is concerned, it could be said that the focus of most countries including Nigeria is on getting children enrolled in schools. This is done through the various UPE and UBE programmes introduced by the various governments. For instance, in Nigeria, the Federal Government, in an effort to make primary education accessible to all children introduced the UPE programme in 1976. This led to an expansion of primary education with increase in the number of primary schools pupils which rose from 3.5 million in 1976 to 16.1 million in 1994 (Akinbote, 2000). The introduction of the UBE programme in 1999 must have raised the enrolment figures in primary education higher than the 1994 figures. This is really commendable even if we have not been able to achieve 100 per cent enrolment in primary education.

However, much as this increase in school enrolment is commendable, it appears not much attention has been given to the retention and completion rate. In other words, it is equally necessary to prevent wastage in primary education by ensuring a high completion rate.

In the next section, we shall be discussing retention and completion rate in primary education.

(b) Retention and Completion Rate in Primary Education

Some studies carried out by individuals, the Federal Government/UNICEF as well as the World Bank, revealed that the incidence of early dropout from school in Nigeria like most of the developing countries has been very high. Before going into the causes

of early dropout in school, let us first explain the concepts retention and completion.

In its simplest form, retention could be described as “the process of keeping all the children who enrolled into the primary education in school till they complete their education”. On the other hand, primary education completion rate refers to “total number of pupils who successfully complete the last year of primary school in a given year divided by the total number of children of official graduation age in the population. For example, if one million were enrolled in primary one class, in an ideal situation, we would expect that about that same figure will complete primary six in six years’ time. However, many of the pupils drop out along the way. Some of the reasons responsible for this include:

(i) Inconsistency in Government Policy

Those old enough could easily remember what happened to primary education between 1988 and 1993. With the promulgation of three decrees – that is Decree 31 of 1988, Decree 3 of 1991 and Decree 96 of 1993, the administration of primary education changed hands from the federal to state and local governments. Decree 3 of 1991 in particular, which placed the funding and management of primary education in the hands of local government chairmen was a disaster. It led to delayed payment of teachers’ salaries which resulted in many teachers in different local government areas going on strike action for months. As one would expect, many children were withdrawn from the school completely. Even now, the public primary schools in many states are yet to recover fully from the problems as people hold no confidence in them again. Efforts are still going on to make parents patronise the public schools again as it used to be before the 1980s.

(ii) Poverty of Parents

It is no exaggeration to say that there are many families in Nigeria today whose daily income and or expenditure is below one American dollar. Such poor parents often find it difficult to retain their children in school despite the free primary education programme. The cost of providing school uniform, school materials and even mid-day meal has been too much a burden for them. They, therefore, either withdraw the children from school to help them in their economic activities or the children drop out on their own to fend for themselves.

(iii) Ill-Health

Many preventable diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases have kept many pupils away from school. In a situation where the parents or the pupils are afflicted, it is difficult for them to attend school regularly let alone remain in school to complete their education. Recent reports on the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS have left many school children as orphans with nobody to support them in school. Some of the young children have even had the misfortune of looking after their siblings after the death of their parents.

(iv) Illiteracy and Cultural/Religious Factors

In many communities, either as a result of illiteracy on the part of the parents or cultural/religious dogmatism, many children particularly girls are not allowed to complete primary education. They are sometimes given out in early marriage hence they have to abandon their schooling. There are still some parents who even believe that the girl-child is not expected to receive western education so that their chastity and other cultural values will be preserved. Where such children are allowed to go to school at all, they are rarely allowed to complete their schooling.

Other factors responsible for school dropout include broken homes, polygamy and poor performance of pupils in their school work. It is hoped that you will be able to explain how these other factors have contributed to the high dropout rate in primary schools.

The last section of this unit to consider now is how to ensure retention and completion in primary education.

3.4 Achieving Universal Primary Completion by 2015

As mentioned earlier on, the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal has set the year 2015 as the year for ensuring that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary education. In Nigeria, efforts are already being made to make education accessible to all children of school age with the introduction of the nine years compulsory schooling. While we are hoping to meet the 100 percent enrolment by 2015, we must equally make efforts to achieve universal primary completion by the same date.

We said also that when a large percentage of children fail to complete primary education, it has great implication for development. Therefore, to derive the maximum benefits of primary education, we must achieve a 100 percent completion rate. Some of the steps that should be taken to achieve this include:

(i) Provision of Free Mid-Day Meal

In one of the units, we discussed the advantages of providing free mid-day meals to school children. The degree of success recorded in India where the free mid-day for school children could be said to originate in the Third World countries has been high. In addition to boosting school enrolment, it has also been found to assist retention of children in school as well as reduction of about 50 percent in-out-of-school girls.

If a similar project could be introduced in Nigeria, it could also boost enrolment as well as retention and completion rates in our public primary schools. The modalities for doing so have been suggested in the unit on free mid-day meal in schools.

(ii) Making the School Interesting and Learner-Friendly

When children see the school as a good place to be through the availability of adequate learning and recreation facilities coupled with effective methods and friendly teachers, we are most likely going to retain more students in school to complete their education. Therefore, from attractive school buildings to interesting school activities and adequate facilities managed by friendly and conscientious teachers, the primary schools will be seen as a good place to be by the children.

(iii) Empowerment of Parents and Guardians

Poverty has been identified as one of the factors for the high dropout rate in schools. When parents find it difficult to provide the necessary material and consequently moral support to their children in school, there is the possibility of pupils dropping out of the school system.

It will be a worthwhile effort if parents could be empowered economically and socially through various poverty alleviation programmes. The Indian free mid-day meal project has been used as a means of empowering scores of jobless women and men as cooks, servers and even suppliers of various food items. Some microcredit scheme could also be used to further enhance the income generating capacities of the parents and guardians. Political party patronage should not be introduced into such empowerment programmes.

(iv) Prevention/Control of Communicable Diseases Which Often Keep Children Away from School

In addition to making free health part of the free education programme, there must be regular visit to the schools by health workers to monitor the health condition of the pupils. Health centres should be available in every community while basic social amenities like portable water should be readily available in all communities. Public awareness campaign on

the benefits of personal and environmental hygiene should be intensified to prevent most of the diseases that afflict both the pupils and their parents. There are many other things that could be done to encourage high retention and completion rates in our primary schools. You can add to the ones already discussed.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The achievement of Universal Primary Education for boys and girls alike by the year 2015 is one of the Millennium Development Goals. All the 189 countries that participated in the Dakar World Education Forum in the year 2000 are unanimous in their desire to achieve not only 100 per cent enrolment, but also universal primary school completion by 2015. Therefore, Nigeria cannot afford to lag behind in this global race to eradicate illiteracy and poverty. Adequate steps must be taken to ensure that all Nigerian children complete the present nine years compulsory schooling.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

There are eight Millennium Development Goals
The Global Education for All goals as agreed upon at the Dakar World Education Summit are:

- Expanding/improving comprehensively early childhood care and education
- ensuring that by 2015, all children, boys and girls alike, have access to and complete primary education
- ensuring that the learning needs of young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes
- achieving a 50 per cent improvement in adult literacy by 2015
- eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015
- improving all aspects of the quality of education;

We can achieve universal primary education completion in Nigeria by:

- introducing free mid-day meal in our schools
- making the school interesting and learner-friendly
- empowerment of parents
- prevention/control of communicable diseases that keep children away from school.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1(a) Identify the eight Millennium Development Goals
 - (b) Which of these Millennium Development Goals relate more directly to EFA goals?
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- 2(a) What are the reasons for the high rate of school dropout in Nigeria?
 - (b) Suggest ways of achieving universal primary education completion in Nigeria by 2015.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

- Akinbote, O. (2000). "Barriers to Efficient Schooling in Nigeria and the Challenges of Mass Literacy in the 21st Century." *In: Akindehin, O. & Adeboyeje, K.A. (eds.) Challenges of the Third Millennium for Primary Education in Nigeria.* Ondo: Centre for Research on Schooling, Adeyemi College of Education.
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