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ECE 112



Origin and Development of Early Child Education **Module 1**

ECE 122 (Origin and Development of Early Childhood Education) Module 1

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Unit I The Concept of Early Childhood Education

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Objectives

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

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

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Different Views about Early Childhood Education

3.1.1 Definition of Childhood

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

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

Now that we have been able to identify who is a child, let us look at the classification of the childhood period. There are three major ways of classifying childhood. These are the early childhood, the middle childhood and the later childhood.

The early childhood period is generally referred to as the period from birth till about the age of five or six (Charles et al 1978). In other words, it is the period before the official primary school age in Nigeria. It means that early childhood does not go beyond the pre-school or what is popularly called Nursery school year in Nigeria.

There is a recent development in some parts of Europe, which appears to have modified the early childhood period to about 18 years. According to some childhood organizations such

as Organization Mondial Pour L'Education Pre-scolaire (OMEP) and Early Years Education's (EYE), this period is from birth till about eight years. This means that in Nigeria, early childhood period will extend to primary three pupils and not limited only to the Nursery school children.

Therefore, in our discussion of early childhood education, we may not have to limit ourselves to the nursery schools. We may have to discuss both pre-primary and primary schools so as to take care of this recent development in some parts of the world. In the next section of this unit, we are going to examine the various establishments that take care of early childhood children which we now say include children up to 8 years of age.

3.1.2 Early Childhood Education

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

Daycare or playgroup: For children below the age of three. There are many of them in urban centres in Nigeria. Working mothers use them as safe places to keep their children.

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

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

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

For the purpose of our discussion here, we shall concern ourselves with the pre-primary or pre-school children's education. This is the age recognized in the National Policy on Education. This National Policy on Education (1998) refers to pre-primary education as the education given in an educational institution to children aged 3 – 5 plus prior to their entering the primary school. In other words, we shall not be concerned much with the day cares or crèches. Although, we may still have to refer to them, yet our attention will focus more on preprimary education. That is, education for children

3.1.3 Primary Education

The National Policy on Education (1998) refers to primary education as the education given in educational institution to children aged 6 to 11 plus. That means, children who are not up

to six years are not officially expected to be in the primary school. You may now be asking why are children expected to attain a particular age before they can start primary schooling? There are some reasons for this. For instance, there is the physiological factor. That is, by the time the child is six years old, the child should have been physically strong enough to withstand the rigours of school life. The child by the age of six should also be physically strong enough to walk to and from school particularly in places where the schools are far from home without any problem to his health.

Psychologically, the child is also ready for formal learning. You should know that up till the time of entering the primary school, the child's learning has been taking place in an informal way. Therefore, the child at six years is mature enough and ready to sit down and listen to formal teaching. He can now pay attention better than the earlier years.

In the same way the child is now capable of being less dependent on the parents. He can now play with other children and is capable of doing certain things for himself. He does not need to call for help again when going to the toilet. By the time the child finishes primary six at about the age of 11 or 12 years, he is better prepared for further education at the secondary school level. As for those who cannot, for some reasons, go to secondary school, they are also prepared for non-formal education such as becoming an apprentice to master artisans such as the tailors, bricklayers, etc. Have you ever seen products of primary schools learning a trade or craft in your area? Are they able to cope with it?

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

Self-Assessment Exercise I

Identify and explain the differences among the pre-schools establishments that take care of children from birth to five years plus.

Feedback

3.2 The Purpose of Early Childhood Education

3.2.1 Nursery/Pre-primary Education

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

Well, there are many people who may not really know why children need pre-primary education. There are some women, who were interviewed a few years back on why they send their children to the nursery schools. Their answers include the following: "I send my children there because the other children of my husband are there, because I want my children to speak good English, because, I want the children to give me peace and time to do some other things at home, etc."

These reasons given by the women might be good. However, there are many people who do not send their children to nursery schools at all. Some do not send their children because they cannot pay the high fees charged in the schools. There are others who do not send their children to nursery schools as a result of ignorance. For example, I met a man in the early 1980s who said it is a waste of time and money to send children to nursery schools. According to the man, he did not attend a nursery school when he was young and he was still able to become a university graduate. There are many people like the women mentioned above and this man. In other words, there are many people who even send their children to the nursery schools without knowing the benefits their children can derive from the school. There are also some like that man who felt that since he has 'made it' without nursery school education, it is a luxury to send children there.

Well, I do not want to disagree with the man who said he 'made it' even without attending a nursery school. There are many Nigerians like that who have become great men and women in the various professions without attending a nursery school. I am sure if you interview all the professors in Nigerian universities today; majority of them will tell you they did not attend nursery school when they were young. That is time but I do not think there are any of the professors or lecturers who will tell you he does not want his/her children to attend nursery school.

Even market men and women who in most cases are themselves not literate, now send their children to nursery schools. So, it now appears that our people are becoming more interested in the education of their children. Most parents particularly those who are illiterates want their children to be better than themselves hence they send their children to the nursery schools.

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

In modern societies, married women are now taking up paid employment. This means that they are no longer full time housewives whose main duty is to take care of the family.

As you are already aware, the African extended family system whereby there are always people at home to look after the children is gradually giving way. Moreover, house helps where available are now very expensive. Even some of the house helps have become security risks hence many people do not like to have them again.

Therefore, in order to ensure safety and adequate care of the children while their parents are at work, the nursery school is necessary. When children are left in the nursery school, the parents can have peace of mind and be sure that their children are not only safe, but also under the care of experts. Therefore, for security reasons, the nursery school is a good place to keep the children when their parents are away at work.

Another important reason for having the nursery school for children is the fact that it provides children with very good environment for socialization. There is no home, however

wealthy that can provide the type of environment which nursery schools provide for the proper education of children.

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

As stated by Akinbote (2001), the ability of a child to realise his potentials depends on the type of stimulation and encouragement the child receives from home. However, as a result of the socio-economic problems in Nigeria for example, many parents can no longer provide their children the necessary stimulation which they need for their all-round development. Therefore, in order to prevent anything that will reduce or prevent the child's rate of maturation and high level of achievement, the nursery school is necessary for the child.

In the nursery school, the child will receive the necessary opportunities which are not available at home.

There are also some children with some problems, which the parents may not actually notice or identify in their children. The problems could be physical such as bad sight or hearing problems. It could also be emotional problems such as fear, restlessness, etc. The various experts in the nursery schools could help to detect such problem early and advice the parents on how to correct them. There are many examples of such problems that should be corrected before they get out of hand?

Therefore, in order to provide children with the necessary security and care while their parents are away at work, we need the nursery schools. Also, for proper social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children, the nursery school is a must for all children in modern societies.

As we mentioned earlier on, the importance of pre-primary/nursery education for the well-being of the child has been recognized all over the world. In Nigeria, government has realised the importance of pre-primary education hence it has stated the purpose of this level of education in the National Policy on Education (1998) as follows:

- to effect a smooth transition from home to school.
- to prepare the child for the primary level of education
- to provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices, etc.)
- to inculcate social norms
- to inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys, etc.
- to develop a sense of cooperation and team-spirit

- to learn good habits, especially good health habits, and
- to teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc through play.
- From our discussion so far, you will surely know that, it is not a luxury to send children to pre-primary schools. In fact, in some units that we shall discuss later, you will see how the love for children's welfare has led to the development of early childhood education over the years.

3.2.2 Primary Education

I am very sure that many of us are familiar with primary schools. This is because we have all at one time or the other attended the primary school. Some of us had our primary school education in the city, some in the town and some in the villages. Do you still remember what we said when we were discussing pre-primary education? We said there are many professors and other successful professional men and women in Nigeria who did not attend a pre-primary or nursery school.

However, have you ever seen a professor, a doctor, lawyer, engineer, teacher or nurse who has never attended a primary school? I have never seen any of such people who have never attended a primary school. I know of some professors and many successful businessmen and women who did not attend a secondary school. They had their primary school education and with that, they started studying privately at home for their O'level and other examinations.

Find out from your father, grandfather or any other old relation whether or not they ever attended a secondary school. I am sure some will say yes and some will say no, but none will tell you they did not attend a primary school. If there is anyone of them who never attended a primary school even for three or four years and is a successful accountant, banker, sailor, etc, then he is a rare person.

What we have just discussed above tell much about primary education. It is the most commonly found educational institution in all parts of the world. It is available in the developed and the developing countries, in urban and rural areas. For example, not every town in Nigeria has a university, a polytechnic, college of education, or a technical college. There are even some small communities without a secondary school.

However, in modern day Nigeria, I do not think there is any community with about 500 to 1000 people without a primary school. Why is primary education made so common in the country then? Why are governments in various parts of the world investing heavily in primary education? There must be some important reasons why this level of education is made available everywhere. Now, let us quickly have a look at some of the reasons.

Development of literacy and numeracy skills: The foundation for permanent literacy and numeracy is laid at the primary school. In other words, the ability to read and write and do some calculations is developed at the primary school level. You may want to say that nursery school children learn to read and write. Yes, you may be right but remember that they will still have to get to the primary school before they can become permanently literates.

This means that if anyone has received good primary education and for whatever reasons, he or she cannot go further, he or she must be able to read and write well in at least a language. It could be the mother tongue or another language or both. There are many people like that in Nigeria today who with their primary education, they can read and write and even speak English language very well. It does not matter whether you call it standard six or primary six-certificate holder. The point is that, that person has not attended any other level of education apart from the primary school.

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

Political and civil education — A popular French philosopher named Voltaire was once quoted as asking the question — who will lead the world? He provided the answer himself by saying those who know how to read and write will lead the world. This answer is very correct because, at whatever level you are looking at it, local government, state, national and international levels, our political leaders are all literate.

An illiterate person can only vote for the literate person to become his governor, senator or president. He himself cannot be one. This means that the ability to read and write which was learnt at the primary school is a very important factor to consider in the election of our leaders. There are many communities in Nigeria today who will not allow an illiterate person to become their traditional ruler.

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

Social and Economic Education: There is a popular saying that illiteracy is a disease? Do you agree with that? Well, people say so because those who can read and write will know many things through what others have written down for them to read.

On the other hand, a person who cannot read and write will not know those things even if the books are given to him. He will always depend on some other people to read and tell him what is in the book. Moreover, an illiterate person cannot put his ideas across to other people. Have you helped your grandfather, grandmother or any other relations to write a letter before? How did he or she feel when you have finished writing the letter?

Therefore, with at least a good primary education people will be able to read and write. This will in many ways improve their social and economic life. They can read simple information that could affect their lives and businesses. A driver with at least primary education will be able to read road signs and therefore become a better driver.

Similarly, the ability to read and write will make people better farmers, tailors, carpenters, bricklayers, fishermen, cattle rearers, etc. Can you allow an illiterate bricklayer to build your house? He will find it difficult to read the plan.

Providing supporting staff: The highest person needs the lowest person to succeed. This is another popular saying that is very true. For example, the president, governors, doctors, lawyers, judges and other highly placed people need the services of messengers, drivers, cleaners, gardeners, etc.

With primary education, such junior workers will be more effective and efficient in the performance of their duties. Therefore, most government and even private establishments in recent years no longer employ these categories of workers without at least primary education.

The government has recognized the importance of primary education in Nigeria long ago. This is why that level of education has attracted much funding by the government since our independence. Primary education is the only level of education that is free throughout the country. All other levels of education are not.

The United Nations has even asked the member Nations to make primary education free for all their citizens. This tells much about the importance attached to this level of education all over the world. The goals of primary education as stated in the National Policy on Education are to:

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

4.0 Conclusion

Early childhood education is a very important aspect of the general education in any society. Even in traditional African societies, early childhood education is given proper attention. The fact now in modern societies is that because of their socio-economic engagements, parents no longer have enough time to stay at home and take care of their children. This is why the various educational institutions have been established to help parents take adequate care of their children while they are away at work. Moreover, the early childhood establishments provide the type of stimulating environment, which no home, however wealthy can provide.

5.0 Summary

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

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Who is a child?
2. Identify two major differences between pre-primary education and primary education.
3. Explain four reasons why early childhood education is necessary for the Nigerian child.

7.0 References/Further Reading

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Unit 2 The Nature and Needs of Children

1.0 Introduction

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

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

2.0 Objectives

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

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

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Nature of Children

3.1.1 The Physiological Make-up

The childhood period could be regarded as the most important stage in human development. First of all, it is a stage, which every adult member of the society has passed through in life. Therefore, there cannot be adulthood without childhood.

As you are aware, not all children grow up to experience adulthood. This therefore makes the childhood period a unique one for everybody. The second reason why childhood can be regarded as the most important stage of development is that it lays the foundation for all other stages of human development. As the morning often shows the day, so also the childhood period shows what the adult life will look like. As people say, who we are today depends much on our development and experience as children.

As you have just read in the introduction to this unit, children are the same all over the world. The differences, which you may find is their physical appearance, level of intelligence or even attitude, are due largely to hereditary and environmental factor. The birth normally follows the same procedure in all cultures of the world.

In the same way, all children follow the same principles of growth and development no matter their geographical location or their family background. The only thing that may be different is their rate of growth and development.

So, it is possible for children from very rich families in urban centres to be faster than their counterparts from very poor families in urban or rural areas. Why do you think that can be so? Yes, it is because the children from the rich families are given balanced diet, which keeps them growing up well. Also, they are given good care in terms of medical and other material needs. On the other hand, children from the poor families may have retarded growth because of inadequate care and balanced diet.

However, this does not mean that all of them will not pass through the same stages or process of development. As another example, all children learn to sit, crawl and walk before they can run.

In the same way, the developments of spoken language among children start with babbling and gradually to the picking of their first words. Environmental factors may favour the rate of development of these skills in some children than the others, but the fact still remains that they all follow the same pattern or process of development.

Therefore, we can say that all normal children no matter their home or environmental backgrounds have the same types of organs of the body and these organs follow the same natural process in their growth, development and functions. No child in this regard is superior or more favoured by God. All of them have the same number of eyes, ears, hands, legs, toes, fingers, heart and mouth. Anyone that has for instance three eyes or no hands will be regarded as an abnormal child.

3.2.2 The Sociological and Psychological Nature of Children

You have just learnt that children are the same in their physical make up. The European child is not different from the African or the Asian children as far as the organs of the body are concerned. In the same way, children are the same in their social characteristics. Let us take an example to explain this point.

Children are by nature gregarious. That is, they always like to be in the company of other children. If it is possible to bring children each from Europe, Asia and Africa to a place where they can see themselves, they will naturally walk towards each other.

Even if language will initially be a problem, this will not stop them from moving very close to one another. What we are saying here is that no child likes to be alone. They all like to keep the company of other children. If you see a child that fails to move with or get closer to other children of approximately the same age, you should know that something is wrong. It is either the child is sick, hungry or angry. If they are older children, it might be due to the influence of some environmental factors such as racial discrimination, ethnicity or other negative things their parents must have 'planted' in them right from home. But if none of the above conditions exist, children will naturally want to move with other children no matter their background.

Children are by nature egocentric. That is, the child is self-centred or selfish. He is more concerned about his personal interest and needs. That is why he wants to have his way in all things. If for whatever reason he is not allowed to have his way, he cries.

For instance, when the mother buys some biscuits, sweet or fruits from the market. You will always see the youngest trying to take possession of everything. In the same way, if a child wants to have something and the parents for some reasons say no, he does not want to listen to or hear why such a thing is denied him. All his thinking is based on the personal desire for that thing. This is one of the general characteristics of children.

However, with time and age, they gradually learn through the socialization process to be less selfish. They learn to share things with others, listen when others talk and cooperate with others during play. All these are learnt in the school where children from different home backgrounds interact and share things. They learn to tolerate others and from there the spirit of give and take is developed in them. Therefore, children who for one reason or the other do not have access to school education may miss this early socialization process.

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

They are:

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

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

One of the characteristics of children, which we must not forget, is curiosity. That is, all children naturally want to find out things for themselves. This they do through the exploration of their environment and asking questions from people around them.

Again, some children are encouraged to develop this natural tendency in them by providing them stimulating environment with different toys and other objects, which they can play with.

On the other hand, there are some children who are often discouraged from asking questions from elders. In some cases, unnecessary restrictions are placed on them as a result of cultural practices and beliefs. It is not surprising therefore to find some children that are very restless in their natural desire to know. Such children often develop self-confidence, self-assertion and autonomy. Such children are known to be great achievers and competent individuals later in life.

The point we are making here is that all children possess this important natural tendency. The environment in which the child finds himself may hinder or promote it. But the fact still remains that they will like to explore, find out things and ask many questions.

All children also like to play with water and sand. No matter their location children always want to play with these two natural materials. Why this is so, we do not know.

However, some children may not have access to these materials as a result of their environment. This is why pre-school establishments always have a corner for sand tray and water for children to play with. There are many other characteristics of children, which you can still find out on your own.

Self-Assessment Exercise I

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

3.2 The Needs of Children

3.2.1 The Basic Needs

As soon as the child is born, there are some needs, which must be satisfied for them to survive. Needs tend to persist in human lives. Although, Maslow has categorized needs into higher and lower needs, yet certain basic needs have to be met first before meeting the high order needs. The child needs oxygen that is the air we breathe. This is naturally available in the environment that is free from pollution. Since the baby's respiratory organs are just starting to function independently, it is necessary to provide them with fresh air.

In other words, children should not be kept in badly ventilated rooms or rooms that have been polluted in one way or the other. Anything that will hinder the effective functioning of the respiratory organs should therefore be avoided. As you are aware, any damage to the lungs can easily lead to death.

Children also need food and water. Although, the new baby cannot take solid food, yet he needs food to grow and survive. As you have learnt in one of the courses, breast-feeding is the complete natural food for the new baby. Everything the child needs to grow and develop well is supplied in adequate quantity and quality in the mother's breast milk. This has been proved by modern medical science.

Therefore, you will notice that in recent years, mothers are being discouraged from giving other things like baby food, to the child at least for the first six months of life.

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

Sleep is another important need of children. It is a device by which the body regulates itself, maintains stability in the body and thus preserves the individual's energy for later activity (Messen et al 1974). The length of time required for sleep depends on the age of the child.

For example, a year old child spends about 12 hours of the day asleep. This usually includes about two or three naps during the day. However, the preschool and primary school

children do not require as much as 12 hours a day. The pre-school children may require at least between seven and nine hours a day while the primary school children may require between six to eight hours.

As we have mentioned above, sleep is an important and natural way by which the body is allowed to rest and regain some of the lost energy. Therefore, children should not be denied their well-deserved rest and sleep.

Overworking the children or reducing their hours of sleep may actually be dangerous to their health. This is why there are periods for break on the school timetable. Such breaks are used by children to relax and move about to get them refreshed for their work. They do not need to sleep during the break before they can take a rest from the mental activities they are engaged in.

It is not enough to provide children with good food and water. They need love, care, attention and protection as much as they need food and water. In fact, it is part of the love and care of children that makes parents take good care of them by providing their basic needs. Children need the love and care of their parents to give them the much-needed confidence with which they can do well in life. Staying with children at home or taking them out to visit friends or relations means much to children's social and emotional development. It is not good to always lock the children up in the house while the parents go out to 'enjoy' themselves.

Showing love and admiration for the children's good behaviour or performance encourages them to do better. This could be shown by taking them to places of interest in the town or other towns such as the zoological garden, waterfalls, etc. All these go a long way in helping the children to satisfy their natural desire to explore.

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

3.2.2 Development Tasks

Development task has been described as a task that arises at a certain period in the life of the individual. The successful achievement of such a task leads to happiness and success with later tasks for the individual.

On the other hand, failure to accomplish the task leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by the society and difficulty with later tasks (Charles, et al 1978). There are stages within which the tasks can be performed.

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

- Learning sex differences and sexual modesty. In this task,

- children are just learning to notice that boys at school wear different uniforms. However, they are not worried whether their dresses are up or down
- Forming simple concepts of social and physical reality, by the time the child is about 5+, he is beginning to move away from selfish understanding of the world to reality. This therefore makes it possible for the child to learn some of the subjects or topics taught in the school.
- Learning to relate emotionally to parents, siblings and other people. Gradually the child now learns to give and take and cooperates with others.
- Learning to distinguish right and wrong and the development of conscience. Although this is not yet well developed, in the child, yet he is beginning to realize that certain things are good or bad particularly as from the age of six.

Primary School Children

The developmental tasks for primary school children are as follows:

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

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Explain any five of the basic needs of children

3.2.3 The Educational Implications of Developmental Tasks

Pre-primary School Children

We must emphasize here that the teacher should bear in mind that children differ in their rates of development and learning. Therefore, teachers should not use the chronological age as the yardstick for assessing the child's ability to learn or perform certain tasks. Individuals must be respected and accepted as they are. They need love and attention to build some confidence in them. Their desire for autonomy, creativity and curiosity should not be thwarted through unnecessary restrictions, scolding, punishment and other inhuman treatments.

As much as possible, the classroom should be neat, attractive and learner friendly. The children must be encouraged to play with others and share things with others. Opportunities should be provided for the children to have varied learning experiences with real objects. Most of what they learn should be through play since formal teaching and learning has little place among pre-school children.

Primary School Children

Primary school children generally are usually full of energy, which must be properly directed for purposeful activities. Competitive games such as football, volleyball, basketball, table tennis and athletics could be introduced. This helps to develop in them the team spirit as well as self-confidence in their ability to perform.

We must however be careful not to over work them so as not to have any negative effect on their growth. When children disagree or even engage in physical fighting, we must be very understanding. With proper guidance and counselling, from the teachers, children could develop mutual respect and understanding for one another. They therefore build up the ability to get along easily with others.

As regards the development of the skills of reading, writing and calculation, teachers should realize that only interesting and purposeful activities in which children will be involved could bring about permanent literacy and numeracy. Teachers should therefore not do all the talking in the class. He must use different methods that will involve practical activities and participation of the pupils.

In the development of conscience, we must maintain a close and affectionate relationship with the pupils. This is better than the use of force, physical punishment, severe scolding or threat in controlling the pupils. In other words, the use of techniques that can arouse unpleasant feeling in the children should be avoided.

For instance, giving some instructions in moral development and personal counselling can promote high level of conscience development in the pupils than punishment.

Moreover, teachers should help children to recognise the good in other people through their own examples. Children should be encouraged to have adequate and correct information about others before they form their opinion about others.

4.0 Conclusion

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

5.0 Summary

In this unit, we have discussed the nature and needs of children particularly at the pre-primary and primary levels of education. You learnt in the unit that children have the same characteristics and that the differences we may find in them may be due to the influence of heredity and environment.

As far as the organs of the body are concerned, there is no difference. You also learnt the developmental tasks and their educational implications. In the next unit you will learn how children were treated in the past in Western Europe.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

7.0 References/Further Reading

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Unit 3 Historical Views of Children

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Objectives

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

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

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Status of children in History

3.1.1 Ancient Greek and Roman Period

There was a period in the history of the Ancient World popularly referred to as the period or era of Greek and Roman Civilization. This period which lasted from about 600 BC to about 400 A.D is regarded by historian as a period of enlightenment particularly as regards learning, art and culture. The education of children particularly those from the upper social class was highly appreciated.

Despite this great awareness on almost everything during this period, the status of children society was not good enough (Vesta et al 1995). Even great thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle who were the first to recognise the needs for the early education of children could not do much to protect children from the evil practices of their time.

In almost all communities in Western Europe during this period, the killing of children for various reasons was very common. For example, children who were found to be unhealthy were either killed or left in the cold open spaces or forest. The Greeks were particularly noted for not allowing sick or weak children who could not become good soldier to live.

The same story is true about baby girls. Baby girls were not considered good for wars hence there was no need for them to live. The only condition that made them allow baby girls to live was for the purpose of child bearing in future. Even then, most Greek and Roman families allowed only one daughter while others were regarded as unwanted and were therefore not allowed to live (Breiner, 1990).

Those children who were lucky to be allowed to live were treated badly. Severe punishments were meted out to them and they were sexually exploited. Children were

bought and sold for various purposes such as for domestic work and services in brothel where they were sexually exploited by adults.

In some other instances, children were killed and burned in the foundations of public buildings or burned in mass graves as sacrifices to the gods (Vaster et al 1995) People at this time did not see anything wrong or bad in their cruelty to children. As we mentioned earlier on, great thinkers like Plato and Aristotle even defended such practices, which we in modern societies regard as evil.

Therefore, we can see that children in the ancient world were not adequately protected and catered for. Although, they were recognised as necessary in every society at least for the continuity of life, yet the attitude of the adult to children was bad. However, as we shall see in the next sections, things started to improve as far as attitudes to children generally were concerned as during the next periods of Europe history.

3.1.2 The Medieval and Renaissance Period

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

This change in the attitude towards children during the middle ages (Medieval period) as the period between 400 AD and 1300 AD is called, could be attributed to two factors. These are the spread of Christianity and the attempt by the church to promote the new image of children. The church apart from preaching against the killing of children also helped parents of the unwanted children like the girls, the twins and the weak or sick ones. This they did by taking such children away to mission houses where they were looked after.

Although the church could not provide good education during this period, yet they were able to teach reading and writing to children. The church tried during the period to change people's attitudes towards children. However, the church could not completely stop all forms of negative attitude towards children.

Therefore, children in most parts of Europe during the Middle Ages were still not treated as a class of human beings requiring special attention. They were generally considered to be small adults' once they passed the infancy stage. Thus at about the age of seven years, children were mixed with adult in the classroom. They worked and played with mature adults. In other words, there were no separate classes for children of different ages as we now have in the school system.

In the same way, there was no separate place or type of work and play for children. Children who were regarded as immature adults' were made to participate in all adult activities at work, play and even religious festivals. There was no special consideration for the implications of such activities on the health and the general growth and development of the child.

You will be surprised to learn also that children during this period had no special dresses. In other words, there was nothing like children wear as we have in modern societies. Children were made to wear adult dresses meant for men and women of various statuses. So, if a

child was from the lower class, he or she would wear the same clothes like adult from the lower class. It was the same thing for children from the middle or upper social classes.

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

The Renaissance Period (1300AD to 1600AD) witnessed an improved concern for the welfare of children. In some places such as Florence in Italy, Charitable institutions known as 'fondling homes' were set up to take care of children (Vaster 1995) the children admitted into such homes included the sick, lost and unwanted children such as girls and twins. Such homes were financed mainly through donations from wealthy individuals or groups.

Do we say this is the beginning of modern day motherless babies' homes or childcare centres? These founding homes later spread to other parts of Western Europe. The springing up of such homes in different places could therefore be regarded as the sign of new attitude towards the care and protection of children during this period.

Most of the changes in the attitude toward the care and protection of children during this period had been attributed to the effort of some philosophers and religious people. In the next section of this unit, we shall discuss the period of reformation, which actually brought about the modern ideas and attitude towards children.

3.1.3 The Reformation Period

The 17th century marked the beginning of the great and lasting changes in the attitude towards children generally in Western Europe. The activities of Clergymen and some humanitarians, which we shall discuss later, encouraged the separation of children from adults. They also ensured that certain privileges and rights were accorded the child.

As time went on, the activities of the clergymen and humanitarians greatly changed the attitude and orientation of not only parents but also the general public towards children generally. The reformation period saw the emergence of new Christian Protestant denominations. The Puritans led by John Calvin were very prominent because of their belief and attitude toward child rearing. They for instance believed that all children have the natural capacity to learn early and that parents have the great responsibility to give them the proper training. As noted by Vasta, et al. (1995), the Puritans were the first to write manuals to assist parents in the proper upbringing of their children. Their approach to the training of the child was more child friendly than those of other sects or the medieval period. For example, they believed that children should be helped and encouraged to become self-reliant, independent individuals with self-control.

According to them, proper guidance would prevent children from misbehaving and would thus eliminate the need for severe forms of punishment for the children (Vasta, et al 1995). The puritan's emphasis was on the proper education of children.

Their insistence on guidance rather than severe punishment of child made them the first to write books that were particularly meant for children. This in fact could be regarded as the beginning of modern ideas of making learning relatively more interesting and easy for

children. In the next unit, we shall be learning about some individuals and groups that contributed to the development of early childhood education in various ways.

Self-Assessment Exercise I

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

3.2 Status of Children in African History

3.2.1 Attitude towards Children in Traditional African Societies

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

- Children are the yardsticks for assessing the success of marriage.
- They are a source of social prestige. Parent who have many children are greatly respected and are addressed by special titles
- Children prove their fathers manhood and mothers womanhood and remove the stigma of barrenness.
- Children are of economic value. They are valued for their help in the farm and in the home.
- They support the parent in old age. Children perpetrate the family and the family name forever etc.

The reason given above shows that Nigerians are very much interested in having children. They can do anything to have children and they do all they can to take good care of their children when they are young. Since children are regarded as a source of social prestige to their parents Africans usually ensure that children are given proper training right from the early childhood period.

By this time to when the child is old enough to acquire a skill, he is made to acquire the necessary skill in any of the professions, trades or crafts. This is done to ensure that children have a means of supporting themselves and also their family members later. Thus, African traditional education is very comprehensive in scope and content.

As regards the status of children in the society, the attitudes of Africans to children differ a little from the Europeans. We discussed earlier on that the Europeans before the 17th century treated children above the age of seven as little adults, thus children were made to do all things the adults were doing. We also said in that section of the unit that children were badly treated and killed for various reasons. The Africans in those days were not as wicked to children.

In fact, they recognized children as children hence there were certain things children should not do. Apart from the high moral standards expected of children, Africans expected them to behave well as children and do only what the culture allowed them to do.

However some of the African traditional practices did not give children full freedom to do what societies would allow them to do. For example, children are to be seen and not heard. That is, children should not talk where elders are talking or ask too many questions from elders. It was considered bad manners in traditional societies for children to look straight into the elders face and ask them frivolous questions or say that the elders are wrong. This however does not mean that Africans had no regard for the children's personality.

Whatever restrictions were placed on the child socially on account of age could be regarded as part of the general training in good conduct. As you should know, Africans like respect for elders and those in position of authority. Therefore, in order to inculcate all these social norms and values in the child, that restriction is had to be placed on him.

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

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

During the various inter-tribal wars that took place in Africa, children and women were usually spared. The worst that could happen to them was to take them as prisoners of war.

Generally speaking therefore, the African child enjoyed much love, care and protection in the traditional societies. However, we cannot say that the African child of the olden days enjoyed the types of freedom, care, Love attention and protection being advocated in modern societies. But relatively speaking they were treated better than their counterparts in Western Europe during the ancient and medieval periods.

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

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

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

The church in Nigeria also performed similar roles among different ethnic groups in the country. Although the Nigerian situation was not as bad as that of Western Europe, yet the Missionaries made some significant impact on the life of children and Nigerians generally. You still recall that we said the killing of twins took place, in some parts of Nigeria in those days. There were some other cultural practices that could not be regarded as good in modern societies.

For Example, Female circumcision was common in different part of Nigeria before the coming of the Christian Missionaries. There were also many superstitions and taboos which created unnecessary fears in the minds of the children.

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

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

4.0 Conclusion

The present views about the attitude towards children in modern society are relatively new developments. In the past particularly during the ancient medieval periods, there was no special consideration for childhood as a special or unique stage of human development. This was particularly so in Europe.

Although the situation was not as bad in Africa, yet things were not particularly very good also. It was the activities of the clergymen and some humanitarian groups that brought a change of attitude towards children. This has gradually developed into the present views that children desire protection, love, care and attention, in different parts of the world.

5.0 Summary

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

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

7.0 References/Further Reading

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Unit 4 The Contributions of Individuals to the Improved Status of Children

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Objectives

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

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

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Pre-Nineteenth Century Thinkers and Reformers

3.1.1 John Amos Comenius (1592— 1670)

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

One of such great men is John Amos Comenius who lived between 1592 and 1670 A. D. He was elected a Bishop in 1632 but gained popularity and recognition as a teacher.

In a way, we can say that he was influenced by both his religion and the teaching profession on his stand about children and their education. He saw education as a birthright of all children. He also believed that education should help individuals to learn all things and to achieve power over these things and discipline himself. The most outstanding contributions of Comenius to the theory and practice of childhood education can be summarized as follows:

1. Learning whereby children should be without tears, without blows or force. That is, parents and teachers should not be using punishment in the process of teaching and learning if we want the child to develop a positive attitude towards learning. Rather, the child should be treated gently and kindly so that he can be motivated to learn with great interest and joy.
2. Teaching should be through all the senses and in the mother-tongue. Here, it would seem as if Comenius was making use of some of the most recent psychological theories

about learning. What he suggested then and which is being vigorously pursued by child psychologists and educators now is that children should learn whatever they are learning practically. There should be no abstract presentation of ideas or principles to children. Moreover, his suggestion that children should be taught in their mother tongue has been empirically supported as the best means of making learning more meaningful to children.

3. Similarly, research findings have shown that whatever children learn in their mother tongue is retained for a long time. That is why all children in Europe and America learn in their first language. It is only in Africa and possibly the other developing countries that children are made to learn in a foreign language (Fafunwa et al 1989).
4. The school should be made a house of joy for children and they should be grouped according to their stages of development. This view could be regarded as a protest against the mistakes of the ancient and medieval people's attitude towards children. What Comenius is saying here is that children should not be mixed with elders in the class and that they should be made very comfortable in the class. These are good ideas that childhood educators all over the world are trying to fully put into practice.

3.1.2 John Locke (1632— 1704)

This is another philosopher whose ideas have greatly influenced the theory and practice of childhood education. He was of the strong belief that all children are created equal. According to him, the mind of a new born infant was like a piece of white plain paper — a tabular rasa, which mean a blank slate (Vaster, et al 1995).

Therefore, he believed that the child acquires knowledge, attitudes and values through experience. That is, it is the type of environment the child is exposed to that will make him a good or bad person.

Other ideas of John Locke that have great implications for early childhood education include the following:

1. The function of education is to help the child to learn how to use his reason more and more in the making of decisions. Thus, according to Locke, it is useless to make or keep the child too submissive or over protected (Curtis and Boulwood, 1975).

In other words, we should encourage children to be very enterprising and courageous. From our own personal experience, you must have observed that children that are not given any chance to be free and do certain things on their own hardly become good and independent minded people in future. This is possibly why Locke would not encourage too much prohibition and the use of the cane on the child. In fact, he regards such things as the evidence of laziness on the part of the teacher or parents (Curtis and Boulwood, 1975).

2. Play and childish activities are necessary for the child - That is to say, children should be allowed to play and do things the way they like it. They should not be given too many rules, which could make the children unhappy. In his own view, when there are to be rules for children at all, they should be very few and within the ability of the children to keep. All these ideas of Locke should not be seen as giving too much freedom for the child. In fact, he encourages the absolute authority of parents on their children, which they can exercise in an easy, friendly and hardly noticeable way.

3. For instance, a mere look or gesture from the parents or teachers should make the child stop a noisy game or any other unacceptable act (Curtis and Boulton, 1975).
4. Rewards and punishment — Even if Locke favoured the use of reward and punishments, he did not favour material rewards or physical punishment. According to Vaster, et al (1995), Locke believed that discipline should involve praise for appropriate behaviours and scolding for wrong behaviours.
5. Curiosity is natural with children hence parents and teachers should never discourage their children. This simply means that all children have the natural desire to know.

Therefore, parents and teachers should do all they can to encourage and guide their children. For example, children's questions should be answered as much as possible. In some cases, they may not even want to ask questions, the parents or teachers could stimulate their curiosity by asking them questions. By so doing the children may be encouraged to find out certain things.

Self-Assessment Exercise I

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

3.1.3 Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712— 1778)

J. J. Rousseau, as he is popularly called, was a naturalist philosopher whose ideas have influenced in many ways our present understanding of the nature of children. Rousseau's views about child rearing practices are presented in his popular book, 'Emile'. In Rousseau's view, the child is naturally good and innocent.

Therefore, he should be allowed to learn from his environment whatever is of interest to him. According to Rousseau, it is not wise to instruct the child formally like we do in the school. Rather, he said, children should be encouraged to learn through a process of exploration and discovery (Vaster et al 1995).

Although, Rousseau's ideas could not be completely accepted, yet he has made significant contributions to the theory and practice of childhood education. His major contributions include the following:

1. The child is not a miniature adult hence he should not be treated as such. You will still remember that in Western Europe during the medieval period, children were regarded as little adults. Therefore, they were dressed in adult clothing, played the same games with adults and attended the same class with adults.

This wrong view of the child and the difficulties involved must have influenced Rousseau's view that children should be treated as children and not as adults. Good enough, we now have special dresses for children, as well as games, books, stories and even schools that are specially made for children.

2. The child's education should be based on his interest, experience and needs. This is an important departure from the medieval ways of training children. You will still remember that apart from being made to learn what adults were learning,

children were also made to do things which were often not of interest to them by the elders.

3. As you are now aware, the modern child educators and psychologists take the child's interest into consideration in either the type of material to teach and learn, the methods to use among other things.
4. Each child is a unique individual with his own interests, needs and problems. This is actually the basis, of the individual differences that educators talk about in their discussions of the child. This means that we should not compare children unnecessarily since every child has his or her own areas of strength and weaknesses that should be taken into consideration while teaching them. Every child should be helped to go at his or her own rate.

Moreover, the teacher should respect his pupils and serve as an adviser and guide and not a dictator to them.

5. Learning by doing, observation and exploration are the most natural ways of learning for children. No one can dispute this great idea from Rousseau. In fact, the modern theory of learning supports the fact that children learn better, whatever they learn practically. This is why in all pre-primary and primary schools today, emphasis is now on learning by doing as against the old practice of rote learning.

3.2 Post Nineteenth Century Thinkers and Reformers

3.2.1 Jean Pestalozzi (1746— 1827)

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

1. The school cannot replace the home. In other words, the home is the best place for laying the foundation for the proper all round growth and development of the child. However, since most homes cannot provide the child the necessary stimulation for this foundation, the school can come in to help.
2. Therefore, for the school to be close to the ideal home, Pestalozzi has suggested that all school activities must be based on love, acceptance and discipline.
3. The teaching of anything must start from the pupil's area of interest, experience and gradually move into more difficult areas. In order for this to be effectively done in schools, he was of the strong view that specialized training is necessary for teachers. What Pestalozzi is saying here is that teaching must start from known to unknown, simple to difficult, concrete to abstract.

Above all, anyone who is to teach little children effectively must be a specialist in Early Childhood education. This is why you are now undergoing this course. You know children

require special attention and methods to effectively assist them to have an all-round growth and development. It is only when a teacher is very familiar with their nature, needs and interests that he can be successful with them.

(c) The complete education must combine the hands, the brain and the heart. Here, the major ideas of Pestalozzi are that the education of the child should combine practical activities with moral and intellectual development. Thus, as much as he was calling for vocational education, he was also very much interested in the proper moral development of the child. Therefore, according to him, the complete education must not just take care of the intellectual development of the child. It has to be many sided.

3.2.2 Fredrick Froebel (1746— 1827)

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

1. Education is a process of aiding the inner development or potentialities of the child to unfold. That is, the education of the child should be allowed to proceed according to his nature at their own pace and appropriate time (Akinpelu, 1981).
2. This means that parents and teachers should not put unnecessary pressure on the child so as not to destroy his natural order of learning. As you are already aware, there are individual differences among children hence each one of them should be allowed to go on at his own rate.
3. Learning is to be done by the child himself, through play activities. This according to Froebel is because play allows children to exercise their physical, emotional and intellectual qualities. Moreover, play helps them to combine attention with relaxation, purpose with independence and rule with freedom.
4. The teacher should not be a dictator of ideas and actions to the children. Rather, he should provide the necessary resources and conducive environment for children to learn. This according to Froebel will be giving the children the freedom to choose which activities to engage in and where to explore. The teacher in Pestalozzi's view stands as a gardener is to the plant. All he needs to do is to water the plant, apply the necessary manure and leave the rest to nature.

Although, it may not be possible in the classroom situation to leave the children all alone to choose what to do or learn without some measure of guidance or control by the teacher. Nevertheless, I think the point Froebel is making here is that teachings should as much as possible give the pupils freedom to do some things by themselves. The present situation in many of our enough.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

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

3.2.3 Maria Montessori (1870— 1952)

Maria Montessori was an Italian medical doctor who became a teacher by 'accident'. That is to say, she was not originally trained or intended to be a teacher. She became a teacher through her contact with the mentally retarded children she was asked to supervise in a hospital in Rome.

According to her, the mental deficiency of the children presented mainly a teaching problem rather than a medical problem (Curtis and Boulton 1975). She therefore developed some materials which she successfully used with the mentally retarded children. She later used the same materials with normal children and found the materials to be very helpful to them as well. Therefore, her teaching methods which relied much on an organized environment, freedom and individual materials among other things are now known as the Montessori Method. We can summarize her major ideas and practices as follows (Akinbote et al. 2001).

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

4.0 Conclusion

The status of children and the general attitude toward them started to change for the better as from the 17th Century. The reformations in the church and the development of various ideas by individuals or since then have greatly influenced the process of educating the child.

The uniqueness of every child with his nature interests and needs recognized by the early educators and educational reformers have remained. In fact, we can say that research efforts in the area of child psychology and education have further strengthened all the views about the personality of the child.

Therefore, the child is no longer treated like an adult but as a child that he really is. Similarly, all the severe punishments and other inhuman treatments experienced by children in the medieval period are no longer encouraged in modern societies.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you have learnt the contributions of six different thinkers and educational reformers to childhood education. You have learnt that children should be regarded as unique individuals with their own independent minds, interests, and needs.

Similarly, you have learnt that learning by children should be without tears, blows or force and that they should be actively involved in the teaching and learning process. That is to say, children should be allowed to learn by doing and should be made to enjoy themselves when learning. In the next unit, you will learn more about child's rights in modern societies.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

7.0 References/Further Reading

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Unit 5 The Rights of Children

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Objectives

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

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

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The UNO's Declarations on the Rights of the Child

3.1.1 The Right to Special Care if Handicapped

In our discussion of the status of children in ancient and medieval Europe, we mentioned how unwanted children were killed. That is some children who were either found to be unhealthy, deformed or those who were weak were killed. We also discussed that as from the 17th century, things started to improve as far as the attitudes toward children were concerned. What started in the 17th century through the activities of some clergy men and humanitarian groups, have now become an international affair.

In November 1959, the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization (UNO) adopted some declaration on the rights of children. Nigeria endorsed the declarations in 1990 (Amafah, et al., 1990). One of the declarations is the right of the child to special care if handicapped. What this means is that no child should be left uncared for as a result of his or her deformity.

As you must be aware, nobody likes to have a blind, deaf, dumb, mentally retarded or even a lame child. This may be due to the problem which such children bring to their parents. Therefore, those who do not like to kill them as it was done in the past now hide them at home or allow them to go out and become beggars.

It is in an attempt to stop all these bad attitudes towards the physically or mentally challenged children that the UN has declared that the physically or mentally challenged has the right to be properly taken care of like the normal children. So in all members' nations of the UN, efforts are being made in various ways to take good care of such children. Here in Nigerian, there are many homes, school or centres for the various categories of handicapped children. At these centres, such children are taught to read and write by their specially trained teaches.

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

3.1.2 The Right to Free Education

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

The non-implementation of the right of the child to education as once suggested by Comenius in different parts of the world must have forced the UN to make the declaration. Many countries, of the world including Nigeria are now providing free primary education to all children of school age.

In some countries, including Nigeria it is even an offence for parent not to send their children to school. This is to ensure that all children enjoy their right to be educated no matter their socio-economic background. In Nigeria, the free education formally enjoyed only by primary school pupils has been extended to the Junior secondary school level under the new UBE program. Unfortunately however, many Nigerian children are still being denied their right to free education as a result of many reasons. Can you give some of the reasons?

3.1.3 The Right to Develop his Abilities

As you must be aware, there are individual differences including abilities among children. However, right from the ancient times, some children have been denied their right to develop their special gifts and abilities. For example, in ancient Greek, only children who were found to be physically fit were considered good enough to live and receive special military training.

Even in modern societies, many children who cannot gain much from formal education are usually regarded as useless. Children are not given the necessary encouragement to be the best of whatever they are. Some class teachers were in the past fond of calling boys and girls who could not do well in mathematics and English Language as the never do wells who should drop out of school

We thank God that as a result of this UN declaration, there are now different levels of educational institutions and vocational training centres to cater for the different interest and abilities of children. You should be able to mention some people either in your town, state or country who did not attend or complete secondary school education but are successful in certain trades or crafts? There are many musician, footballers, boxers, carpenters etc. who are known all over the world today but who were not good in class work in the past. So these rights of the children and many more which you can still find out on your own have gone a long way in protecting the rights, interest and needs of children all over the world.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

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

3.2 Nigerian Laws and the Child

3.2.1 Freedom of Expression

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

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

The Nigerian constitution however recognizes the right of the child to freedom of expression. That means the child is free to hold his own opinion, receive information and express his own ideas on any issues without any interference.

In the same way, the child's views, thought, and conscience are recognized by the constitution of our country. Even if the parents or guardians have the power to direct their children in the exercise of these rights, that fact still remains that they have the freedom to exercise them. In other words, parental control over their children does not mean that the children do not have the constitutional freedom to exercise their rights.

So, you can see now that the struggle for children's freedom of expression, thought and conscience which started in the 17th century is now fully recognized by law. This is not saying however that all is well with children generally in Nigeria and other parts of the world.

3.2.2 Right to Dignity of Human Person

Apart from the ancient or medieval periods, there are many people in different parts of the world including Nigeria who still treat the child badly. You must have heard or read the news about some Nigerians who often inflict serious bodily injuries on children. Sometimes, this is done by the parents of the children themselves or by their guardians or those who employed them as house helps. Some people make children to work too much or carry very heavy loads and work long distances. You must have been seeing some children selling pure water, bread, biscuit and other things on the major roads.

In most cases, the children are forced to do all these things by their parents or guardians. The Nigerian constitution however grants the right to dignity of human person to the child like all other citizens. In the relevant portions of the constitution, it is stated accordingly that:

1. The child shall not be subject to any form of torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment
2. The child shall not be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.

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

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

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

3.2.3 The Right to Life and Development

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

For example, no parent must kill any of their children who is physically or mentally challenged in any form. In the past, some parents used to privately kill and burn children that were found to be physically or mentally challenged. This was often done to save the parents

the trouble of having to carry such children up and down for care or treatment. The shame and disgrace of having such children have also led to their killing.

As you have learnt in one of the earlier units, this killing of children is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. It has physically or mentally challenged also in Europe during the ancient and medieval times. However, just as Nigerian Laws go against the killing of children for whatever reason, the laws of those European countries equally guaranteed the child's right to life.

Although we often hear about cases of abandoned children in Nigeria, we have not been hearing of cases of parents killing their physically or mentally challenged children. You probably must have heard or read from the mass media that the Police are looking for the mother of an abandoned baby. This shows that such mother who wants to deprive children of their rights to life and development could be prosecuted if they are caught. You may say that such mother did not actually kill their children hence they should not be punished. The fact remains that they have deprived such children of their right to survival and proper development. By throwing the babies away either in to the toilet, well, bush or uncompleted building, their right to survival and development have been violated. Anything could happen to such children. Those who are lucky to be picked up among such children by good and kind people cannot in any way receive the natural love and affection which a child enjoys from the mother.

4.0 Conclusion

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

5.0 Summary

In this lecture, you have learnt some of the rights of children as guaranteed by the United Nations declaration which many member countries have signed or ratified. In the same way, you have learnt some of the fundamental rights of children in Nigerian as guaranteed by the constitutional provision and other laws in the country. However, despite all these constitutional provisions, many people in Nigeria still violate the rights of children.

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

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

7.0 Reference/Further Reading

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