



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

ECE 112



Origin and Development of Early Child Education **Module 2**

ECE 112 (Origin and Development of Early Childhood Education) Module 2

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Published in 2014, 2021 by the National Open University of Nigeria
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Unit I Origin and Development of Early Childhood Education

1.0 Introduction

The previous units in this course have provided you with the general background information about the child and his education. The attitudes of people towards children in different places and at different times in history were discussed in those units.

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

2.0 Objectives

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

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

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Origin of Pre-school Education

3.1.1 The Ancient Times

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

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

Our concern will be for the first level which is the pre- school or Nursery school level. One thing that is very important for us to appreciate about Plato, who lived between 427-248 BC, is his great ideas about how and why children between three and five years should be educated.

According to Plato, this level of education should be developed to play and games. He was of the opinion that the process of education should start as early as possible. This according to him is because it is during the childhood period that any impression which one may wish to communicate is easily stamped and taken.

In other words, the childhood period is the stage when we can start to give the necessary training for an all-round development of the child. We should not wait till the child has become an adolescent or an adult before we start his education. Why? You know, it will be very difficult for example to start teaching an adult how to read and write. Plato also suggested that children should be taught by specially trained teachers and not just anybody as it was done during his time.

Another important contribution of Plato to the development of early childhood education is in the area of learning environment. He strongly believed that we should surround the child with beautiful things and the right kind of environment. That is to say, we must place the child among those things, places or people which are like what we want him to become. This shows that Plato realized that children always like to imitate people or things around them.

Therefore, if we do not want them to imitate bad things, we must expose them only to good and desirable things, attitudes and values. We must also appreciate the fact that Plato brought in these good ideas on early childhood education at a time when education was not well coordinated and people were just doing whatever they thought was good for them. Thus, Plato's ideas marked the beginning of the formal school system, a formal curriculum that we are now very familiar with (Akinpelu 1981).

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

3.1.2 Modern Europe

In one of the earlier units, you have learnt how children were treated in the middle ages. You have also learnt about the activities of groups and individuals who influenced the general change in attitude towards children. You will still recall how children were to do things like adults as from the age seven years. In other words, they worked, played and even discussed like adults. There was no special school for them as children and adults were taught together in the same class.

However, as from the 17th century, particularly during the reformation, men and women were inspired by religious or humanitarian feelings to protect and defend the life and rights of children. Through great people such as John Calvin and the Puritans, a comprehensive model of child development was provided.

As you learnt, the puritan under the Leadership of Calvin took child-rearing practices seriously. They believed that children have the capacity for learning at an early age and that they could be helped to become independent and self-reliant individuals (Vasta 1995).

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

From their individual contributions, childhood education has been generally accepted as a desirable thing for children in _all parts of the world. Moreover, the international community has now risen up to the task of protecting children from all forms of deprivation, abuse and inhuman treatment.

As you have learnt in unit five, the United Nations Organisation (UNO) has adopted certain declarations on the rights of children. Nigeria as a member of the UNO has endorsed the declaration like others. In addition to this, various countries of the world now have laws which protect the rights of the child. The countries in Western Europe and North America are in the forefront in the call for the eradication of all forms of child abuse.

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

Self-Assessment Exercise I

1. Identify the different levels of Education as suggested by Plato.
2. Why did Plato say that the Education of children should start early in life?

3.2 Pre—school Education in Britain Before 1900

3.2.1 The Dane Schools and Others

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

This however does not mean there were no places where children were looked after. As we have already said, some individuals and groups started the struggle for the proper care of children. One of such places where children were looked after in Britain before the 20th century was the Dane schools. The schools according to Maduewesi (1999), were no more than child minding establishments. Some old women, who on humanitarian grounds were running the centres as places to keep children safe while their parents, were away.

Another group that made great efforts in the provision of preschool establishments for children in Britain during this time was the Sunday school movement under the leadership of Robert Raikes. The first school by the group was established in 1780. By 1803, the number of schools under the Sunday school union had risen to 7,000 with 850,000 pupils of all ages from three upwards (Kent, 1972 P.21).

Another person who made efforts in the provision of pre-school education during the period was Robert Owen. He was a socialist who believed that environment entirely determined character and personality. He started an infant school in New Lanark in 1816. His method of teaching was based on securing children's attention through interesting activities and not the rod.

Later, one of Owen's assistant, James Buchanan established the first infant school in London with about 150 children (Kent 1972). The Infant school society, which was later formed, was a result of the growing interest in Owen's educational ideas started schools for two to six years old children in different parts of England.

Others who were involved in the development of pre- school education during the period under review include Dr Charles Mayo and his sister Elizabeth who in addition to establishing infant schools also trained teachers for the infant schools.

As we discussed earlier on, these individuals and groups who were responsible for the establishment of what could be regarded as real infant schools were motivated by people like Pestalozzi and Froebel. You will still remember that these great childhood educators were particular about the use of play as the best means for making children realize their full potentials if properly used. The expansions of pre-school establishments in Britain even in 20th century were based on the effectiveness of the ideas of these and other childhood educators. We shall say more about them in the other sections of this unit.

3.2.2 Pre- School Education Since 1900

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

Therefore, as from 1905, the public schools started rejecting the pre — school children. As expected, the population of under five children in schools dropped. However, the policy of not allowing pre- school children in public primary schools gave rise to the establishment of private nursery schools as they were from then called.

The Hardow report 1933 that most children would benefit from nursery education and that a nursery school could be of benefit to the primary school had great influence on the popularity of nursery education in Britain ever since. Although the report did not make nursery schooling compulsory, yet, it provided the necessary motivation for all those who are concerned with the education and welfare of children to take it more seriously.

Although there was not much attention given to pre- school establishment during the war, (1939-1945), by the government, yet government did not mean to destroy it. Many associations were formed which actually intensified the campaign for nursery school education. The efforts of the various associations such as the pre-school, Playgroup

Association, the National Campaign for Nursery Education among others actually encouraged the establishment of as many 7000-play groups by 1971 (Meduewesi 1999).

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

4.0 Conclusion

The development, of pre- school education has come a long way in Britain to become very popular. From the ancient ideas of Plato to those of Calvin, Comenius, Lock, Rousseau Froebel and Montessori, the child has been accepted as a unique individual who can be educated.

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

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you have learnt how Plato who lived many centuries before the birth of Christ categorized education into the formal levels which we are still operating today. His ideas about why and how children should be educated early are still very valid today.

Similarly, you have learnt how individuals in Europe helped through their ideas about how children should be educated to influence the teaching and learning activities in Nursery school. You also learnt in this unit how the various nursery school associations have helped to increase people's awareness on the importance of nursery education in Britain. In the next unit we are going to discuss the origin of Western education in Nigeria.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

7.0 References/Further Reading

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Unit 2 Western Education in Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Objectives

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

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

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Missionary Efforts

3.1.1 The First Missionary Effort

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

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

However, the activities of the slave traders and raiders along the coast of West Africa during the time actually disturbed the work of the missionaries. As Fafunwa, (1991) has rightly put it, the influence of the Catholic missionaries was almost wiped out as a result of the slave trade. Therefore, we can say that, the first missionary effort at introducing Western

education into Nigeria was not successful because of the slave trade. However, what the Roman Catholic Missionaries could not successfully do in the 15th century that is to permanently plant Western education in Nigeria, was done in the 19th century by another group of missionaries, this time from England. We shall discuss this fully in the next section.

3.1.2 The Second Missionary Effort

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

The Second Coming of the Christian Missionaries was however led by the English-speaking missionaries. They came at a time when the slave trade had been abolished. In the other words, there was no more slave trade when the English-speaking Missionaries came in the 19th century.

After the slave trade had been stopped, all the ships carrying slaves on the West African coast were arrested and the slaves set free, However, because of the difficulty of tracing their home towns, and to avoid other problems, the free slaves were settled in Freetown, Sierra Leone. There they received Western education and many of them became Christians. Do you still remember Bishop Ajayi Crowther? He was one of the freed slaves who were settled in Free Town. So, like Ajayi Crowther, many other Nigerians who were also freed slaves, went to school in Sierra Leone and later became catechist, teachers and traders.

Some of the freed slaves who became traders came to Lagos and Badagry on business trips where they met some of their relations. You will still recall that Lagos and Badagry were the major ports where slaves from the hinter land were shipped to Europe and America.

Among these freed Nigerians who returned from Sierra Leone some came to settle in Badagry in 1840. By 1841, they asked some of the missionaries in Sierra Leone to come down to Badagry. They wanted the missionaries to help and preach the Gospel to their fellow Africans who did not know Christ then.

The request of the ex-slaves for missionaries to be sent to them in Badagry was eventually granted. Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman and other missionaries came to Badagry in 1842 while Henry Townsend and some other C.M.S missionaries arrived Abeokuta early in 1843.

One of the missionaries who came to Badagry with Rev. Thomas Freeman remained there while freeman left for other places. So, the first school in Badagry was established by the Missionary and his wife (Mr. and Mrs. de Graft) in 1842.

The school in Badagry opened the door for other schools to be established in other parts of the country particularly in the south by the various missionary bodies. For example, the CMS established two schools in Abeokuta, in 1846. Other Missions such as the Church of Scotland, the Baptist, the Catholic, the Qua Ibo etc. established schools in Calabar, Lagos and other places in the South between 1842 and 1892.

The missionaries established schools mainly for the purpose of spreading Christianity. In fact it could riot have been easy for them to spread Christianity without the school. So, as soon as the missionaries arrived a place, they would first establish a mission house which in most

cases served as the school and the church. Each of the Missionary bodies such as the Methodist, C.M.S, RCM, Baptists, Presbyterians, Qua Ibo and others tried to out do the others in their desire to win more converts. The school served as the means for converting the people hence all the missions struggled to establish a school in each station. The school curriculum was prepared by each mission hence there was no uniform curriculum for all the schools. However, all of them taught Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Religion as the core subjects.

As we mentioned earlier on, the early schools took off within the mission houses. However, as the number of pupils increased, separate classrooms were built within the church premises. This is why you will still find most of the oldest schools in each town or village within the church premises. The funding of the early schools in Nigeria were done by the various missions with support from their home missions and friends. This means the schools were free then. Why did they make the schools free? Well, this was the time when the missionaries were beginning the parents to send their children to school.

Therefore it could have been impossible to get such children released by their parents if they were asked to pay. In fact some missionary teachers even requested their mission to pay some little amount to the school children living at home. The idea of Boarding school started with the early missionaries who for various reasons preferred children to live with them (Fafunwa, 1991).

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

The Missionaries were in full control of education in Nigeria up till 1882. That is, colonial administration at that time was more concerned with other things than the education of Africans. This therefore gave the missionaries the full opportunity of using their schools to win more converts. It was rare in those days for a child to attend the mission school without becoming a member of that particular Christian denomination that owned the school.

As time went on, the colonial administration started developing some interest in what goes on in the mission schools. The reason for this we shall discuss in the next section of this unit.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

- 1(a) Mention three towns in Nigeria that were first visited by any white man.
- (b) Why did the Portuguese visit the towns?

3.1.3 The Colonial Administration's Intervention

You have just learnt that the period between 1842 and 1882 was the period of total missionary control of education in Nigeria. It was the period when the various missionary

bodies established, funded and managed the schools all alone. They therefore dictated where to learn and how to learn it.

As noted by Fafunwa (1991), the major achievements of the Missions in the field of education during the period of complete Missionary control include, the translation of the Bible into some Nigerian Languages such as Yoruba, Ibo, Ekiti and Nupe. They also introduced vocational training and enforced high moral discipline among the teachers and children.

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

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

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

One important fact for you to note is that the educational system in Nigeria was patterned after the British system of education. Therefore, the 1882 ordinance was based on the British education Act of 1844.

The establishment of the protectorate of Northern and Southern Nigeria by the colonial administration in 1899 had some effects on the development of education in Nigeria generally. The various reorganizations in the education system brought a noticeable increase in the number of schools in Nigeria.

For example, government started to establish its own primary schools. At this time, the government assisted primary schools were about 91 (Fafunwa 1991). Generally speaking therefore we could say that active government involvement in primary education started with the promulgation of the 1882 Education Ordinance. From that date, government has been involved in the administration of primary education in Nigeria. We shall discuss this further in the other sections.

3.2 The Regionalization of Education

3.2.1 The Pre-Independence Era

As we have just discussed, the establishment of the Protectorate of Northern and Southern Nigeria had some great effects on the development of education in Nigeria. There were other events after the establishment of the protectorates. For example, there was the amalgamation of the two Protectorates in 1914 which made Nigerian one country that we now know it to be. We also had the Richards Constitution of 1946 which divided the country into three Regions — North, West and East. With this constitution, each Region

now had its own government under the Governor however the Richard constitution did not really meet the desires of the Nationalist then.

Therefore further discussions on how to arrive at an acceptable constitution continued and led to the 1951 Macpherson constitution, which gave the Regional Government the power to make laws on education among other things.

As Fafunwa (1991) has rightly pointed out the Macpherson constitution brought about what can be rightly referred to as the era of self-determination in education. This constitution therefore gave each of the regions the power to go at their own rate as far as the establishment; management and control of educational institutions were concerned. As we shall see later, there were some educational revolutions in some of the Regions, which had lasting effects on the social economic and political life of the people.

We must not forget that the amalgamation of the Northern and southern, protectorate in 1914 did not affect the education system. In other words the two separate education departments which were in existence for the two Protectorates before the amalgamation were not merged until 1929.

Thus between 1929 and 1946, the educational system of Nigeria was centrally controlled under one Director of Education. As you should expect, it was not easy for just one director to oversee every part of the country. There were agitations for improved educational institution from the Nationalists on the one hand and the missionaries on the other hand. We could therefore say that the unification of both the Southern and Northern Protectorate in 1914 and the two education departments in 1929 did not bring much development in education.

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

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

3.2.2 The Post-Independence Era

The period between 1955 and 1960 witnessed a rapid increase in the number of primary schools as well as teachers and pupils in the western region. As we have already discussed, the regionalization of education provided a kind of healthy rivalry among the three Regions in all areas of development. However, it appeared all the Regional Governments gave special attention to education. In fact, Primary education took the central stage in the educational programme of the regions. This special interest and attention given to primary education may be because of the important role which these levels of education play in the promotion of literacy.

Since majority of our people were then illiterates, it was necessary to quickly find a means of reducing or eradicating illiteracy. This may therefore explain why the Regions embarked on various measures to make primary education accessible to all the people. We have just learnt about the introduction of the UPE in the Western Region. A similar programme was introduced in the Eastern Region.

We shall discuss more on this when we are talking about the UPE in the next unit.

The great vigour with which the people oriented education programmes were pursued after the regionalization of education continued even after independence in 1960.

The three Regions were increased to four in 1964 with the creation of the Mid-west Region out of the Western Region. Generally speaking the development of primary education in Nigeria after independence was based on the recommendation of the Ashby commission.

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

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

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

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

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

4.0 Conclusion

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

5.0 Summary

In this unit, we have discussed how the first attempt by the Portuguese Missionaries to introduce formal school education failed. We later discussed the successful introduction of school education into the country through Badagry and Abeokuta by English speaking Missionaries. The rivalry among the different Christian Missions helped in a way to have schools built in different parts of the country. So, for over forty years, the Missionaries were in complete control of education in Nigeria.

It was the 1882 Education ordinance by the colonial administration that brought about government participation in the establishment, funding and management of primary education in particular. The regionalization of education as a result of the Macpherson constitution brought about the rapid expansion of both primary and secondary education in different parts of the country. In the next unit, we shall discuss the UPE programmes and the expansion of primary education in Nigeria.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

7.0 References/Further Reading

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Unit 3 The UPE Programmes in Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Objectives

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

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

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Pre-Independence Period

3.1.1 The Western Region Initiative

In the last unit you learnt how the colonial administration started showing some interest in education. You also learnt how the creation of three Regions and the Regionalization of education helped to increase the rate of educational development in Nigeria. As we discussed then, the three Regions were involved in healthy rivalry in their development programmes. As far back as 1952, the Western Region Government made a proposal for the expansion of educational institutions at all levels in the Region.

In a paper presented to the house of Assembly, on Educational Policy of the Region, by the Minister of education, Mr. Awokoya, some of the reasons for embarking on the expansion of educational institutions were started. These according to Taiwo, (1982) include the attitude of the illiterate parents to sending their children to school, the shortage of teachers and lack of fund. Although the Federal Department of Education recognized the desirability of Universal Primary Education, the colonial administration preferred the provision of secondary education and teacher training colleges.

On one hand, the Western Region Government realized the need for the expansion of education at all levels. However, the Region decided against all difficulties facing the Region to start with the introduction of the Universal Primary Education Programme. As the Minister of Education for the region said, educational development is imperative and urgent. It must be treated as a national emergency, second only to war (Fafunwa, 1991).

Therefore on 17th January 1955, the great education revolution in Nigeria took place with the take-off, of the first UPE Programmes in Black Africa. It was a great event in the history of education in Nigeria. Apart from making primary education accessible to all children of

school age, it also marked the beginning of the war against illiteracy, ignorance, diseases and superstition not only in the West but also in Nigeria.

The UPE programme led to the expansion of primary school facilities, teacher training programme as well as the secondary level. There was an unprecedented increase in the enrolment figure which jumped from 457,000 in 1954 to 811,00 in 1959 representing a jump from 35 percent to 61 percent. Thus, by 1958, that is three years after the introduction of the UPE, the enrolment figures in primary schools in the Region had gone up to one million. As you can see in Tables 1 and 2, the expansion was not limited to Primary Education.

Table 1: Enrolment in All Educational Institutions

Level of education	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
Primary School	456	811 43 2	90802 2	98275 5	1,037,75 5	1,080.30 3
Secondary school	9,126	10935	12621	16,208	18,754	22374
Teacher Training						
Grade II	1,508	2,093	3152	3833	4128	3311
Grade III	3,483	4,659	5,988	6,609	6,609	6681

Table 2: Number of Education at Institution in the West

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

As one should expect from the kind of new project, the first problem was financial. The resources of the region like the other regions were not much. There was also the inadequacy of facilities such as classrooms and materials. Moreover, there was a shortage of professionally qualified teachers. Many of the classrooms were overcrowded with pupils.

Whatever the problems that confronted the UPE programme, we should give some credit to those people who even thought it right to start it. They were African Leaders operating within the colonial system with all the problems associated with colonialism. The various limitations did not stop them from introducing a programme that would benefit all their people. This bold step by the Western Region Government actually encouraged other Regions and in fact other Black African countries to embark on programmes that could uplift their people educationally.

3.1.2 The Effort of the Eastern Regions

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

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

When the UPE program eventually started in January 1957, it had some problems as we should expect. The first major problem was the lack of funds. As we mentioned earlier on, the financial resources of the Regions were very limited and there was not much they could do about it. Therefore in 1958 as a result of inadequate funds to pay the teachers' salaries and provide other facilities, many of the teachers had to be laid off and many of the schools closed down (Fafunwa 1991).

However in order not to completely do away with the UPE programme, it was modified a little. In other words the program was changed to six years as against the earlier eight year primary education. With the new arrangement, the first three years were free while the last three years were fee paying.

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

Self-Assessment Exercise I

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

3.1.3 The Expansion of Education in the Northern Region

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

As you may be aware, the Northern Region was the largest of the three regions in both population and land mass. Therefore, if the relatively smaller Regions could experience some financial difficulties, with their own programmes the North could probably have had a greater problem. Other reasons why the Northern Region could not introduce UPE was

possibly because of the misgiving of some Northern Leaders about the benefits of Western education. In other words, some of the leaders preferred Islamic education to Western education.

Moreover, education had almost been free in the North as pupils in Government and Native Authority schools paid very low fees. Those who could not even pay were exempted from paying (Taiwo 1982). Therefore the introduction of the UPE programmes did not appear to be a priority to the leaders in the North in those days.

Although the North did not introduce any UPE scheme, yet there were some efforts made at expanding education generally. Special attention was given to Teacher Education, mass adult Literacy and craft were also given attention. For example, at the end of the Second World War, there were 935 primary schools in the Northern Region. However by 1958, there were 2,204 primary schools in the Region (Taiwo 1982).

We can therefore say that appreciable expansion was made particularly in primary education in all the Regions before independence. The regionalization of education helped the Nigeria leaders during the period to take steps that would make education accessible to the people.

As we have just discussed, even in the areas where there was no UPE programme, education was almost free. The great achievements made in the expansions of primary education in particular, after the regionalization of education in Nigeria were consolidated after independence. With the difficult economic and political situation of the time, our leaders were still able to make some appreciable progress particularly in the development of primary education. So, they should be commended.

3.2 The Post-Independence Era

3.2.1 The 1969 Curriculum Conference

The rate of development in the field of education which started in the mid-fifties, continued after independence. As we have discussed in the previous unit, the Ashby Commission report encouraged the development of education in Post-independence period. All the Regions including the newly created Mid-West Region in 1964 intensified their efforts at expanding primary, secondary and tertiary education. The civil war between 1967 and 1970 however disrupted the educational development particularly in the Eastern Region and parts of the Mid-West.

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

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

The 1969 National Curriculum Conference was an important landmark in the history of education in Nigeria for many reasons. As we mentioned earlier on, it was the first time that a cross-section of Nigerian stakeholders in education came together to deliberate on the future of education in Nigeria. It was also significant in the sense that it took place during the Nigerian Civil war. This helped the participants to look at ways through which education could become an instrument of unity in the country. The various experts who participated actively in the conference made useful suggestion on how to make education meaningful to the citizens.

Moreover, apart from giving birth to the Nigerian Philosophy of education, the conference also laid the foundation for further discussions on the improvement of the school curriculum and the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education. Finally, while the conference closed the major educational activities during the decade of independence, it opened the door to the next decade. As we shall discuss in the next section and other units, the 1970s witnessed the introduction of the National UPE programme in 1976 and the New National Policy in 1977. There is no way we can discuss these laudable steps that we shall not make reference to the historic 1969 National Curriculum Conference.

3.2.2 The 1976 National UPE Programme

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

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

In September 1976, the Federal Military Government Launched the National UPE Programme. It was planned to cover the whole country. Although, it was initiated by the Federal Government, yet all the 19 States in the country as at that time supported it. So, with the National UPE Programme, primary education became free throughout Nigeria. The programme also made the duration of primary education six years as against seven years in some of the Northern states. The primary school age was also fixed at six years. In other

words, all children who were six years on or before September 1976 were qualified for admission.

Thus, for the Western, Lagos and Mid-Western States, it was a continuation and maintenance of the free primary education which they have already known. As for the Eastern States, it was full achievement of free Universal Primary Education (Taiwo, 1982). You will still remember that the UPE in the old Eastern Region was in 1958 modified to be free only in the lower classes while the upper classes, school fees were paid. That means that from 1976, all classes of primary education in the East became free. However in the North where the UPE had not been officially launched, the national UPE program aimed at closing the education gap between the Northern and the Southern states.

While the Federal Government provided all the funds for implementing the UPE programme, the states served as the agents through which the funds were released. The projected enrolment figure for the first year was 2.3 million.

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

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

The lack of adequate statistical data on which the projections could be based created one of the major problems of the programme. If there were adequate records of birth and death, the Government could have been able to make accurate projections on the number of children to expect in the schools. Do you think that problem has been solved now? From all indications, it appears we are still having that problem. There are no adequate records of birth and death in the country now. This therefore means we cannot say with any degree of accuracy how many children of school age we shall have next September now. As long as we do not know how many children are to be in school, so shall we continue to experience shortage of everything in the schools.

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

May be the inadequate funding of the UPE program which we mentioned earlier on could have been avoided. For instance, many contracts were awarded for the construction of classrooms and the supply of equipment. Many of the contractors collected the money

without doing the work. Some of the abandoned UPE projects could still be seen in many parts of the country today.

Despite the problems that confronted the National UPE Programme. It was another significant landmark in Nigerian education. For the first time in our history as a nation, the 1976 UPE brought uniformity into primary education. As mentioned earlier on, the duration of primary education became six years. In the same way, there was uniform school curriculum, goals and objectives of primary education. Moreover, the UPE programme became a national design to make primary education accessible to all Nigerian children of school age irrespective of their socio-economic background. It was also a national effort at eradicating illiteracy with all the attendant evils.

4.0 Conclusion

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

5.0 Summary

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

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

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Unit 4 The Development of Pre-School Education in Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Objectives

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

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

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Pre-Independence Era

3.1.1 The Early Missionary Efforts

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

The history of pre- primary school education in Nigeria can be traced to the Christian Missionaries who introduced Western education in the 19th century. The Earliest schools in Nigeria were mostly organized within the church premises. The nursery schools were usually organized by wives of the Missionaries for their children and the children of their members. They also organized Sunday schools in which one of the classes would be for children.

As time went on, the number of children involved in such Sunday classes increased. This encouraged the Missionaries to formalize the Sunday school classes which later became a Monday to Friday affair. In other words, the teaching and learning in the schools were no more limited to Sundays (Akinbote, et al 2001). They were now taking place on weekdays like the other formal schools. This could really be regarded as the origin of pre- school establishment in Nigeria.

Later on, as more Europeans came into Nigeria either as Missionaries, traders or members of the colonial administration, the demand for preschool establishment increased. Since the European settled mainly in the G.R.A., the first sets of pre- primary schools to be established outside the missions were in the GRA. This explains why the first sets of pre-school establishment were found only in the big cities that were either capital cities or commercial centres. In this case, cities such as Lagos, Ibadan, Port- Harcourt, Enugu, Benin, Kaduna, Jos among a few others were the places with large concentration of Europeans which had Nursery schools in those days.

3.1.2 The Public School Experience

We must however not forget that like the British system of education, our primary schools during the colonial period also had what was known as the infant class which formed part of the public schools in Britain in those days. So, before Nigerian children started the standard one class in those days, they must have spent two years in the infant school also known as the preparatory classes. Although, some of the children found in the infant classes then were in most case older than the normal children. However, they performed similar roles like the normal nursery schools. That is, preparing children for the primary level of education.

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

As regards the pre-school establishments that were run by private individuals and groups, they continued to expand. This was as a result of their being patronized by some Nigerian elites who have either travelled abroad or are working with the colonial administration or the private companies. They realized the importance of pre-school education and were able to pay the fees charged. Many Nigerians as at that could not afford the fees paid in the privately owned pre-school establishments. Some even saw the pre-primary schools as unnecessary luxury.

Therefore, the pre-school establishments in Nigeria before independence were mainly patronized by the Europeans and a few Nigerian top civil Servants or those in the multinational companies. As much as it is difficult to know the number of such school in Nigeria before independence, it is also difficult to say where and when the first preprimary school was established. As we shall see in the next section of this unit, the growth rate of pre- school establishments in Nigeria after independence has been great and rapid.

3.1.3 Post Independence Era

We have just discussed how pre-primary education started in Nigeria with the effort of the Missionaries. We also discussed the gradual spread of the pre- school establishment s outside the mission house to the GRA before independence. Now let us discuss what happened to pre-school education after independence.

The political, economic, social and industrial development of Nigeria improved considerably after independence. With the expansion in education particularly at the territory level, many

workers both foreigners and Nigerians took up appointment with new universities at Ile-Ife, Lagos, Nsuka, Zaria and even at the premier University of Ibadan. Similarly, more Nigerians took up top management positions in the Civil Service, the various corporations and the multinational companies. Above all, more foreign inventors came into Nigeria in large numbers with their families. What then could we regard as the implication of the new job opportunities for Nigerians particularly during the first two decades after independence.

First, the establishment of new universities in Ife, Lagos, Nsuka, Port-Harcourt, Zaria, Jos, Ilorin and Benin in the first two decades after independence meant a lot. As earlier mentioned, more workers both academic and non-academic were recruited. Those that were foreigners needed pre- school establishment for their children. This led to the establishment of nursery schools in the new Universities.

In the same way, Nigerian workers in the universities also demanded pre-school education for their children. You should note that many of such Nigerian who took up top academic or administrative positions in the universities had been to the European and North American countries. So, they too knew the importance of pre- school establishments for their children.

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

Similarly, with the many existing employment opportunities, many women took up paid employment either in government services or in the private organizations. It therefore became necessary for such women to look for places to keep their children while they were away at work. You will remember that the National UPE programme was introduced in 1976. This led to many boys and girls going to school hence there were no more house boys and girls as it used to be for employment by the working mothers. In the traditional societies grandmothers and other relations were always around to help in taking care of their children.

However, with the rapid urbanization that took place in the country after the civil war, it became difficult to get the assistance of such good old relations. As a matter of fact, many of them got involved in some economic activities which gave them no time to go and stay with any grandchild or other relations.

Generally speaking therefore the two decades after independence witnessed some great improvement in the level of economic power on the part of our people. The importance of pre- school education was also recognized and people then had the financial means to send their children there. As we shall discuss later, the Government Policy on Pre-primary education which was published in 1977 encouraged many Nigerians to establish nursery schools.

Self-Assessment Exercise I

Explain how pre—school education started in Nigeria.

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

3.2.1 The Level of Awareness among Nigerians

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

The last two decades of the 20th century could be rightly described as the period of rapid expansion in pre-school education in Nigeria. In fact, the rate at which pre-school establishments sprang—up in all part of the country during this period is unprecedented in the history of childhood education in Nigeria.

In the urban centres, you will find them in every corner, however remote. While some were operating from uncompleted residential building, others made use of completed residential buildings. Only a few had what could be called permanent school buildings and other facilities that make up a good school. What then could we say was responsible for the upsurge in the number of preschool establishments in Nigeria during the periods 1980-2000? There are many factors responsible for it. We shall try to identify and discuss some of them.

First of all, we must acknowledge the fact that the level of awareness of our people was more than double during the period. As we have discussed earlier on, the UPE programme of 1976, the high rate of industrialization and its effect on the economic power of the people and the establishment of more universities somehow affected the peoples level of awareness with the free UPE programs. Many people had access to formal schooling which in a way affected their level of awareness generally. Many of the university graduates got good ideas about the importance of education at all levels.

Therefore, with many people graduating from the various educational institutions, there was an increased awareness generally on all aspects of national life and the need to give children good education right from the early childhood period. The generality of the people including even some illiterate men and women traders and artisans started patronizing the pre-school establishments.

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

3.2.2 The Inconsistency in Government Programmes

One other important factor that was responsible for the upsurge in the number of pre-primary school has to do with the state of the public primary schools. You will still recall that the UPE programme of 1976 was financed by the Federal Government.

However, with the coming of civilian government in 1979, there was a change in the method of funding. The 1979 constitutions placed primary education under the control of states hence the civilian government tried to follow the constitutional provisions. This was why in early 1980s, the states took over the responsibility for the funding of the schools. This actually led to the beginning of the problem encountered in Nigerian primary schools in the last two decades. You may now be wondering about how this affected pre- primary education in the country.

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

Now, with the patronage of the private primary schools by children from the public schools, there was expansion in the private schools. Since the public programme were disrupted many parents lost confidence in them. This led to removing their children to the nursery schools where they could later continue with their children to primary education. Thus, from the early 1980s, there has been a steady increase in the number as well as the enrolment figures of the private nursery/primary school in Nigeria.

In 1988, the Federal Military Government through Decree 31 of that year established The National Primary Education Commission. (NPEC). The Commission thereafter took over the management, funding and supervision of primary education in Nigeria. This was widely regarded as a welcome development by many Nigerians. However, in 1991, the NPEC was scrapped through another decree.

The Local Education Authority was then established for each state. This arrangement gave the Local Government Chairman control over the management and funding of primary education in their areas. It was indeed a disaster for primary education as funds were diverted or misused. The teachers' salaries were not paid for months in many States and this led to long periods of strike by the teachers. So, what we experienced in the 1980s before the establishment of NPEC was repeated on a wider scale, that is, the mass withdrawal of children from the public primary schools.

In 1993, with another decree, the Federal Military Government once again re-introduced the National Primary Education Commission. It was aimed at restoring normalcy into the management of funding and control of primary education in Nigeria. Frantic efforts were made by the new NPEC to restore the past glory of primary education in Nigeria. Even with the efforts made to make things normal in the primary education system, many parents have up till now not returned their children to the public schools. This is particularly so in the urban centres.

As we mentioned earlier on, the situation in the public primary schools have forced many parents to take their children to the private fee paying schools. Along the line, they go ahead to enroll their pre — school aged children in the nursery section of the private primary schools.

Thus, when such children complete the pre- primary education there, they normally proceed to the primary school section. Many parents have therefore lost confidence in the public primary school system. The enrolment figures dropped in the public schools. Government in some of the States had to result to paid adverts on the radio and television asking or rather begging parents to send their children to the free public schools.

In an attempt to correct the situation, the Oyo state primary Education Board (SPEB) introduced a new idea. That is, by running pre-school classes as a section of the public primary school. This was an experiment aimed at catching the children young. You will remember that we said parents who sent their children to the private nursery school do not withdraw them to continue their primary education in the public schools. Since the Oyo SPEB nursery schools are free, it is hoped that parent will be encouraged to send their children there.

Thus, such children will just continue with primary education after finishing their nursery education. Let us hope me experiment will work.

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

We also mentioned earlier on the expansion of the tertiary institutions. With more universities, many people were employed thereby giving them the necessary economic power to send their children to the nursery schools. Similarly, many of the products of these universities realized the importance of pre-school education and therefore send their children there. There was also the married women who took up paid employment and looked for places to keep their children.

In addition to these, the levels of awareness among our people improved considerably in the last two decades hence almost everyone now knows what is good for the children. The inconsistency in government policy and programmes as they affect primary education made people to loose interest in the public schools. Thus the demand for pre-school establishment has been on the increase. Even the illiterate market men and women as well as other categories of self-employed people now send their children to the private nursery/primary schools. Is this not a welcome development?

4.0 Conclusion

The development of pre-school education has witnessed a rapid expansion in the last two or three decades. From the very simple beginning in the mission houses as Sunday school, it

has now become very common in all the major cities of Nigeria. The social, political and economic developments in Nigeria since independence have affected the rapid growth of pre — school establishments in Nigeria. The increase in the number of pre- primary schools and the high patronage which they enjoy could be regarded as indication of the high level of interest in early education of children by Nigerians.

5.0 Summary

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

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

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Unit 5 The National Policy on Education

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Objectives

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

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

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Historical Background

3.1.1 The Philosophy of Nigerian Education

In unit 8 of this course, we discussed the 1969 Curriculum Conference. We then mentioned the importance of the Conference to the development of education in Nigeria. You should not be surprised that we are once again discussing that historic National Curriculum Conference of 1969. There is no way we can discuss the National Policy on Education without making reference to the curriculum conference.

This is because as we said earlier on, the conference gave birth to the National Policy among other things. The 1969 National Curriculum Conference has therefore become an important landmark in the history and development of education in Nigeria. The Conference took place at a time when Nigeria was going through a civil war. This actually gave all the participants, which included Nigerians from different cultural, political, religious, social, economic and professional backgrounds, to look for ways by which education could be used to unite us. Thus, the report of the proceedings of the conference was titled, “A Philosophy for Nigerian Education.”

In a keynote address, the then Chief Federal Adviser on Education, Dr. S. J. Cooley, said among other things that, 'education should be used as a tool of national unity.... It is urged that we should inculcate in the students of our educational institutions the idea of belonging not to one clan or tribe but to the whole nation (Adaralegbe, 1981).

Therefore, in discussing the philosophy of Nigerian education it may be necessary to first of all look at the concept, philosophy of education. As used here, a philosophy of education means the particular ideals which our education should be concerned with. That is, what goals or purposes do we want our education to serve? These and many more were the questions which the participants at that conference tried to answer between September 8 and 12, 1969.

As we discussed earlier on, what the conference agreed upon as the goals of Nigerian education at all levels is what we have in the document titled, National Policy on Education (1977) revised 1981 and 1998. The Philosophy of Nigerian education is therefore based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system.

From this stated national philosophy of education you can see that, the individual citizens of this great country passing through any of the levels of education must be greatly transformed. In other words, everyone has equal opportunity as far as access to education is concerned. Moreover, the system of education is also expected to make everyone that passes through it at whatever level a good citizen of Nigeria. Thus, Nigeria's philosophy of education is related to some special aims and objectives as follows:

- the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.
- the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

If you can take time to go through the stated goals of education at the three formal levels - primary, secondary and tertiary, you will discover that the above national goals are reflected in them.

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

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

In unit one, you have learnt the goals of pre-primary and primary education. However, for the purpose of emphasis and to be in a better position to see the relationship between the goals of primary education and the national goals, we shall state the goals here again.

The purpose of pre-primary education, which according to the NPE is the education given in an educational institution to children aged 3 — 5+ are as follows:

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

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

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

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

I want you to quickly compare the above goals of primary education with national goals of education which we identified earlier on. Is there any similarity? Yes, there are many similarities. In fact, we can say that the goals of primary education are based on the goals of Nigerian education.

Then, why is this so? It is simply because of the fact that primary education is the key to the success or failure of the entire education system. As you know primary education is the first level or the foundation upon which all other levels of education are built. Therefore, if the goals of primary education could be effectively pursued and realised, then every product of the school system will be a good citizen. What do you think we can do so as to realise the goals of primary education?

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Explain the major focus of Nigeria's Philosophy of Education

3.2 The Policy Statements and Implementation

3.2.1 Pre-Primary Education

We are now going to discuss the National Policy on Education as it affects pre-primary education. The purpose of doing this is for you to be familiar with the official policy of government on this level of education. You will then be in a position to determine whether any particular policy is appropriate or not. Moreover, you will be able to suggest ways of ensuring the effective implementation of the policy.

As stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE), the policy statements which are aimed at achieving the objectives of pre-school education include:

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

Before we go on to identify the policy statement on primary education, let us see how far the above policy statement on pre-primary education have been implemented.

There is no doubt that the policy of encouraging private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education is being effectively implemented. This is because private individuals and organization are having their ways in the establishment and management of pre-primary schools. The rate at which they are springing up in every part of the country tends to confirm this. Similarly, they determine how much to charge as school fees without any measure of control by the government. We shall discuss the implications of this policy in the next section.

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

On the training of teachers for Early Childhood Education, it could be said that the policy has been implemented. This is because both the Colleges of Education and some universities have in the last two decades been offering courses in Early Childhood Education up to the Ph.D. Level.

However, as regards the method of teaching and the quality of teachers in the pre-primary schools, very little has been done to implement the policy statements. For instance, if you visit majority of the pre-primary school establishments in any part of the country you will see that they do not have professionally qualified teachers in early childhood education. In some cases, some of the teachers are not even professional teachers at all.

Similarly, most of the pre-primary schools do not have adequate facilities and equipment. This is not limited to the schools in rural areas alone. In fact we can say that there are more badly equipped schools than the well-equipped schools in the large cities. What are the implications of both the implemented and non-implemented? We shall discuss this later.

3.2.2 Primary Education

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

The first is making primary education free and proposes to make it compulsory as soon as possible. We can say that with the UPE programme of 1976 and the recently launched UBE programme, primary education has been made free to a reasonable extent. The UBE Bill has made basic education which includes the primary schools free and compulsory in Nigeria.

On curriculum, government prescribes the following curricular activities for primary schools — inculcation of literacy and numeracy, the study of science, the study of the social norms and values of the local communities and the country as a whole through civics and social studies, the giving of health and physical education, moral and religious instruction, the encouragement of aesthetic, creative and musical activities, the teaching of local crafts and domestic science and agriculture.

Again, this aspect of the policy has been adequately taken care of. As at now, there are about 16 subjects in the primary school curriculum from which appropriate or necessary ones are selected. There are however some core courses which are taught in all public primary schools in Nigeria. These include Mathematics, Language study, Cultural Arts, Integrated Science, Social Studies and Physical and Health Education. But government has not been able to make provision for all the facilities promised to ensure the success of the curricular activities.

As regards the medium of instruction, the policy states that the mother tongue or language of the immediate community will be used in the lower classes and English language in the upper classes — that is primary four to six. One may even say that there are instances of compliance with this policy and some instances where they are not.

For instance in many public primary schools, the mother tongue is even used in teaching pupils in the upper classes where English should be used. On the other hand, there are schools where English language is used as medium of instruction in the lower classes. This is particularly common in private schools and some public schools in the urban centres.

The teacher pupil ratio of 1:20 (pre-primary) and 1:30 (primary) is the official policy with the provision that 1:40 would be acceptable for the transition period. Except for some schools in the urban centres, we could even say that the inconsistencies in government programmes in the last two decades have left the public primary schools under populated. That is, in many schools, the teacher pupil ratio is much lower than the 1:30 proposed. Abolishing the primary school leaving certificate examination is another policy that has been implemented. Unlike the past, when pupils in primary six will have to sit for their final examination in a day or two, the Continuous Assessment is now being used in many states.

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

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

3.2.3 Implications of the Policy Statements

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

The first policy statement that government will encourage private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education has some implications on the society. To begin with, it means not all children of pre-school age in Nigeria will have access to such institutions. This is because individuals who want to establish them will want to make some profit.

Therefore, they will only establish it in the urban centres where they can have many children and also charge high fees. In other words, children in the rural areas and those of poor parents cannot have access to such schools. As you learnt in one of the earlier units of this course, this category of children even need the pre-school education more than their counterparts who have been receiving a good degree of stimulation from their relatively better home background.

In the same way, the non-compliance with the policy on the use of mother tongue in the pre-primary schools has much implication for the child. There are many Nigerians today who do not speak their mother-tongue to their children even at home. Some children therefore grow up to feel that the English language and even the English culture are superior to African languages and culture. This is not good enough for the promotion of our own cultural heritage. As Fafunwa and Macaulay (1989) once asserted, it is probably only in Africa and the third world countries that children are made to learn in a foreign language right from the pre-primary schools.

Apart from this poor attitude to our culture, the difficulty which our children often encounter in their school learning could be traced partly to the language of instruction. Since we think reason and learn and understand new concepts with the help of language, it is sure that children who learn in a second language will always be at a disadvantage. The life six-year primary education project has proved this.

On the method of teaching and quality of teachers in pre-primary schools in Nigeria, we must be frank enough to say there are problems. As we said earlier on, most teachers in the pre-school establishments in the country are not professionally qualified to use the appropriate methods for teaching. The result therefore is the rote learning which is common in the schools. The implication therefore is that children at this tender age are not given the necessary stimulation to explore and find out things on their own. They are made to be docile receivers of facts and information from their teacher.

On the long run, they will grow up to become dependent individuals who cannot carry out any research work on their own. As thing are now, government has no control over the quality of teachers for the pre-primary schools. It is true there are institutions training teachers for the pre-primary schools. The question is are they being appointed to teach in these private schools?

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

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

4.0 Conclusion

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

5.0 Summary

In this unit, we have discussed the National Policy on Education with particular reference to pre-primary and primary education. We first looked at the philosophy of Nigerian education and the relationship with the objectives of primary education. We later discussed the level

of implementation of the policy statements and their implications. In the next unit, we shall discuss early child care and development initiatives in Nigeria.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

7.0 References/Further Reading

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

Adaralegbe, A. (1981). "A Philosophy for Nigerian Education." *Proceedings of the Nigerian National Curriculum Conference*. Ibadan: Heineman Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd.