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of Early Child Education
Module 3

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MODULE 3

Unit I Early Child Care and Development Programmes in Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Objectives

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

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

3.0 Main Content

3.1 FGN/UNICEF Initiatives

3.1.1 Early Child Care Problems in Nigeria

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

However, things have changed over the years in Africa generally. In terms of the social, economic, political and industrial development, things have changed. As you have learnt earlier on, the developments have affected not only the cultural practices but also the ways of life of our people. In Nigeria, while the life styles of some have improved considerably, some cannot just make ends meet. This means that some have all they need to take proper care of their children including giving them good pre-school education.

On the other hand, there are many others who are in the majority who cannot take good care of their children as a result of illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. The rapid urbanization since independence has led to the overcrowded cities with all the problems associated with it. So in Nigeria, the traditional love and care for children which have always been part of our culture are gradually giving way to lack of care and proper attention for children. This is particularly very obvious in the ever growing urban centres.

On the other hand, in the rural areas where much of our traditions are still being kept, many have been forced by circumstances to abandon them. For example, in many of the rural areas, there are no basic social amenities hence people have been moving to the urban centres.

On getting to the cities, things often do not go the way they were expecting. Thus, they often find it difficult to return to their villages. This has often led to their living in slums and very un-stimulating environment for their children's proper growth and development since many of the people in the urban centres are poor, they cannot take adequate care of their children.

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

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

However, since most homes cannot provide such early stimulation and encouragement to the child, the pre-school establishments could have been most helpful. Unfortunately, majority of pre-school age children have no access to such establishments in Nigeria. A survey conducted by UNICEF has revealed that majority of pre-school age children in the urban and rural areas have no access to nursery school or day care centres.

So, in a way, the average Nigerian child of pre-school age is not receiving the much needed stimulation and encouragement for his proper growth and development. This may therefore explain why Fafunwa (1967) once asserted that the average African child below the age of six is at a serious disadvantage when compared with his counterparts from Europe and North America. It is with this lack of early stimulation and encouragement for most Nigerian children in mind that FGN/UNICEF and some NGO's have introduced Early Child Care and Development (ECCD) Programme in Nigeria. In the next section, we shall see how the ECCD initiatives has been organized to help the Nigerian child.

3.1.2 Objectives of ECCD

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

Even the available day care centres and nursery schools which are located mainly in the urban centres are not adequately organised. Apart from this, they are too expensive for the average Nigerian families to afford. All the private owners of such centres and schools have commercialized them. In other words, they are after making huge profits from such centres. This is why there has been an upsurge in the number of such day care centres and nursery schools in recent years.

Many of these mushroom centres and schools are not registered hence their services could not adequately meet the required standards. In other words, many of the available day care centres and nursery schools cannot provide the necessary stimulation and encouragement to the children who attend the centres and schools.

It is in the realization of these deficiencies in the Nigerian preschool establishments that the UNICEF with financial assistance from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation started the Early Child Care Development (ECCD) project in Nigeria. The collaborative pilot project on ECCD between UNICEF and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) started in 1987 in five Local Government areas of five states. The project was designed to counter the activities of the badly organized, inadequately equipped and expensive pre-school establishments in Nigeria.

In this regard, the project was aimed at providing alternative and low-cost methods and ways of childcare and development which could encourage mothers to take good care of their children.

The main goal of the ECCD project is therefore to improve the overall growth and development of children under six years. This is achieved by:

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

Self-Assessment Exercise I

Why was the ECCD project introduced in Nigeria?

3.1.3 Prospects of the ECCD Projects in Nigeria

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

The output objectives of the project were to:

- Set up 920 low-cost community-based ECCD centres
- Provide early stimulation through non-formal learning opportunities to 92,000 children aged between 3 and 5 years.
- Support and promote health and nutrition services to 50,000 children under two years of age,

- Train 5,000 child-care providers and 700 trainers and supervisors in improved ECCD techniques and practices
- Orient 2,000 personnel from the existing day-care centres (Akinbote et al 2001, p. 156).

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

There has been a great interest in the project by the various communities. This is demonstrated by the 175,000 children under six years who benefited from the ECCD project. Moreover, about 7,000 preschool age children have been de-wormed through the cooperation of some other agencies.

The ECCD has made some achievements which has been summarised as follows:

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

Generally speaking, the ECCD project has been helpful in the provision of child care facilities. It has been able to raise the level of awareness of parents, particularly in the rural areas on why and how to stimulate their children's social, psychomotor and cognitive development. The ECCD project has also shown that collaboration and co-project development is possible for the proper development of children, it is therefore not good enough for the government as you learnt in the last unit to encourage private efforts in the provision of pre-school establishments.

With the FGN/UNICEF initiatives, many children who could have been deprived of the stimulation and care necessary for their development have benefited from early childcare and development programmes. It is only hoped that the programme will not be abandoned. The programme must be sustained so that millions of other deprived children could benefit from it.

3.2 The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)

3.2.1 OMEP Nigeria-Background

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

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

- Promote and coordinate research in Early Childhood Education.
- Collect and disseminate information on Early Childhood Education.
- encourage the provision of pre-school institutions
- Promote the education of parents and adults in charge of children.
- encourage the production of suitable books and other educational materials.
- encourage educational institutions to develop courses for the training of teachers of pre-school children
- liaise with governments and any organizations with concern for children
- promote conferences, seminars, workshops, etc on childcare and education
- encourage the preparation and publication of pamphlets, journals, etc for parents and the public on childcare and education
- encourage the formation of suitable educational programmes adequate for Nigerian pre-school children.

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

3.2.2 OMEP Activities in Nigeria

Since the inception of OMEP in Nigeria, it has engaged in various activities aimed at promoting the well-being and happiness of children. It has a National body as well as State chapters. Apart from organizing workshops, seminars and conferences, it has been involved

in the provision of day care centres and nursery schools for children. This is mostly done by the State chapters. Let us now look at one of the State chapter's activities.

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

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

You may wish to know how the OMEP centres/schools are financed. Since OMEP is not a profit-making organisation, the centres are financed through token fees paid by the parents, donations from OMEP members and the general public. Similarly, fund raising activities such as parents' day, children's art exhibitions among others are some of the sources of funding the projects.

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

4.0 Conclusion

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

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you have learnt how FGN/UNICEF have jointly organized the ECCD projects for some children in selected Local Government areas of the country. You also learnt how

the projects have helped many children to receive the much needed care, education and stimulation essential for their optimum development.

Some nongovernmental organizations such as OMEP have been also helpful in bringing pre-school education and childcare to the grassroot people. You specially learnt how Oyo Chapter of OMEP has taken pre-school education to the villages and market places for the benefit of children who ordinarily could not have had access to pre-school establishment.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

7.0 References/Further Reading

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

OMEP (Nigeria) Constitution and By-laws.

Unit 2 UBE and Early Childhood Education

1.0 Introduction

In one of the earlier units, you learnt about the UPE programmes in Nigeria and how they affected the development of primary education. In this unit, you are going to learn what the Universal Basic Education is all about. Specifically, you are going to learn the meaning of UBE and how it affects childhood education. The difference between the UPE and the UBE as well as the prospects of the UBE will be discussed.

As you are aware, the UBE is the latest attempt by the Federal Government to make education available to all Nigerians irrespective of their age, condition and location. Therefore, this unit will give general background knowledge about the meaning, purpose and component of the UBE programme.

2.0 Objectives

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

- explain the meaning and purpose of the UBE
- identify the component of the UBE
- explain the major differences between the UPE and UBE programmes

3.0 Main Content

3.1 UBE in Nigeria

3.1.1 Definition and Scope

In one of the earlier units, we discussed the UPE programmes we have had in Nigerian so far. In discussing the various UPE programmes in Nigeria, we identified their specific effects on the development of primary education in Nigeria. You will still remember that throughout our discussion of the UPE, we concentrated only on primary education.

In other words, Primary education was the major concern of the UPE programme. This is where the UBE programmes differ from the UPE. Therefore, before we start discussing the UBE and its various components, let us first explain its meaning.

In the blue print on Basic Education (1999), basic education is referred to as early childhood education and primary education, the first three years of secondary education, and basic and functional literacy for out of school children, youth and adults, In other words the UBE programmes is wider in scope than the former UPE programmes.

As explained in the Blue print, the UBE is an organized, multi- sectional community based education. It involves not only the acquisition of reading, writing and numeracy skills, but also functional and other skills as may be determined by the government.

One important fact about the UBE programmes which we should not forget is that it is extended to cover non- formal education. This means that pre- school children and adults outside the formal school system are not forgotten. Moreover, both private and public educational activities that are aimed at meeting the needs of Nigerians of all ages are covered by the UBE programmes. When we are discussing the childhood education component of the programmes, we shall be talking about the various bodies that are involved in its implementations.

Therefore, we can say that the UBE unlike the UPE covers all aspect of formal education up to the JS III as well as pre- school and adult education. Let us now identify the goals and objectives of the programmes.

3.1.2 Goals and Objectives

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

According to the Blueprint (1999), the UBE is aimed at equipping every individual - child youth and adult with such Knowledge, skill and attitude that will enable him or her develop to his or her fullest capacity, derived maximum social, economic and cultural benefit from his or her membership of the society and fulfill his or her civic obligations.

This broad aim of the programme shows that all categories of Nigerians are to be helped to become the best of whatever they are. Age should not constitute any problem. You will recall that when we were discussing the characteristics of formal education, we said formal education is rigid in terms of entry and exit. That is, there is fixed age limit and other conditions you have to meet before you could be admitted. However, with the aims of the UBE, It is now possible for people to make it educationally even if they once dropped out of the formal school system, they can still make it.

The specific objectives of the programmes are as follows:

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

As stated in the first objectives, the UBE programme was introduced to increase enrolment of children in schools. It was also to ensure that more children stay in school to complete their education. This may therefore mean that the UPE programme of 1976 has not really achieved the much expected 100% enrolment at the primary school level. In other words, not all children of primary school age are in school.

Similarly, the statement that the UBE is to increase the retention and completion means that even out of those registered in primary schools for instance, not all of them stay to

complete their education. Many factors could have been responsible for all these. For example the postural norms, migration fisherman and the disabled children may not have been having the opportunity to go school. Now the UBE programme has taken adequate care of all categories of children in Nigerian.

Other areas covered by the stated objective include the reduction of gender access and equity disparities to education. As you may be aware there are some parts of Nigeria where more boys than girls go to school. This is very common in some of the Northern States.

On the other hand, there are some areas where there are more girls in school than boys. This is very common in Eastern States. So, the UBE programme is designed to correct all these anomalies in the enrolment of boys and girls in school.

Finally, as we observed in our discussion of the UPE programme, the Federal Government was mainly responsible for the funding. The present UBE program is to involve all other bodies in the provision of basic education.

Thus, one of the strategies of the UBE is to encourage the various communities to support and sustain formal and non- formal education efforts in their areas. It is sincerely hoped that the programme will achieve a higher degree of success than the previous UPE programmes. This is if some of the problems which we shall discuss in the next unit are adequately taken care off.

Self-Assessment Exercise I

Enumerate the specific objectives of the UBE programme.

3.2 Childhood Education Components of the UBE

3.2.1 Early Childhood Education

As we have already discussed in unit one, Early Childhood period covers the period from birth till 6 years. This means that children who are yet to start pre-primary or nursery school (0 – 3 years) as well as those of pre-primary school (3 – 6) years are included. We can therefore say that the target groups for the Early childhood education component of the UBE program include the following (Blue print 1999).

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

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

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

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

The question you should be asking now is how does the government intend to do this? Well, the approaches to be adopted by government in ensuring that the target groups benefit from the program are many. We shall only highlight a few of them here.

The first thing government intends to do is to raise the level of awareness of parents and guardians, the community, the NGO, and other voluntary organizations, to participate in the care and education of preschool children. Government also intends to encourage interested individuals or groups to establish and manage pre-school institutions.

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

The implementation of the UBE programmes as they affect early childhood education is to be a joint effort. In other words, it is not to be only a government affair. The Ministry of Education at both the Federal and State levels and their parastatals as well as the Local Government Education Authorities will be involved. Their various activities will be in collaboration with the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community based Organizations (CBOs), the Mass Media, individuals and the International Donor Agencies.

If all things go on well, it is hoped that the pre-school age children in all parts of the country will benefit from the program. This will therefore make it possible for the children to receive the much needed stimulation and encouragement for their development.

3.2.2 Primary Education

Primary Education as you already know refers to the education given in an educational institution to children aged 6 to 11⁺. This level of education has always been lucky in the sense that it has always received government attention.

You will still recall that all the UPE programmes in the country have always been centered on primary education. The present UBE programme has also included primary education as one of its components. Why is primary education enjoying the patronage of all programmes

aimed at making education accessible to all? This is because, primary education is the level of education that lays the foundation for the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy.

It therefore follows that any program aimed at bringing education to the door steps of all citizens must include primary education. Everybody needs primary education as we discussed earlier on in one of the units. The modern day social, economic and political activities require at least literacy in the mother tongue for individuals to become relevant in the society. One does not need a University degree for example before you can be a good driver, carpenter, trader or bricklayer.

However, a good primary education is necessary for anybody to become a driver who will be able to read the road signs, or a good tailor who will be able to design good clothes and so on.

Now that we know why primary education is one of the components of the UBE programme, let us now see the target group and the approaches to be adopted in the programme.

The target group, that is the particular group of people for whom the USE primary education programme is meant for. They are:-

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

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

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

- establishment of more primary schools;
- use of incentives advocacy and mobilization to achieve higher enrolment and retention rates;
- training and re training of teaching and non-teaching staff;
- involving the communities in the primary education programme;
- proper gender streaming in schools and classes;

- excursions and field trips to relevant sites and facilities;
- public enlightenment through the print, electronic and other media;
- Improvement and effective utilization of existing facilities in primary schools.

All these approaches and strategies for achieving the goals of primary education under the UBE programme will be in cooperation with some, other bodies or organizations.

As we mentioned under the Early childhood education aspect of the UBE programme, the government cannot do it alone. This is why there is going to be some degree of collaboration with private individuals and organizations. The existing Federal and State Ministries and Parastatals involved in the management of primary education will still be involved. These include, the Federal and State Ministries of Education, National Primary Education Commission, National Commission for Nomadic Education, State Primary Education Boards, Local Government Education Authorities.

Some educational institutions involved in the training of primary school teachers and agencies responsible for curriculum development and publication of course materials will also be involved. These include the National Commission for Colleges of Education, National Teachers' Institute and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council.

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

3.2.3 Special Education

Special education according to the National Policy on Education (1998) refers to; the education of children and adults who have learning difficulties because of different kinds of handicaps - blindness, partial sightedness, deafness, hardness of hearing, mental retardation, social mal-adjustments, limb deformity, or malformation, etc. due to circumstances of birth, inheritance, social position, mental and physical health patterns or accidents in later life. As a result, such children and adults are unable to cope with the regular school class organization and methods.

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

The UBE programme does not want to leave anybody out of the desire to help everyone to develop to the best of his or her ability. Many parents in Nigeria often neglect their

handicapped children. This is why we see many of such children begging on our streets in towns and villages.

The reason why many of them are begging is because they are not adequately taken care of by their parents or the society. That a child is blind, deaf and dumb does not mean he cannot be helped to live a happy and decent life. It is in the new desire of helping all citizens to become the best of what they are that the UBE program has not excluded the handicapped.

So, the target groups of the UBE Special Education Program include the physically handicapped children and adults, the mentally retarded children, the disabled, the gifted and talented children and those in special circumstances.

In order to achieve the goals of special education which includes the inculcation of permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively in the handicapped people? The government through the UBE programme will do the following among other things.

Government will establish special education schools. As at now, such schools are very few to adequately cater for such children. Therefore, through the UBE programme, if more of such schools are established, more physically and mentally challenging children will have access to formal education.

As people say, there is nobody that cannot be educated. Have you ever seen a deaf and dumb person write or the blind child read? That is what the UBE is after. Everybody irrespective of his location or condition should be able to read and write.

The government can only achieve this through cooperation from the parents, the various societies, International organizations, nongovernmental organizations, the mass media among others. Parents and relations of handicapped children should not be ashamed to bring their children to such schools. We should all do whatever we can do to assist them even if it is only by telling parents where such schools are available.

4.0 Conclusion

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

5.0 Summary

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

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

7.0 References/Further Reading

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

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Unit 3 Major Obstacles for the UBE

1.0 Introduction

In one of the earlier units, you learnt how the UPE programmes were introduced in the old Western Region and the Eastern Region. You also learnt how they ran into difficulties as a result of inadequate planning, lack of funds, inadequacy of teachers, classrooms and other things.

Later you learnt how the Federal Government introduced a National UPE programme in 1976 and the problems encountered. In this unit, we are going to discuss some obstacles that may prevent us from realizing the objectives of the UBE programme if they are not adequately taken care of.

2.0 Objectives

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

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

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Personnel and Administration

3.1.1 The Quality of Teachers

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

One of the major problems of the previous UPE programmes in Nigeria centred on the quality and quantity of teachers. You will still remember how the lack of adequate number of trained teachers led to the appointment of untrained teachers to teach in our schools.

In an attempt to produce the much needed trained teachers in large numbers, crash programmes were introduced. This was the case in the 1976 National UPE programme. As we once mentioned in one of the earlier units, the doors of our Teachers Colleges were thrown open to whoever cares to come in. This led to the admission of reluctant, school failures and those who had no other places to go, into the Teachers Colleges.

As if this was not enough, the duration of courses were in some cases reduced while admission requirements were deliberately lowered. All these led to the production of half-baked, unsure, reluctant and undedicated teachers. Thus, the two major problems of teacher education for primary education in Nigeria as identified by Taiwo (1982) were

experienced during the time. The problems are the poor quality of teachers produced from the Teachers Colleges and their low output.

This is not to say however that all the teachers produced were bad. In fact, some of the primary school teachers were very good and dedicated. But, majority of them were not particularly professionally competent. This really affected the standard of teaching and learning in our schools.

Thus, there were many primary school products of the UPE programmes who were not literate in either their mother tongues or English language. Although the poor quality of teachers may not be the only factor responsible for this, yet, it could be regarded as one of the most important factors.

So far, we have seen how poor teachers preparation affected the quality and output of the UPE teachers. This shows that we should not just be after the mass production of teachers. As much as we need a large number of teachers to teach in our schools, we should also be careful not to throw quality into the winds. The question now is, has the UBE taken this into consideration? In other words, have we learnt anything from the past mistakes of embarking on a crash programme of teacher education? There should have been a long term planning for the training of teachers before the introduction of the programme.

The recently introduced 'emergency' training programme for the UBE teachers by NTI may not be the ideal thing. How are we sure that the people being recruited for the 'emergency' training programmes are not the reluctant ones like those trained for the UPE programme?

One other problem associated with the quality of teachers is the type of in-service programmes organized for them. For teachers to be up to date with new developments in the teaching and learning process, they have to be exposed to regular in-service programmes. It could be a long or short term courses.

For example, there could be long vacation courses/workshops on different methods of teaching the various school subjects, classroom management and control, school community relationships and so on. Experts could be invited on the various areas while the teachers are given special allowances for the course. If in the UBE programme this has not been done, then it should start immediately.

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

3.1.2 Lack of Dedication by Teachers

We have just discussed the problem created by the crash programme introduced during the UPE programme. In an attempt to produce enough teachers for the programme, the admission into the Teachers Colleges were relaxed. This made it possible for people who could not have been qualified to come in. Among those who came in we had the reluctant ones. That is, those who naturally did not want to become teachers but were forced to come into Teachers Colleges. So, these people became reluctant teachers. They had divided interest hence they could not give their best as teachers.

In many cases, some of those who came into teaching then merely used teaching as a stepping stone. As soon as they were able to secure a better job or admission into a tertiary institution, they left the classrooms without any notice. There were even some of the teachers who were not regular in school. This is very peculiar to teachers in the rural areas. Many school teachers in the rural areas often make special attendance rosters among themselves.

In other words, if there are four teachers in a rural school, two will be in school from Monday till Wednesday while the remaining two will come on Thursday and Friday.

The next week, they will alternate the arrangement. This makes the pupils to suffer as the two teachers in the school may not even be able to cover the whole days' work for a class let alone all the classes in the school.

In the Urban schools, many of the teachers are engaged in some business activities. Some even come to school to sell their goods to their colleagues or pupils. The implication of this is that such teachers have little or no time to make adequate preparation for their lessons. There has been many cases of teachers who do not prepare any lesson notes at all while some use the school periods to write their notes.

This lack of dedication on the part of teachers could sometimes not be their fault. In a situation where salaries were not paid regularly, or where their take home pay was not enough to take care of their family, naturally teachers would look for other sources of income.

Similarly, the poor condition of service which also led to poor retirement benefits often forced many teachers to do some running around while in service. By so doing, they are sure of a fairly comfortable living after retirement even when their benefits are not paid. These and other problems often lead to teachers not being dedicated. The pupils as you will expect are always the worst for it as they will not be having the necessary teaching and learning activities to make them permanently literate.

If the UBE programme is not to have such undedicated teachers, the necessary precautions must be taken. First, the recruitment of teachers for our classrooms must be based on merit.

That is, only those that are professionally qualified and suitable should be employed. This means that proper interviews should be conducted for those that applied for teaching after their qualification. I think if care is taken to conduct proper interviews for teachers before appointment, most of the bad ones would have been eliminated.

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

Self-Assessment Exercise I

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

3.1.3 Inadequate Planning and Supervision

We have just talked about how the crash programmes have led to the poor quality of teachers produced for the UPE programmes. This idea of using crash programmes in the training of teachers could be regarded as part of the inadequate planning which led to the failure of the UPE program. If we know we are introducing a programme like the present UBE, at least, the first three or more years should have been devoted to planning.

In this case, the training of the teachers could have been embarked upon. Therefore, by the time the programme is taking off, there would have been some good number of teachers on ground. It is not good planning to start the programme before embarking on the training of teachers.

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

Therefore, in order to have an accurate data on which the planning of the UBE is to be based, there is need for proper awareness campaign on the need to register all births and deaths. The officers in charge of such records should be more dedicated and keep adequate records. It should be made compulsory for all health institutions to register all births and deaths and send same to the Department of Statistics at regular intervals of three months or six months.

Moreover, officials of the statistics Division of the National Population Commission should go to the villages to register their new babies. No meaningful planning can be done without a reliable statistical data.

There is also the problem of inadequate supervision of schools in Nigeria in recent years. Those of us that are old enough can still remember that during the period immediately before and after independence, inspectors were frequent in schools.

However, in the past two decades, things have not been the same again. Many schools in the rural areas are not visited by inspectors for years. In most cases, the head teachers of such schools are merely asked to come to either the local government or state headquarters to supply some necessary information about their staff, students and available facilities. This arrangement often gives room for the false figures often sent to the State and Federal Ministries of Education.

What do you think is responsible for this? Well, many Inspectors of Education have neither personal nor official cars with which they could pay regular visits to the schools. In some cases, most of the rural roads are not motorable for a greater part of the year. Therefore,

the inspectors have no choice than to remain in their offices and rely on whatever information they receive from the head teachers.

For the UBE to be successful there should be adequate supervision. The head teachers should be empowered to discipline any teacher who is found wanting in the performance of his or her duties.

In recent years, many teachers tend to disobey their head teachers because of their special connections. This should not be so. The supervision of schools should even be encouraged more among the head-teachers who are always on ground. They should be given the necessary powers to do so.

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

3.2 Instructional Materials/Facilities

3.2.1 Inadequacy of Relevant Instructional Materials

As we are all aware, majority of children and those to benefit from the UBE program are from poor families. Therefore, most of them cannot even afford to buy ordinary school uniform for their children. This is why such parents often feel reluctant in sending their children to school. After they have been told that education is free, they usually send their children to school with the hope that government will supply all their needs.

Unfortunately, such materials as textbooks, exercise books, writing materials where available are never sufficient to go round all the pupils. Even some essential materials such as attendance register, diary, chalk, duster including desks and chairs are also inadequate. This was the case during the national UPE programmes. There are still some schools now in different parts of the country without adequate supply of such materials.

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

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

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

- Pupils individual textbook in all subjects

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

3.2.2 Poor Learning Environment

We discussed in one of the earlier units that during the UPE programmes, there were shortage of classrooms, tables and chairs. This was due to inadequate planning as the number of pupils that turned up for admission was much more than what was planned. There are still many schools around today without adequate classrooms.

In some cases, rainstorms have removed the roof of many of the classrooms. Some of the classrooms have become so dilapidated that they are no longer habitable. The result is that the few rooms, available are overcrowded. In such a situation, the rooms become stuffy and too noisy for any effective teaching and learning to take place. Have you ever seen such a situation where about sixty or more pupils are packed in a room? They are common in the urban centres where there is usually inadequacy of classrooms.

There are also situations when the location of the school will not be particularly conducive to good academic work. There are some schools that are either too close to or are located within the market places in the urban centres. The noise and other distractions often make it difficult for effective teaching and learning to take place in such places.

In some other places, the schools are located in slums where pupils and teachers have to wade through refuse dumps, dirty stream and gutters before they can get into their classrooms. There are places where people even use the school compound as highways.

All these things make the school compound not only dirty and unattractive but also not learner friendly. They even affect the ego and morale of both the teachers and their pupils. This may also be one of the reasons why teachers are looked down upon in the societies. Whereas their counterpart in the in the ministry or companies are working in beautiful and attractive offices with all modern amenities, here they are in slums without chairs and tables.

This is an important area to address in the UBE programme. Our primary school buildings and surroundings should be beautiful and attractive. The 19th and early 20th Centuries school buildings should be replaced with modern ones. We should try to be more economical in the way we claim to spend millions of Naira on a few classrooms which do not last till the end of a session.

There should be a very good but more cost - effective ways of constructing the classrooms that will serve the purpose of the 21st Century. The school environment should be made more learner and also teacher friendly. The type of environment where one works often affects the pride, the dignity and the productivity of the workers. So, the UBE should give us more modern school buildings.

4.0 Conclusion

The previous UPE programmes in Nigeria had a great plans of making education accessible to all children of school age in Nigeria. However, there were some obstacles which were not adequately taken care of in the programmes.

As you have already learnt, the obstacles made it difficult to achieve the desired goals of the programmes. Since the current UBE programmes has got some past programmes to learn from, it is expected that necessary steps will be taken to avoid the past mistakes.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you have learnt some factors which may serve as obstacles to the achievement of the UBE goals and objectives. You specially learnt that poor teachers' preparation, lack of dedication on the part of the teachers, poor motivation of teachers, lack of adequate materials and facilities and inadequate supervision could affect the success of the UBE. We also discussed what can be done to prevent the repeat of the past programme failure.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

7.0 Reference/Further Reading

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

Unit 4 Problems of Pre-Primary Education in Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Objectives

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

- Identify five problems of pre-primary education in Nigeria
- Suggest ways of doing away with such problems.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Accessibility

3.1.1 Urban Centres

We have discussed how pre — primary education was introduced into Nigeria first through the Christian Missionaries. We also discussed how the pre-school establishment started in GRAs n Urban centres with large concentration of foreigners. After some time, Nigerians who have travelled abroad and are now back home as well as those who are top civil servant started sending their children to pre- primary schools.

I am sure you will remember what led to the expansion of pre-primary schools in Nigeria after independence and at the end of the Nigerian Civil War. For instance after independence, there were new tertiary institutions such as the universities of lie, Nsuka, Lagos and ABU. All these new universities had many foreigners and Nigerians who wanted pre-school education for their children. This in a way led to the increase in the number of pre-primary schools.

Do not also forget that the rate of industrial development increased after independence. This also led to the coming of many foreigners and their families who needed pre- school educational institution for the children. After civil war in 1970, there was a higher rate of industrial activities with many Nigerian men and women securing good jobs. While the married working women needed places to keep their children, the men then had enough money to send their children to pre- primary schools.

As you have already learnt, the pre — primary schools were springing up mainly in the urban centres. Since the existing good ones were too few to take all those who were interested, many Sub - standard pre - primary schools started to spring up. If you take time to go round some major cities in many parts of Nigeria today, you will see many of them in

both completed and uncompleted residential buildings. We shall discuss this aspect of the problem later.

The increase in the number of pre- primary schools should have been a thing of joy to all of us. However, as many as they are in the urban centres, many children of pre- school age still do not have access to such schools. In other words, the pre-school establishments are accessible only to families with incomes that are above average.

As a result of the high fees charged in the pre- primary schools. Many parents cannot afford to send their children. This is why the larger percentage of pre — school aged children even in the urban centres cannot receive pre- school education. For example, in a survey of some Local Government Areas by UNICEF, it was discovered that only about 2.0 percent of pre- school age children were attending pre- school establishments. This means that about 98 percent of pre- school age children are not having access to pre — school education in those LGAS. This means that majority of Nigerian pre- school children are not having the necessary stimulation and encouragement which they need for their proper development.

Unfortunately, these children who have no access 'to pre — primary school establishments are mainly from home environment that are not only unstimulating but also not child friendly.

Although, we do not have a statistical data that covers the whole country, yet we can say that there may not be much difference from what we have for those Local Government Areas.

3.1.2 Rural Areas

In our discussion of the development of pre-primary education, we said they were started first in the urban centres. Even the post-independence expansions were concentrated in the urban centres. This means that right from the beginning, the rural areas have never been included in the list of places to be covered. Why do you think this should be so? Well, the answer is simple. It is because the people establishing them want to have the schools in the urban. They believe that only people in the urban centres can pay their fees.

The rural children are therefore deprived the opportunity of receiving the early stimulation and encouragement which their counterpart in urban centres are enjoying. That is not all. Even the very few preprimary schools available in some of the urban areas are not accessible to majority of the children. In the UNICEF survey which we mentioned earlier on, only about 0.7 per cent of normal children have access to preschool education. That means 99.3 per cent do not have access to preprimary education. Since the majority of children in the rural areas have no access to pre- school education, we can say that majority of preschool age children in Nigeria have no access to preschool education. This is based on the fact that the populations of such children are greater in rural areas than in the urban areas.

And by simple calculation, it means that in the local Government Areas covered by UNICEF, only $2.0 + 0.7$ (i.e. 2.7) percent (for urban and rural areas) children of pre- schools age attend pre-primary schools.

This is not a good thing for us in Nigeria. If we considered the fact that majority of people living in the rural areas are poor illiterates who cannot provide the necessary stimulation and encouragement for their children, then the absence of pre-school education to the

children who need it most is a very serious problem. The implication is that majority of the rural pre-school age children will have their rate of motivation retarded during this important formative period of their lives.

Thus, their chances of achieving their potential are greatly reduced. Such children who lack the right opportunities at home for their development should be the first to receive, pre-school education as an intervention programme.

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

Self-Assessment Exercise I

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

3.1.3 Solution to the problem of Access

In our discussion of the development of pre-primary education we mentioned the Oyo State Primary Education Board's Initiative. If you still remember, we said that Oyo (SPEB) started a programme of running pre-school education as a section of the public primary school.

Although this experiment is limited to a few schools in the state, yet we could say it is a right step in the attempt to make pre - school education accessible to all children. In other words, one of the ways of making pre-school education accessible to majority of all pre-school age children in Nigeria is for State and Local Government to make pre- school education a section of the public primary schools. Even if it will just be a few schools in each Local Government Area, it will go a long way in helping the poor parent to give their children pre- school education.

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

The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should be further encouraged to established low-cost pre-primary schools particularly in the deprived areas. In our discussion earlier on, we discussed the activities of OMEP (Nigeria).

We specifically mentioned the establishment of pre- primary schools near market places, and in the rural areas. Government as well as individual, associations and communities can assist the NGO's with money and other materials. The NGOs have been doing a great work not only in Nigeria but throughout the world. Any assistance therefore could further make it possible for them to reach out to more areas where children have been deprived of many things including early childhood education.

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

However, there is still the need for proper awareness programme for all our people. There are many parents in both urban and rural areas who do not know the importance of pre-school education for their children. Without adequate information given to the masses on the good things their children can derive from the pre-school establishments-therefore, all the means at the disposal of the government should be used to educate, inform and enlighten parents and guardians on the importance of pre-school education.

Apart from using the radio and television, the officials of the information unit of the Ministry of Information, and the Local Government should be sent out to do village to village visit and pass the information across. This is necessary otherwise, even if the preprimary schools are free, many parents may not send their children there.

3.2 Human and Materials Resources

3.2.1 Staffing

As you are already aware, the National Policy on Education stipulated that private efforts will be encouraged to establish pre- primary schools in Nigeria. This means that government at all levels may not be directly involved in the establishment and management of pre-primary school.

Therefore, since the private individuals and organizations that establish such school wants to make profit, they often do not employ the right calibre of teachers. In some cases, the numbers of staff are reduced to save cost. So it should not be a surprise if you get to a pre-primary school class in any part of Nigeria and find only a teacher without a helper. In some cases, non-professionally qualified teachers are appointed to teach in many of the pre-primary schools. Do you know why? It is simply because the untrained teachers could take any salary which the professionally qualified teachers may reject.

A survey conducted by the Situation and Policy Analysis of Basic Education in Nigeria (SAPA) sometimes ago showed that about 25% of teachers in the sampled schools had NCE. The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) is the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria. But let me quickly add here that it is not every NCE teacher or even University graduate in Education that are competent to teach at the preprimary school.

The various Ministries of Education which are in charge of the registration and supervision of pre- primary schools are not really doing much in this respect. I am not sure the ministry of education official conducts regular supervision of the school to find out the teachers qualifications.

So, the suggestion we can offer here is that the ministry, of education should insist on having professionally qualified and competent teachers for the pre-primary schools. If they only depend on the information supplied on their registration, the true situation would not be

declared. The only solution is for the officials to conduct regular inspection and personnel audits of the pre-primary school establishments. If the pre-primary schools are not having qualified teachers, the children will not be having what they need for their all-around development. That will be as bad as not even going to the preprimary school at all.

3.2.2 Facilities and Instructional Materials

If you have seen many of the pre-primary school establishment around, you would have noticed that many are operating from private residential buildings. That is, many of the nursery schools are not operating in ideal school environments. You often see the so-called Nursery schools primary putting children in very badly ventilated rooms.

Thus, the children are deemed the open air and open spaces to play, run and jump. You may see a few swings or slide boards which are fixed outside. These few outdoor play materials are even fixed in dangerous places in most of the school. So in a way, we can say that most of the preprimary schools in Nigeria do not operate in conducive learning environment. If the schools that are operated in private residential buildings are in spacious places, it could have been manageable.

Apart from the unsuitable buildings many of the nursery schools lack other essential materials which should be available in such schools. For example, many schools do not have adequate chairs and tables, rest-rooms, and other play material. As you are aware children in primary school should learn through play.

However, where the necessary instructional materials are not available for the children, teachers often do formal teaching which is not good for this level of education. A study by SAPA has revealed that the chalkboard is the most commonly found material in our pre-primary schools. This actually supports the claim that the pre-primary schools engage mostly in formal teaching of the children.

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

4.0 Conclusion

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

5.0 Summary

In this unit, we have discussed the various problems confronting preprimary education in Nigeria. Many children do not attend preprimary schools in Nigerian because the schools

are not available in their areas. Some also cannot pay the high fees charged in the schools because their parent are poor.

You also learnt what government at all levels should do to ensure that pre-school education is made available to all children no matter their socio-economic background. Finally you have learnt in the unit the inadequacy of competent teachers and facilities in most pre-primary schools in Nigeria and what should be done about it. In the next unit, you will learn how to start a nursery school.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

7.0 Reference/Further Reading

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

Unit 5 How to Start a Pre-Primary School

1.0 Introduction

In Nigeria, the establishment and management of pre-primary schools is mainly done by private, individuals, groups and organizations. This however does not mean there are no rules and regulations guiding the establishment of pre-primary schools. Therefore in order to receive the official permission to open a pre-school establishment, there are certain requirements.

In this unit, we are going to examine those regulations guiding the establishment of pre-primary school in Nigeria. Although, there are minor variations in the States particularly as they relate to the registration procedure, yet there are still some general requirements. If these requirements are known, then it will be easier for you to start a pre- primary school if you like.

2.0 Objectives

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

- explain the General requirement for starting a pre-primary school.
- identify other human and material resources necessary for starting a pre- primary school.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 General Requirement

3.1.1 Premises/Location

In some of the earlier units, we have discussed the problem of inadequacy in the number of pre-primary schools we have in Nigeria. This means that we still need more so that more Nigerian pre- school age children could have access to pre-school education.

As a specialist in Earlier Childhood education, you should be familiar with the necessary things to do in setting up a good pre-primary school. The first step in starting a pre-primary school is to make a feasibility study as the business people will say. That is you must first of all find out the possibility of pre-primary school being required or needed in the particular areas So, the first thing you should do is to find out the following:

The population density of the area

For instance, are there many families with many pre-school age children in the areas? If the answer is yes, the next thing is to find out the general level of education and occupation of the parents. This is necessary because if the area is a predominantly illiterate and agrarian

community, it may have some implications for the number of children that will be allowed to attend the school.

The next thing is to find out the number of the existing pre-primary schools in the areas. If there is none or if the existing ones are deficient in certain ways, this might be a good reason for you to open a new school there.

When you are satisfied that there is need for a pre- primary school in the areas, then the next thing is to look for the premises.

The premises

The premises should be suitable and safe for children. For example, the place must be easily accessible to children and their parents. It must be safe in terms of not being too close to the highway, in term of children being free from kidnappers, dangerous animals and reptiles etc. Then, the premises must be airy and the environment not polluted. It should be clean and not too close to a market or a factory.

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

3.1.2 Physical Facilities

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

Building must conform to the following standards:

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

From the above list, you may be thinking it is only the normal classroom buildings that can be used. This may be so for a start. All the things mentioned above are for the permanent site. A large hall or building can be partitioned appropriately to meet the needs. This is usually the case when the building has a large open hall.

As regard the residential building, there are some that are not suitable. You will have to see to it yourself that whatever building you are using is well ventilated.

As regards the furniture, the guideline on pre-primary education stipulates that the chairs and tables should be suitable for the ages and sizes of the children. Moreover, such tables and chairs should be made of polished wood of Formica surface and should be light materials. There should be no sharp edges. Why do you think the materials should be light?

In addition to these, there should be a large table with drawers for teachers use. Provision should be made for book racks and toy storage in every classroom.

The last thing as regard physical facilities is the playground. Although most pre-primary school establishments particularly, those in residential building often lack this. This is not good since children need much space to run and play. This is why the Federal Ministry of Education has specifically listed some items that should be available on the playground.

These are:

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

3.1.3 Learning/Play and Other Materials

We have just identified some of the physical facilities that are expected in a standard pre-primary school. Just like I told you earlier on, for a start, you may not be able to provide all of them. However, this does not mean you can start pre-primary school without having some of the facilities. In fact, the State Ministry of Education may refuse the registration of your school for that simple reason of inadequate facilities.

As much as the physical facilities are necessary, the play and others learning materials are equally important. For example, it is not enough to have all the physical facilities in place without the real materials that will be used to stimulate the children. If you will still remember, we said in another unit that play is one of the most natural needs of children.

This is why Froebel and other child educators emphasized the need to provide the children with a wide variety of materials through which they can be actively engaged in play activities

that will bring about the development of some concepts and skills. You will also still recall that formal learning or formal instruction has little place in the pre-primary school.

Therefore, since play is very fundamental to whatever learning that takes place with variety of materials. Such materials must include those that are necessary for the development of gross physical skills such as running, jumping, climbing etc.

Similarly there are those that are needed for the development of fine motor skills that is fingers and wrist. We must not forget also that there are those that are needed for the intellectual, social and emotional development of the child among others. Therefore, you can see that it is not just one or two materials but a wide variety of them that are needed to help children develop maximally. We shall only make an attempt here to indicate some of the materials. The list is not limited to those given here. You must find out more on your own.

- For gross motors skills
- Materials to be provided here should include those that will provide opportunities for climbing, swinging, hopping, jumping and running and others. e.g. Climbing frames, sliding boards, swings, rocking horse, seesaw, hoops and ropes etc.
- Fine motor skills-material here should include those that will encourage throwing catching, cutting, threading, painting, drawing etc. Such materials therefore school include small balls, bean bags, beads and stings for threading, counting flamel, crayon, pencil and papers, weighing scales etc.
- Intellectual skills. This is probably where you need the most diversified material to provide the rich experience the child needs. In this regard, the following among others are necessary:-Toys of various shapes, columns and sizes, for counting modelling, construction etc.; water and dry sand trough, children's literature, blocks, colour sorting and matching materials etc.

Self-Assessment Exercise I

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

3.2 Personnel and Administration

3.2.1 Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

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

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

- A trained qualified teacher with at least five years' experience in lower primary classes, or the Montessori, Diploma certificate or Diploma of any Universities or Colleges of Education.
- A Grade II Teachers Certificate with Associateship Certificate in Education (ACE) of any recognized Nigerian University with specialization in pre-primary Education
- A Grade II certificate with Montessori Diploma
- A Grade II Teacher with any of the following certificates or diplomas of any recognized university or college of education
 1. National Froebel foundation course
 2. NCE pre—primary/primary of any Nigerian or other university.
- Ministry of Education certificate U. K —2- 3 years
- B.Ed, B.A (Education) with specialization in pre-primary education
- Any other qualification in early childhood education approved by the Federal Ministry of Education.

As regards the class teachers, the Federal Ministry of Education recommended that the qualifications listed for the Head teachers would also be appropriate for them. However, in addition, Grade In and Grade II teachers could be allowed to teach there. But now that the NCE has become the minimum teaching qualification, it may be necessary to limit the qualification of teachers for pre-primary school to that. I will personally not recommend grade II teachers except those with not less than ten or 15 years teaching experience.

The non-teaching staff which we normally refer to as Nursery Helpers could have any of the following:- Modern III certificate holders, Pre 1976 standard six certificate holders, and Primary six certificate holders. May be we can include J.S III certificate holders or those who failed their SSC examinations.

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

3.2.2 Finance and Administration

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

- Personal saving
- Loans
- School fees and other levies
- donations/gift from individuals and groups.
- Internally generated revenue through money collected on school property such as Bus, hall rented out etc.

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

To start a pre-primary school and to equip it adequately a big sum of money may be required. This is going by the present cost of living generally in Nigeria. This however will depend on whether you are starting with an existing building or newly constructed one. Therefore, it is difficult to say exactly how much you will need. But just be sure that you need some reasonable amount of money to start.

In the day to day administration of the school, much depends on the proprietor and the Head teacher. In many cases, the Head teacher is in-charge of academic programmes while the proprietor/proprietress is in-charge of the other aspect of financial transaction.

Whatever the situation, there must be a Board of Governors which will be responsible for taking major decisions on the affairs of the school generally. There should also be the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA). This body is purely in an advisory capacity. The membership is open to all parents and the guardians of children in the school as well as the teachers. On the other hand, the Board of Governors membership is based on the nomination by the proprietors of the school. They are usually men and women with great experience and interest in education.

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

- Admission Register
- Attendance Register

- Log Book
- Visitor's Book
- Pupils progress (Continuous Assessment) Cards
- Diary of work etc.

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

3.2.3 Registration

As mentioned earlier on, the registration of pre-primary school education centres is the responsibility of state government. Specifically, the State Ministry of Education is responsible for giving the approval to open the school. The procedure as we said earlier on may vary a little from state to state. But generally speaking the following procedures are followed.

First, the prospective proprietor will obtain the registration forms from the Ministry of Education at specified fees. The fees which vary from state to state are also subject to review from time to time.

So after collecting and returning the forms to the Ministry, the Ministry will now inspect the site and the existing facilities to ensure that they are adequate. In this regard, two others Ministries will be involved in the inspections. These are the Ministry of Works and Housing. This Ministry is to ensure that the buildings are put up in conformity with the specifications approved for that level of education. In addition, this Ministry will ensure that safety standards are complied with.

The Ministry of Health on the other hand will see to the health aspect of the school. That is, are the necessary toilet and other health facilities provided? They will also ensure that the classrooms are well ventilated and there are no health hazards in the school environment generally. They will also look at the food vendors, etc.

It is only when the Ministries are satisfied with the facilities in addition to the Ministry of Education's recommendation on the staff, the academic programme etc. that the approval can be given. The registration, is however not a once affair. That is, it has to be renewed yearly. Similarly, there will be regular inspection of the school. The school can be closed down at any time by the Commissioner of Education if the school fails to meet the required standard.

4.0 Conclusion

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

5.0 Summary

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

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

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

7.0 References/Further Reading

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

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