

## **MODULE 2            ISSUES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION**

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### **UNIT 1            MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION CONTENTS**

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#### **1.0    INTRODUCTION**

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

#### **2.0    OBJECTIVES**

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

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

## HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

Read through this unit carefully. Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged

**NOTE: All Answers to Activities and Assignment are at the of end THIS Book.**

### 3.0 WORD STUDY

**Primary Education:** The word primary education means first. Thus, one could simply refer to primary education as the first level of education where formal teaching and learning in the acquisition of permanent literacy and numeracy skills takes place.

### 4.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 4.1 Meaning of Primary Education

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

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

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

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

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), primary education is the education given in an institution to children aged 6 to 11<sup>+</sup> years. This means that in

Nigeria, a child must be at least six years old before he/she can start receiving the first formal education. In addition, the child must remain in school for six years to complete this very important level of education.

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

## **4.2 The Purpose/Importance of Primary Education**

The importance of primary education has been recognised over the ages. This is an event in the various declarations and assertions by groups and individuals on primary education across the globe. At the global level, the United Nations General Assembly, as far back as 1948, stated among other things, made the Declaration that everyone has the right to education, which shall be free and compulsory at the primary level. Similarly, African leaders that met at Addis Ababa in 1961 on the development of education on the continent agreed that all governments must work towards the provision of free and compulsory six years primary education to all their citizens latest by 1980.

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

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

### **(i) Development of Numeracy and Literacy Skills**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

improve their living and productivity is enhanced with the acquisition of the basic skills of literacy right from the primary school.

(iv) **Poverty Reduction**

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

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

(v) **Political and Civil Education**

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

(iv) **Providing Support Staff**

There is no private or government establishment that would like to recruit illiterates even as drivers, cleaners, messengers and so on now. This is because of the popular belief that a good primary education will enhance the efficacy and effectiveness of every category of the unskilled labour which constitute the bulk of the labour force in the society. Since we cannot all be masters or

experts, it follows that experts in various fields will always require the services of the artisans, drivers, cleaners and messengers. Those who have attained at least the primary level of education will thus be more useful in those capacities.

### **4.3 Expansion of Primary Education**

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

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

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

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

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

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

- strength partnerships in the provision of basic education through collaboration, cooperation and coordination.

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

### **5.0 ACTIVITY**

1. Explain the meaning of primary education.
2. Enumerate the benefits of primary education to the individual, the community and the nation.

### **6.0 ASSIGNMENT**

1. Highlight the importance of expansion.

### **7.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt that primary education:

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

Akinbote, O., Oduolowu, E. & Lawal, B. (2001). *Pre-Primary and Primary Education in Nigeria: A Basic Text*. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nigeria) Limited.

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**UNIT 2      GLOBAL CHALLENGES TO PRIMARY EDUCATION****CONTENTS**

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

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

**HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT**

Read through this unit carefully. Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged

**NOTE: All Answers to Activities and Assignment are at the of end this Book.**

### 3.0 WORD STUDY

**Conflict:** This refers to crisis, problems, as a result of human clashes, wars and civil unrest.

**Poverty:** This means a state of lack, insufficient, inability to provide basic needs for human consumption and welfare.

### 4.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 4.1 Major Challenges to Primary Education

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

As noted by Burns, *et al.* (2003), this echoes the commitment by the countries that met in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 to achieve universal primary education by the year 2000. However, for some unforeseen problems, this was not possible hence the commitment was reaffirmed and extended to 2015 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in the year 2000.

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

#### 4.2 Poor Performance of Primary Education

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

##### (a) National and International Conflicts

The various conflicts, be it local, national or international, particularly in the developing countries, have had adverse effects on primary education. Such conflicts often make regular attendance at school impossible thereby affecting the academic achievement of the pupils. Similarly, the destruction of available facilities and infrastructures which have to be replaced means the money which could have been spent in primary education will be diverted to other areas. This has often left many primary schools without adequate classrooms, furniture for teachers and pupils as well as instructional materials. In Nigeria

for example, it is not difficult to find school children in such areas sitting on the floor and learning outside under the shade of trees.

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

**(b) Natural Disasters**

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

**(c) Extreme Poverty**

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

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

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

Thousands of parents have died of HIV/AIDS thereby making schooling difficult for their children. In the same way, many teachers and educational personnel have died or destabilised by AIDS. This have in various ways affected the effective teaching and learning in schools. We may not be having

the impact of HIV/AIDS as much as some other countries do, yet this does not mean it does not happen in Nigeria.

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

**(e) Too Large Classes**

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

**(f) Lack of Adequate Materials**

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

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

**(g) Inadequate Teacher Education Programme**

It is not an overstatement that many teachers in the primary schools have not been appropriately trained. Many of the primary school teachers are deficient not only in the use of appropriate methods of teaching, but also lack adequate knowledge of the subject matter. In Nigeria, for instance, the number of Colleges of Education running both the regular and sandwich programmes have risen considerably in the last decade. This is due to the policy of making the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) the minimum teaching qualification in our primary schools. Therefore, to cope with the increase in the demand for

places in the Colleges of Education, Study Centres were created in different places. This is without due consideration to available facilities and the qualified manpower to teach the various courses. As a matter of fact, many individuals have seen this as a money making venture. They just open centres in collaboration with the colleges and recruit whoever cares to come to the centres as lecturers. We are all witnesses to the poor quality of teaching and learning taking place at such centres. As noted by Akinbote (1999), products of such programmes are half-baked teachers who often go to the classroom to mis-educate and confuse the learners.

**(h) Inconsistency in Government Policy**

This could be traced to the political and socio-economic instability in many of the developing countries. The frequent changes in government policy has done much harm to the education system generally, and primary education in particular. The experience of Nigerian primary education between 1988 and 1993 is a good example of how inconsistency in government policy can destroy any level of education. The public primary schools in Nigeria are yet to fully recover from the damage done to them during the period in question. In many states of the country today, the population of the public primary schools has not improved appreciably as a result of the loss of confidence in it by the general public.

**4.3 Meeting the Challenges of Primary Education**

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

**(i) Teachers**

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

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

**(ii) An Enabling Learning Environment**

For children to learn effectively, it is necessary to provide them a child-friendly school environment. There should be appropriate personnel, materials and facilities as well as a conducive social and political climate. As observed by UNESCO (2001), hardly do we have any resources left to provide teaching and learning materials after paying teachers' salaries. This is not good enough. There must be adequate facilities and materials for children's performance to remain unhampered. There should be collaboration between the school and the communities so that they can provide some of the needed materials. As it is now known, government alone cannot do it hence the cooperation and assistance of individuals, groups and communities will go a long way in making our primary schools learner friendly. We must create a favourable and enabling environment where all children can learn in our schools.

**(iii) Government's Commitment to Educational Quality**

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

**(iv) Ensuring Adequate Support Systems for Education**

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

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

### **5.0 ACTIVITY**

1. Identify and explain the challenges of primary education in Nigeria.
2. Suggest ways of meeting the challenges as they affect Nigerian primary school.

### **6.0 ASSIGNMENT**

1. Identify four challenges facing the primary education in Nigeria.

### **7.0 SUMMARY**

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

- Conflicts at the local, national and international levels
- Natural disasters
- Extreme poverty
- The impact of HIV/AIDS and other chronic diseases
- Too large classes
- Lack of adequate materials
- Teachers' ineffectiveness and lack of dedication.

### **8.0 REFERENCES**

Burns, B; Mingat, A. &Rakotomalala, R. (2003).*Achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015*. Washington D.C: World Bank.

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## UNIT 3 GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

### CONTENTS

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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

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

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

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

### HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

Read through this unit carefully. Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged

**NOTE: All Answers to Activities and Assignment are at the of end this Book.**



### 3.0 WORD STUDY

**Gender-** refers to the psychological attributes of human being as female and males.

**Gender equality-** in education it means equal educational opportunities to boys and girls alike.

**Sex-** refers to the biological attributes of males and females.

### 4.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 4.1 The Concept of Gender Parity and Equality in Education

As you are already aware, God created (Adam) man and woman (Eve). That is, the world is populated by men and women, boys and girls. It is this psychological attributes of human beings as male and female that is referred to as gender. Sex on the other hand refers to the biological attributes of males and females (Burns, 2003).

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

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

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

- Equality of opportunities in the sense that boys and girls are offered the same chances to access school without gender-based attitudes by parents, teachers and society
- Equality in the learning process – that is, boys and girls receive the same treatment and attention, follow the same curriculum, enjoy teaching methods and tools free of stereotypes and gender bias, they are offered counselling not affected by gender biases, profit from the same quantity and quality.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **4.2 Gender Disparity in Education**

As mentioned in the last section, different societies and cultures in the world view males and females differently. This is particularly noticeable in the expectations of what males and females are to do in the society. This is what some people refer to as

gender roles. According to Berns (2004), gender roles are qualities that individuals understand and that characterise males and females in their culture.

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

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

(i) **Culture on Inheritance**

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

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

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

(ii) **The Threat to Female Chastity**

Females particularly in African societies are expected to abstain from all forms of sexual intercourse before marriage. That is, they are expected to remain

pure, simple and virtuous. Therefore, they are to be protected from anything that will expose them to all forms of activities that will make them loose their chastity. It is not surprising therefore to find many Africans presenting their female children from going to school. They believe that the schools through their academic and extra curricula activities could open up their daughters to immoral activities.

(iii) **Women's Economic Value in Bride Wealth**

There are some communities in Nigeria where early marriage is encouraged among the females because of certain cultural and economic reasons. Culturally, some believe that as soon as the girl child attains puberty, she has no business staying with the parents again. That is, she should go to her husband. In such communities, such children are often withdrawn from school for marriage. This perception finds succinct expression in Alhassan (1990; 44-45). In some Muslim communities in Nigeria, it is the custom that girls marry at puberty, and therefore are withdrawn from school. A girl is considered nubile once she is 12 years old. A girl who remains unmarried after 14 may not find a male partner. Parents do not want their girls left on the shelf so that even ages below 10 are given away in marriage usually against their wishes. Child marriage used to be the norm among the Igbos, Yorubas and Ibibios until the demands of western education pushed up the age of girls eligible for marriage. The practice is still common in some African countries till today

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

(iv) **Fear of Insubordination to Male Authority**

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

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

### 4.3 Eliminating Gender Disparity in Education

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

In a bid to eliminate gender inequality and discrimination in education, the UBE programme in Nigeria has made the reduction in gender, access and equity disparities in basic education its objectives. Moreover, the National Policy on Education (NPE) Blueprint (1999) has specified certain steps to be taken to reduce, and if possible, eradicate gender disparity in education. These include:

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

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

**(i) Legislation on Girl-Child Education**

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

**(ii) Special Incentives for Girl Education**

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

**(iii) Empowerment of Indigent Parents**

We mentioned earlier that poverty sometimes force many parents to withdraw their female children from school or prevent them from going altogether. A way out of this is to empower such parents through the provision of soft loans to support their businesses or occupations. The granting of such loans should not be tied to anything such as religions, political or ethnic considerations. In addition, the loans which should be a revolving one should be interest free and without too stringent conditions.

**(iv) Celebration of Successful Women**

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

**5.0 ACTIVITY**

1. Identify the types and causes of genders inequality in primary education.
2. Suggest ways of ensuring gender balance in primary education in Nigeria.

**6.0 Assignment**

1. Explain the concept Gender, and gender equality in education.

**7.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- gender refers to the psychological attributes of human beings as females and males
- gender equality in education means equal educational opportunities to boys and girls alike
- the causes of gender discrimination in education could be due to:

- a. cultural and religious practices
  - b. threat to female chastity
  - c. women economic value in bride wealth
  - d. fear of girls getting out of hand.
- the problem of discrimination against female education could be eliminated through:
    - a. special legislation
    - b. special incentives for girls in schools
    - c. empowerment of indigent female students
    - d. celebration of successful women.

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## UNIT 4 FREE MID-DAY MEAL IN SCHOOL

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Word Study
- 4.0 Main Content
  - 4.1 Importance of Mid-Day Meal for School Children
  - 4.2 Implementing the Mid-Day Meal Programme
- 5.0 Activities
- 6.0 Assignment
- 7.0 Summary
- 8.0 References

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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

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

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

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

### HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

Read through this unit carefully. Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged

**NOTE: All Answers to Activities and Assignment are at the of end this Book.**

### 3.0 WORD STUDY

**Mid-Meal:** This refers to free meal (food) given to all primary school children on school days throughout the year.

**Balanced Diet:**It consists of a combination all essential food items that an individual needs when eating a meal. E.g. Carbohydrate, protein, fat, oils, vitamins and vegetables as well as fruits.



## 4.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 4.1 Importance of Mid-Day Meal for School Children

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

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

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

#### (i) **Enhancement of Educational Achievement of School Children**

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

Therefore, if the children from economically marginalized families could be provided mid-day meals in school, their nutrition level could be upgraded. This will, to a reasonable extent, help to enhance their educational achievement. As you have been told in one of the earlier units, the academic achievement of primary school children has, according to UNESCO, fallen below expectation in many of the developing countries. Poverty has been identified as one of the major factors responsible for the poor quality of

primary education. When parents are too poor to provide the basic needs like good nutrition of their school children, it will be difficult for the children to excel in their school activities. In such circumstances, the provision of free mid-day meal to children in all public primary schools will help the children from classroom hunger.

**(ii) Increasing School Enrolment and Attendance**

One of the ways of ensuring minimal wastage in primary education is to sustain the enrolment and attendance of pupils. As mentioned earlier on, there are many school-age children who are not in school as a result of the poverty of their parents. Similarly many of those who are enrolled in school are not regular in attendance. A former Minister of Education in India was once quoted as asking some boys busy with their cows and goats why they did not go to school? One of the boys was said to have answered by saying, if I go to school, will you give me food? This boy's answer sparked the process of establishing the mid-day meal programme in Indian public primary schools.

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

**(iii) Reduction of Child Labour and Child Abuse**

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

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

**(iv) Social and Economic Empowerment**

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

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

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

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

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

**4.2 Implementing the Mid-Day Meal Programme**

You have just learnt some of the benefits of the free mid-day meal programme. In order to achieve the desired results, the implementation of the school mid-day meal programme has to be properly planned and implemented. If it is not well-planned,

managed and supervised, there may be nothing to show for it in terms of benefits to the individual, the community and the government. Some of the factors to planning, management and supervision of the programme include:

- a. **Implementation** – The implementation of the free-mid-day meal programme should be the responsibility of the state governments. However, the local governments that are closer to the rural schools should be actively involved. First, there should be a separate board like health board or nutrition board manned only by health and nutrition experts. There should be local government offices to be in charge of preparation and distribution of food to the schools in each local government area. The local government offices should equally be manned by health and nutrition officers who will not only supervise the preparation of the food but also ensure its quality in terms of following:
  - hygienic preparation of the meal
  - adherence to the menu
  - sufficiency in terms of quantity to go round all the children for whom it is intended
  - nutritional value of the meal to ensure that whatever is given to the children is a balanced diet
  - practicing good food habits by ensuring that children keep to the rules of hygiene before, during and after the meal
  - prevention of wastage at both the points of preparation and serving to the children
  - proper methods of waste disposal.
- b. **The preparation of the meal** - Since it will be too expensive in terms of time, money and men to prepare the food in each school, a central kitchen system could be introduced. For example in a city such as Ibadan, with about six local government areas within the city, there could be two central kitchens strategically located to serve three local governments each. Each kitchen should be able to cater for about 50 to 70 thousand children. This may be adequate for easy management. There is the world's largest central kitchen at Hyderabad in India (spread over two acres with built up area of 14,000 square feet) which prepares mid-day meal for 880 schools in twin cities benefiting 1.3 million children daily. This may be difficult for a start in Nigeria where the programme has yet to gain popularity and acceptance. In some other areas, a local government area with about 30,000 to 50,000 school children could have a separate kitchen of its own. Other local government areas with smaller population could team up to have a central kitchen for the preparation of school mid-day meals.

- c. **Funding** – The mid-day meal is a capital intensive programme. Therefore, the funding should not be left to the state governments alone. The federal government should be responsible for at least 50 to 70 per cent of the total cost. In fact, there could be a statutory allocation for this programme from the federation account. The state and local governments are also to contribute towards the project.

Other sources of funding the project could be the international organisations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, African Development Bank (ADB) etc. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), business groups, communities and other philanthropists could also participate in the funding.

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

## 5.0 ACTIVITY

1. Explain the importance of balance mid-day meal for school children.
2. Suggest ways of making free meal available to school children in Nigeria.

## 6.0 ASSIGNMENT

1. Highlight the preparation of the food in terms of ensuring good quality.

## 7.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Mid-day meal involves providing free meal to all public primary school children on school days throughout the year
- The advantages of the mid-day meal include:
  - a) enhancement of educational achievement of school children
  - b) increasing school enrolment, attendance and completion rate
  - c) reduction of child labour and child abuse
  - d) social and economic empowerment
  - e) promotion of good practices in food consumption and health;
- The implementation of the programme should be done by the state governments and the local governments after proper planning with respect to the:
  - a) recruitment and training of personnel
  - b) establishment of central kitchens
  - c) preparation of the meals
  - d) monitoring and supervision of the programme
- The financing of the project should be done mainly by the federal government with contributions from the state, local governments, international organisations, NGOs, local communities and philanthropists.

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## UNIT 5      HOMEWORK IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Word Study
- 4.0 Main Content
  - 4.1 Meaning and Importance of Homework
  - 4.2 Types of Homework
- 5.0 Conclusion
- 6.0 Assignment
- 7.0 Summary
- 8.0 References

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

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

### HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT

Read through this unit carefully. Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

**NOTE: All Answers to Activities and Assignment are at the of end this Book.**

### 3.0 WORD STUDY

**Homework:** It is a tool that teachers use to help learners review and practice what they have learnt in the school.

## 4.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 4.1 Meaning and Importance of Homework

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

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

- (i) **Extending student exploration of topics more fully than class time permits.** As you are aware, the duration of a lesson period in the primary school is 35 minutes. This therefore means that the teacher must do all his teaching and explanation within the period. There are however some topics which may require more time to complete, but which the teacher may not be able to do since other subjects have to come up. In order not to abandon the topic at that point, the teacher could give the pupils more exercises to do on it from home. This will give them the opportunity of further exploring other things to learn and do on the topic or subject.
- (ii) **Helping students gain skill in self-directed learning and using resources such as libraries and reference materials.** One of the important philosophies of teaching for every teacher is that a good teacher must not tell his students everything. This is to help the learners find out things on their own. Psychology of learning makes it clear to us that whatever a learner discovers on his own remains long in his memory than what he is told. Moreover, whatever the learner discovers, he understands better. Therefore, when teachers give homework to the learners, it helps to promote the inquiry and self-learning skills of the learners. It also encourages the learners to make use of the library and the internet in their quest for knowledge.
- (iii) **Helping students review what has been learned.** There are many children whose home background will not allow them to read at home. Some help their parents in their domestic or economic activities. Others engage in playing with their peers all day without having time for studying. However, when such children are given homework to do by their teachers, they will always find time to do it. This is particularly so when they know that their teachers will punish them if they fail to do the assignments. You must have heard your children or those of your relations or neighbours saying, "I am going to do my homework". Or sometimes, "I have not done my homework". The homework, in a way,



helps the children to go over what they have learnt in the school. This goes a long way in helping children to understand and remember better all they learnt in school.

- (iv) **Helping learners to remember and understand their school work.** When children practise something they have learnt in school at home, it promotes retention and better understanding of the principles, facts or skills learnt. We can give an illustration of this in pupils who have been taught some aspects of English grammar in the school. If they are given some exercises to do at home, they will be able to practice the use of the rules of grammar with their friends, relations or neighbours at home. In the process, they would gain more practical knowledge about those skills in grammar. Above all, through regular practice at home, they will always remember what they have been taught.
- (v) **Helping teachers to monitor pupils' progress and diagnose their problems.** When pupils are given homework to do and teachers grade them, it will give teachers an opportunity to monitor the pupils' level of understanding of the topic or subject. It will also help the teachers to ensure that the pupils practice whatever they have learnt in school at home. In addition, the individual pupil's area of difficulty or peculiar problem could be identified by the teacher. This will give the teachers the opportunity of helping the individual learners to overcome the problems.
- (vi) **Helping learners to prepare for the next class.** This is another good reason why homework should be given to pupils. When a new topic is to be taught, the teacher could ask the pupils to bring some materials needed from home. The teacher could also ask them to find out certain things on the new topic from home. For example, in a social studies lesson, the teacher is to teach a topic like Transportation next week. He could ask the pupils to:
  - (a) find out the different means of transportation by land, water and air
  - (b) find out where camels, donkeys and horses are mostly used as means of transportation in Nigeria etc.

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

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

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

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

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

## **4.2 Types of Homework**

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

**(i) Practice Homework**

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

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

**(ii) Preparation Homework**

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

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

**(iii) Extension Homework**

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

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

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

**(iv) Creative Homework**

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

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

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

**5.0 ACTIVITY**

1. Explain the meaning and importance of homework in primary education.
2. Identify the different types of homework.

**6.0 ASSIGNMENT**

1. What are the factors to be taken into consideration when giving homework to the pupils?

## 7.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Homework is a tool that teachers use to help learners study at home to review and practice what they have learned in school;
- The importance of homework includes:
  - extending students' exploration of topics fully
  - helping students gain skills in self-directed learning
  - helping students review what they have learned in school
  - helping learners to remember and understand the school work
  - helping teachers to monitor their pupils' progress
  - helping the learners to prepare for the next class
  - encouraging parents' involvement in their children's school work.
- There are four types of homework, namely:
  - practice homework
  - preparation homework
  - extension homework
  - creative homework.

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

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Word Study
- 4.0 Main Content
  - 4.1 The Benefits of Early Childhood Education
  - 4.2 Sustaining the Benefits of Pre-Primary Education in Primary Schools
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

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

### **HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT**

Read through this unit carefully. Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged

**NOTE: All Answers to Activities and Assignment are at the of end this Book.**

### **3.0 WORD STUDY**

- i. **UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- ii. **EFA:** Education For All

## 4.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 4.1 The Benefits of Early Childhood Education

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

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

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

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

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

One of the identified long term benefits of pre-primary education is that children with good pre-primary education do not usually repeat primary classes as such children are less often referred for special education. Parents of primary school children with pre-

school education background are often more satisfied with their children's performance than other mothers.

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

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

#### **4.2 Sustaining the Benefits of Pre-Primary Education in Primary Schools**

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

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

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

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

It is not an overstatement to say that the classroom and the school environment generally are crucial to a successful teaching and learning process. You must have observed the deplorable condition of physical facilities such as school buildings, library and furniture for both teachers and pupils in our public



primary schools. This is in addition to the grossly inadequate teaching and learning materials necessary for creating and encouraging a learning culture among the pupils.

Most of the good pre-primary school establishments in Nigeria are privately-owned and they provide a better learning environment than what is obtainable in public schools. Therefore, if the kind of stimulation that gives children in pre-primary schools a smooth transition from home to full-time formal schooling is to be sustained, the schools' learning environment should be improved. Since all children can learn and will learn if given adequate opportunities, our public primary schools must be made more child/learner-friendly. In this regard, appropriate personnel, materials and facilities must be made available to accompany the teaching and learning process.

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

(ii) **Effective and Efficient Teachers**

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

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

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

(iii) **Parental Support**

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

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

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

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

**(iv) Adequate Funding**

Education is a capital intensive venture. Therefore, no appreciable degree of success can be attained in the goals of education with poor or inadequate funding. To benefit fully from educational opportunities, there must be adequate and judicious use of funds. The provision of a favourable environment for learning as well as sufficient and high quality human and material resources to service primary education requires adequate funding. The government alone should not be left with the great burden of funding education. Communities, religious and non-governmental organisations should cooperate with the government in the funding of education. One should however add that, the available funds should be judiciously managed. Probably one of the problems of primary education in Nigeria is mismanagement of funds. The inordinate desire by individuals has led to the misappropriation of funds meant for primary education. Adequate steps should be taken to ensure proper monitoring of funds allocated to primary education. Anybody found to have misappropriated education funds should be punished accordingly.

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

**5.0 Activity**

1. Identify the benefits of early childhood education.
2. Explain how the primary school can sustain and build on these benefits.

**6.0 ASSIGNMENT**

1. Outline the benefits of pre-school education supported by research findings.

**7.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt the following:

- The benefits of pre-school education, supported by research findings include:
  - better transition from home to school
  - helping children to learn better than remedial programmes in later school life
  - help to establish and strengthen children's emotional maturity, language development, thinking, creative, social and physical skills
  - Prevent repetition of classes in primary schools.

- The gains of pre-primary education can be sustained in primary schools through:
  - creating a child friendly school environment
  - having effective, efficient and committed teachers
  - adequate parental support
  - adequate funding.

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## **UNIT 7      MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
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  - 4.1 The Millennium Development Goals
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  - 4.3 Universal Access, Retention and Completion Rate in Primary Education
  - 4.4 Achieving Universal Primary Completion by 2015
- 5.0 Conclusion
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

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

### **HOW TO STUDY THIS UNIT**

Read through this unit carefully. Study the unit step by step as the points are well arranged.

**NOTE: All Answers to Activities and Assignment are at the of end this Book.**

### **3.0 WORD STUDY**

**MDG:** Millennium Development Goals

**UNICEF:** United Nation International Children Emergency Fund

## 4.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 4.1 The Millennium Development Goals

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

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

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

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

### 4.2 Global Education for All Goals

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

- (a) Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. In Module 1, we have discussed the importance of early childhood education and how to make it accessible to all children in Nigeria.
- (b) Ensuring that by 2015, all children, particularly girl children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access and

complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. This is in line with the MDGs which is to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. We shall discuss this fully in the next section of this unit.

- (c) Ensuring that the learning needs of young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes. The current UBE programme in Nigeria has this goal as one of its coverage areas. Since our focus here is on primary education, we shall not discuss this EFA goal here. There may be another avenue to discuss it in this course.
- (d) Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. This goal is also covered by the present UBE programme in Nigeria.
- (e) Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015 and achieve gender equality in education, which is a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality. As you must have observed in the MDGs stated earlier on in this unit, this is goal number three. We have discussed this in one of the units in this Module under gender equality in education. You may go over it again.
- (f) Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensure excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

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

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

### 4.3 Universal Access, Retention and Completion Rate in Primary Education

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

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

#### (a) Making Primary Education Accessible

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

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

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



(b) **Retention and Completion Rate in Primary Education**

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

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

(i) **Inconsistency in Government Policy**

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

(ii) **Poverty of Parents**

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

from school to help them in their economic activities or the children drop out on their own to fend for themselves.

**(iii) Ill-Health**

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

**(iv) Illiteracy and Cultural/Religious Factors**

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

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

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

#### **4.4 Achieving Universal Primary Completion by 2015**

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

100 percent enrolment by 2015, we must equally make efforts to achieve universal primary completion by the same date.

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

(i) **Provision of Free Mid-Day Meal**

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

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

(ii) **Making the School Interesting and Learner-Friendly**

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

(iii) **Empowerment of Parents and Guardians**

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

It will be a worthwhile effort if parents could be empowered economically and socially through various poverty alleviation programmes. The Indian free mid-day meal project has been used as a means of empowering scores of jobless women and men as cooks, servers and even suppliers of various food items.

Some microcredit scheme could also be used to further enhance the income generating capacities of the parents and guardians. Political party patronage should not be introduced into such empowerment programmes.

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

In addition to making free health part of the free education programme, there must be regular visit to the schools by health workers to monitor the health condition of the pupils. Health centres should be available in every community while basic social amenities like portable water should be readily available in all communities. Public awareness campaign on the benefits of personal and environmental hygiene should be intensified to prevent most of the diseases that afflict both the pupils and their parents. There are many other things that could be done to encourage high retention and completion rates in our primary schools. You can add to the ones already discussed.

## 5.0 ACTIVITY

1. Identify the Millennium Development Goals.
2. Explain the Millennium Development Goals as they affect primary education.

## 6.0 ASSIGNMENT

1. What are the reasons for the high rate of school dropout in Nigeria?

## 7.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- There are eight Millennium Development Goals.
- The Global Education for All goals as agreed upon at the Dakar World Education Summit are:
  - Expanding/improving comprehensively early childhood care and education
  - ensuring that by 2015, all children, boys and girls alike, have access to and complete primary education
  - ensuring that the learning needs of young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes
  - achieving a 50 per cent improvement in adult literacy by 2015
  - eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015
  - improving all aspects of the quality of education;

- We can achieve universal primary education completion in Nigeria by:
  - introducing free mid-day meal in our schools
  - making the school interesting and learner-friendly
  - empowerment of parents
  - prevention/control of communicable diseases that keep children away from school.

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