

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:
INDICATORS IN THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT
OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF NIGERIA**

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BY

**EDDY C.C. UZODINMA
EDUCATION CONSULTANT
EDUCATION**

**MARGARET AKINWARE
PROJECT OFFICER,
UNICEF, NIGERIA**

INTRODUCTION

The title of this presentation is “EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: INDICATORS IN THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF NIGERIA”.

EARLY CHILDCARE AND DEVELOPMENT

This is variously defined:

- The education provided for children 0-3 years in Day Care Centres and for children 3 years to under 6 years in Nursery schools
- A community-based, low-cost project for the holistic development of the child from 0-6 years
- Refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to eight years of age, their parents and caregivers; its purpose is to protect the child’s rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential.

INDICATORS

Indicator is a statistical data-based instrument to describe or measure the main or relevant components of a system.

BASIC EDUCATION

- A system of education which offers every person (child, youth and adult):
 - educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs, comprising both essential learning tools such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving;
 - also included are the basic learning content of knowledge, skills, values
 - furthermore, attitudes required by human beings to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity are included as well
 - thus to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions and above all
 - to continue learning

THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM:

The structure:

- Formal Education (FE) or First Strand
- Non-Formal Education (NFE or Second Strand

Formal Education (FE) or First Strand

The components are:

- Pre-Primary (Day Care and Nursery)

- Primary (for 6 – 11 year olds)
- Junior Secondary (JS) – 3 years duration after primary 6
- Senior Secondary (SS) – 3 years duration after Junior Secondary
- Tertiary (Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities)

Non-Formal Education (NFE) or Second Strand

- Early Childhood (children 0-8 years)
- Girl Child Education
- Koranic Education
- Nomadic Education (for nomadic communities including migrant fishermen))
- Out-of-School Education (essentially Boys Drop-out education)
- Continuing Education and Mass Education

CONTENT: THE MAJOR ISSUES:

- Access
- Retention
- Equity
- Drop-out syndrome
- Under Achievement

RELATION BETWEEN THE STRUCTURE AS WELL AS THE CONTENT OF THE SYSTEM AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The issue being raised really is this: how do the structure and the content function in or relate to Early Childhood Education?

First, The Structure:

- Early Childhood Education (ECE) is Non-Formal Education (NFE)
- Its structure or pattern is flexible
- Its infrastructure is different from the specification of the formal classroom
- The environment is baby and learning friendly
- The furniture used is tender and sensitive
- The establishment, management and organisation of ECE Centres are facilitated and regulated by Government rules and regulations which ensure standardisation and very little uniformity

Second, Content:

- ECE employs an Alternative Delivery System (ADS) which is non-formal
- Instruction not teaching is the mode used and providers of non-formal learning
- Access is key to a successful early childhood education, thus:
 - (a) letting the girls learn;

- (b) reach children where they are;
 - (c) reaching the unreached;
 - (d) finding the lost children
 - (e) reaching rural families
- Retention and completion are important issues and will ensure that children who enter the Centre or school stay to the end;
 - Equity is the issue which demands fairness to opportunities available
 - Drop-out syndrome is linked to under achievement; both are destructive elements and often are caused by:
 - (a) early marriages and withdrawals
 - (b) negative cultural and religious norms
 - (c) expensive (school) levies
 - (d) inappropriate curriculum
 - (e) poor application of the principles of access and equity
 - Quality - enhances the value of education and ensures impact. Its essential components are:
 - (a) professionally qualified and experienced instructors and personnel who are dedicated
 - (b) available instructional materials and teaching aids
 - (c) good learning environment
 - (d) inputs (pupils) who are ready to and capable of learning;
 - (e) learning through play – available and practised.
 - Quality Control: This entails monitoring and evaluation by qualified experienced and dedicated personnel.
 - (a) It demands the conserving of resources while raising school quality;
 - (b) it ensures that necessary remedial measures are carried out promptly;
 - (c) it ensures that access is not infringed by over-emphasis on quality
 - Child Rights: In Formal Education (the Second strand) these are embedded in the Social Sciences. But in Early Childhood Education, Child Rights are expressed and made functional in the ‘Principles Rights’ also called the ‘Four Pillars’ which are:
 - (a) **Survival Rights**
Rights of the child to survive and develop, health, nutrition and social security among others
 - (b) **Development Rights**
Right to education (especially primary education), development, the ‘freedoms (expression etc), leisure, recreation, health, nutrition

- (c) **Protection Rights**
 These deal with rights to protection against torture, economic and sexual exploitation, against denial of parental care and protection including family life among others
- (d) **Participation Rights**
 Right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, of speech and expression, access to socially and culturally beneficial information, right to leisure, recreation and cultural activities among others

GENERAL STATISTICAL DATA BACKGROUND:

- Proper and effective education are recognised in Nigeria as vital to Survival and Early Child Development, 1999 survey showed that about 50% of children aged 3 to under 6 years lacked access to any form of organised early child education programme
- Majority of caregivers lacked adequate training and skills
- The estimated population of Nigeria in 1999 was 124 million, 59 million of this are under the age of 18
- Population 0 – 4 (2000) was 23,081,860 (Males – 11,748,090; Females – 11,333,770)
- Population of 5-9 (2000) was 19,436,997 (Males – 9,804,082; females: 9,532,915)
- 1999 Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) was 105 per 1000
- 1999 Under 5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) was 178 per 1000 live births (compare with National Plan of Action) (NPA) estimates of 114 and 191 respectively)
- 1990/1999 Survey showed increase in rate of exclusive breast feeding in children 0-3 months from 22 to 20%
- 1999 Immunisation rose to 27% from 18% for 1995
- unsatisfactory increase in wasting since 1996 among children under 5 from 8% to 16%
- Estimated Eradication date for Polio is 2002
- Access to Safe Water increased from 50% in 1995/96 to 54% in 1999

EARLY CHILDHOOD INDICATOR IN THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM ARE MULTIPLE INDICATORS (M.I)

Accordingly, we state them as follows:

- (i) **Multiple Indicator One:**
 Gross Enrolment (GER) in early childhood development programmes, (including public, private, and community programmes) expressed as a percentage of the official age-group concerned, if any, or otherwise the age-group 3 to under 6 years.
- (ii) **Multiple Indicator Two:**

- The percentage of new entrants of primary grade I who have attended some form of organized early childhood development programme.
- (iii) Multiple Indicator Three:
New Entrants in Primary Grade I as a percentage of the population of the official entry age (Gross intake rate)
 - (iv) Multiple Indicator Four:
New Entrants to Primary Grade I who are of the official primary school entrance age as a percentage of the corresponding population (Net Intake Rate)
 - (v) Multiple Indicator Five:
Public expenditure on primary education as a percentage of total public expenditure.
 - (vi) Multiple Indicator Six:
Percentage of primary school teachers who have the required academic qualification (NCE Pre-Primary or NCE Primary)
 - (vii) Multiple Indicator Seven:
Pupil Teacher Ration (PTR)
 - (viii) Multiple Indicator Eight:
Percentage or Number of children taught in the mother-tongue to master basic learning competencies in the first three years of primary as required by the National Policy of Education (NPE)
 - (ix) Multiple Indicator Nine:
Number of Percentage of 'Baby-Friendly schools in relation to approved Early Childhood Education Centres (ECEC)
 - (x) Multiple Indicator Ten:
Number of Early Childhood Education Centres built and supported through Advocacy and social mobilisation
 - (xi) Multiple Indicator Eleven:
Number or percentage of schools which have benefited from teaching and non-teaching staff trained under an approved programme of capacity-building
 - (xii) Multiple Indicator Twelve:
Extent of circulation and, or use of national curriculum or syllabus on preparing children for reading in the Early years.

- (xiii) **Multiple Indicator Thirteen:**
Number or quantity of suitable toys from local sources and for different age levels suitable for teaching or encouraging reading skills (visual perception observation, concentration, oral expression and recognition of words, shapes, numbers, and colours among others.
- (xiv) **Multiple Indicator Fourteen**
Principle of learning through play – identification and promotion which is intended to deal with the importance of play as enhancing the development of creativity;
- stimulant to the child’s cognitive skills
 - enriching the child’s experience
 - teaching social skills, cooperation, respect for others and team spirit
- (xv) **Multiple Indicator Fifteen:**
‘School Readiness’; This is the ‘Transition Module’ and deals with all genuine efforts and activities to prepare the Day Care Nursery and the pre-Primary Child for primary 1 – 3.
- (xvi) **Multiple Indicator Sixteen:**
This is termed the ‘Biological Risk Category’. Children, who have a physical problem at birth that can be remediated such as low-birth babies come under this category.
- (xvii) **Multiple Indicator Seventeen:**
We have here the ‘Environmental Risk Category’. Children in this category are ‘deprived’ and in general live in poverty. They include children from ethnic minorities, as well as those ‘raised in condition of war and violence’
- (xviii) **Multiple Indicator Eighteen:**
This is the ‘Early identification and Intervention’ measures in this category engender useful sometimes critical, remedial measures and in each case make a difference in the quality of life, thus ensuring optimal growth and development.
- (xix) **Multiple Indicator Nineteen:**
Effect of Government Policy. This is an obvious regulatory category that no doubt indispensable:
- facilitates the growth and expansion of early childhood and development
 - strengthens ECD structure and capacity;
 - gives its content quality and ensures quality control;
 - helps to ensure that the child is ready for the school and the school also ready for the child
 - assists and nurtures a sustaining culture of education in the sub-sector
 - acts as catalyst to implementors especially non-governmental organisations at the grass root level.

CONCLUSION

Early Childhood Education and Development is in fact a start to life and a reliable foundation to continuing education. Learning begins at birth and at eight most 'brain wiring, language abilities, physical capabilities and cognitive foundations have been set in place. Investing in Early Childhood Care (ECC) is investing in the whole child and dividends continue to pay off throughout the entire life cycle. ECC must remain low cost and affordable. It is a pity that it is poorly funded in our system.

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