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Principles and general objectives of education

The guiding principle of education in Nigeria is the equipping of every citizen with such knowledge, skills, attitudes and values as to enable him/her to derive maximum benefits from his/her membership in society, lead a fulfilling life and contribute to the development and welfare of the community. More recently, and in the spirit of promoting basic education, there is a plan to provide every child with a nine-year schooling up to the end of the junior secondary level.

The national educational aims and objectives for all levels of education are: a) the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; b) the inculcation of correct types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society; and c) training for understanding the world around.

One of the strategic objectives of the *Nigeria Vision 20:2020* is to improve the nation's prospects for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and creating employment in a sustainable manner. In order to achieve the long-term broad objectives, one of the challenges is for the nation to raise the quality and standard of education to international comparative levels. Every Nigerian child must have opportunity to acquire quality education, in an environment conducive to learning. The strategy to be employed will include redesigning the curricula to sooth the labour market demand and benchmarking of the quality of education standards with global standards.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The National Policy on Education was enacted in 1977 and undergone several revisions, the most recent one in 2004. Since 1981, a number of decrees have been passed providing the legal framework of education in the country.

The **Decree No. 16** of 1985 places special emphasis on the education of the gifted and talented children within the National Policy on Education.

The National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education was established by **Decree No. 17** of 26 June 1990 and formally inaugurated on 5 July 1991.

The **Decree No. 96** of 1993 re-established the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC). It also provided the arrangement for funding primary education in the country.

The **Education National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions Act No. 16** of 1985, together with the 1999 Constitution, empowers the Minister of Education to ensure that minimum standards are set, maintained and



constantly improved in all schools of the federation. This responsibility, aimed at ensuring uniformity of standards, is delegated to the Federal Inspectorate Service (FIS) Department and other bodies by the Minister of Education and carried out through inspection and monitoring of educational provision in schools and colleges. In 1993, the National Minimum Standards and Establishments of Institution Amendments **Decree No. 9** was promulgated. It provides for religious bodies, non-governmental organizations and private individuals to participate in the provision of tertiary education.

By a recent decree, all companies operating in Nigeria which have up to 100 employees on their payroll shall contribute 2% of their pre-tax earnings to the Education Tax Fund for the funding of education.

The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) was established by the **TRCN Act No. 31** of 1993. The Council became operational by June 2000.

The most crucial strategy for sustainable education development in Nigeria is the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme, which was launched in 1999. In May 2004, the Nigerian Legislature passed the UBE bill into law. The **Free Universal Basic Education Act No. 66** of 2004 represents the most significant reform and addresses comprehensively the lapses of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the issues of access, equality, equity, inclusiveness, affordability and quality. There are three components of the UBE scheme, namely: a) formal basic education encompassing the first nine years of schooling (primary and junior secondary education) for all children; b) nomadic education for school age children, pastoral nomads and migrant fishermen; and c) literacy and non-formal education for out-of-school-children, youth and adults.

In the context of Nigeria, basic education includes early childhood care development and education as well as compulsory primary and junior secondary education. The main policy objective is to provide nine years of universal, free and compulsory education (primary education and the first three years of secondary school), as well as to provide functional literacy for adult illiterates.

Administration and management of the education system

Nigeria is a federation of thirty-six states with a Federal Capital Territory in Abuja; it has altogether over 770 local government councils. The management of education is dictated by the country's political structure based on federalism. Consequently, the administrative mechanism devolves some power to the state and local governments.

For the purposes of providing university, technological, professional and other post-primary education services, the federal and state governments are at liberty to legislate, establish and manage institutions in this category. Local governments on the other hand, have a statutory responsibility to provide and maintain primary education subject to necessary assistance from the states. The role of the Federal government with regard to the primary and secondary subsectors, as articulated in the Constitution, mainly concerns the determination of national policy, setting of standards (including curriculum) and the monitoring of performance. In practice



however, the Federal government has over the years directly influenced the financing and management of primary education through the setting up of special institutions at federal and state levels.

Responsibility for the management of basic education (comprising early childhood care and education, primary and junior secondary education) is shared among the federal government, state governments, local governments, community committees and school committees. Measures have been introduced in the past years which encouraged active participation of local communities in the running of schools. The federal level is responsible for policy, allocation of resources through **Universal Basic Education Commission**, and the maintenance of standards (inspection and monitoring); the states are responsible for implementation through the State Universal Basic Education Commissions; and the local governments manage primary schools. Concerning senior secondary education, the federal level is responsible for policy, curriculum, inspections, examinations through the relevant entities, the management of unity schools and of federal technical colleges. The Federal government has also responsibility for policy design, strategy and management of all federal-owned colleges of education, polytechnics and universities, as well as Education for All, literacy, adult and non-formal education and special education.

The **Federal Ministry of Education** is charged with the responsibility of harmonizing educational policies and procedures of all the states of the Federation. The Ministry is responsible for: i) formulating a national policy on education; ii) collecting and collating data for purposes of educational planning and financing; iii) maintaining uniform standards of education throughout the country; iv) controlling the quality of education in the country through the supervisory role of the Inspectorate; v) harmonizing educational policies and procedures of all the states of the federation through the instrumentality of the National Council on Education; vi) effecting cooperation in educational matters on an international scale; and vii) developing curricula and syllabuses at the national level in conjunction with other bodies.

The organization of the Federal Ministry comprises several units and the following departments: basic and secondary education (which includes five divisions); tertiary education (including seven divisions); federal inspectorate service; human resources; finance and account; procurement; and policy, planning, education management and research. The main functions of the **Federal Inspectorate Service** include: supervising the effective and comprehensive implementation of curriculum, standards and pedagogy; collaborating with relevant entities involved in the monitoring and evaluation of schools; providing oversight functions for the implementation of Whole School Evaluation as a tool for school self- evaluation; designing monitoring and evaluation instruments for measuring education quality indicators; ensuring linkages with the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, the faculties of education, institutes of education and other national and international bodies on development in curriculum contents, delivery and pedagogy practices as they apply to secondary technical and vocational education.

The **National Council of Education** (NCE) is the highest policy-making body in educational matters in the country. It consists of the Federal Minister of Education and the State Commissioners for Education. It is assisted by the **Joint Consultative**



Committee (JCC) on Education, which is composed of professional officers of the federal and state ministries of education. The Committee advises the NCE on a wide variety of educational matters.

The main mandate of the **Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council**, established in 1972, is to develop curricula for use at all levels of the educational system in Nigeria. Other functions of the Council include: functions: to encourage, promote and coordinate educational research programmes in Nigeria to identify such educational problems in Nigeria needing research; to encourage research into education problems and, for that purpose, undertake commissioning and financing such research projects; to maintain a central register for educational research projects and publish a list of completed educational research project; and to complete and publish or sponsor the publication of the results of educational research.

The **National Universities Commission** is a parastatal entity under the Federal Ministry of Education. The Commission is responsible for: the approval of courses and programmes; the determination and maintenance of minimum academic standards; monitoring of universities; the accreditation of academic programmes; and the provision of guidelines and processing of applications for the establishment of private universities.

The **National Examinations Council** conducts examinations for some junior secondary schools, and for senior secondary schools jointly with the **West African Examination Council**. The **National Business and Technical Examinations Board** administers technical and business examinations. The **National Commission for Colleges of Education** provides advice to the Federal Ministry and coordinates all aspects of non-degree teacher education in the country. The **National Commission for Polytechnics** has been established following the 2003 revision of the National Policy on Education.

The **National Teachers' Institute** plays an active role in teacher professional development by organizing in-service training programmes, seminars and workshops for teachers nationwide under the aegis of the federal and state governments. The main responsibilities of the **Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria** are: determining what standards of knowledge and skills are to be attained by persons seeking to become registered as teachers and raising those standards from time to time as circumstances may permit; securing the establishment and maintenance of a register of teachers and the publication from time to time of the lists of those persons; regulating and controlling the teaching profession in all its aspects and ramifications; and classifying from time to time members of the teaching profession according to their level of training and qualification.

Other relevant bodies include: the **National Board for Technical Education**; the **National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult Education and Non-formal Education**, which is charged with the responsibility of developing strategies, coordinating programmes, monitoring and promoting literacy and post-literacy programmes nationwide; the **National Commission for Nomadic Education**; and the **Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board**. The **National Centre for Adult Education**, established in Kano in 1985, serves as a national non-formal education library, documentation and resources development and production centre. It provides



in-service training to staff of state agencies for mass literacy and NGO literacy programmes and carries out research on adult education.

The Federal Ministry of Education owns and funds a number of universities, polytechnics, technical colleges, colleges of education, and secondary schools, which are evenly located in every state in the country. The remaining tertiary institutions are owned and funded by state governments, while other secondary schools are owned and funded by state governments, communities and private organizations. The administration of the different types of tertiary institutions is defined by the federal and state governments' instruments which established them.

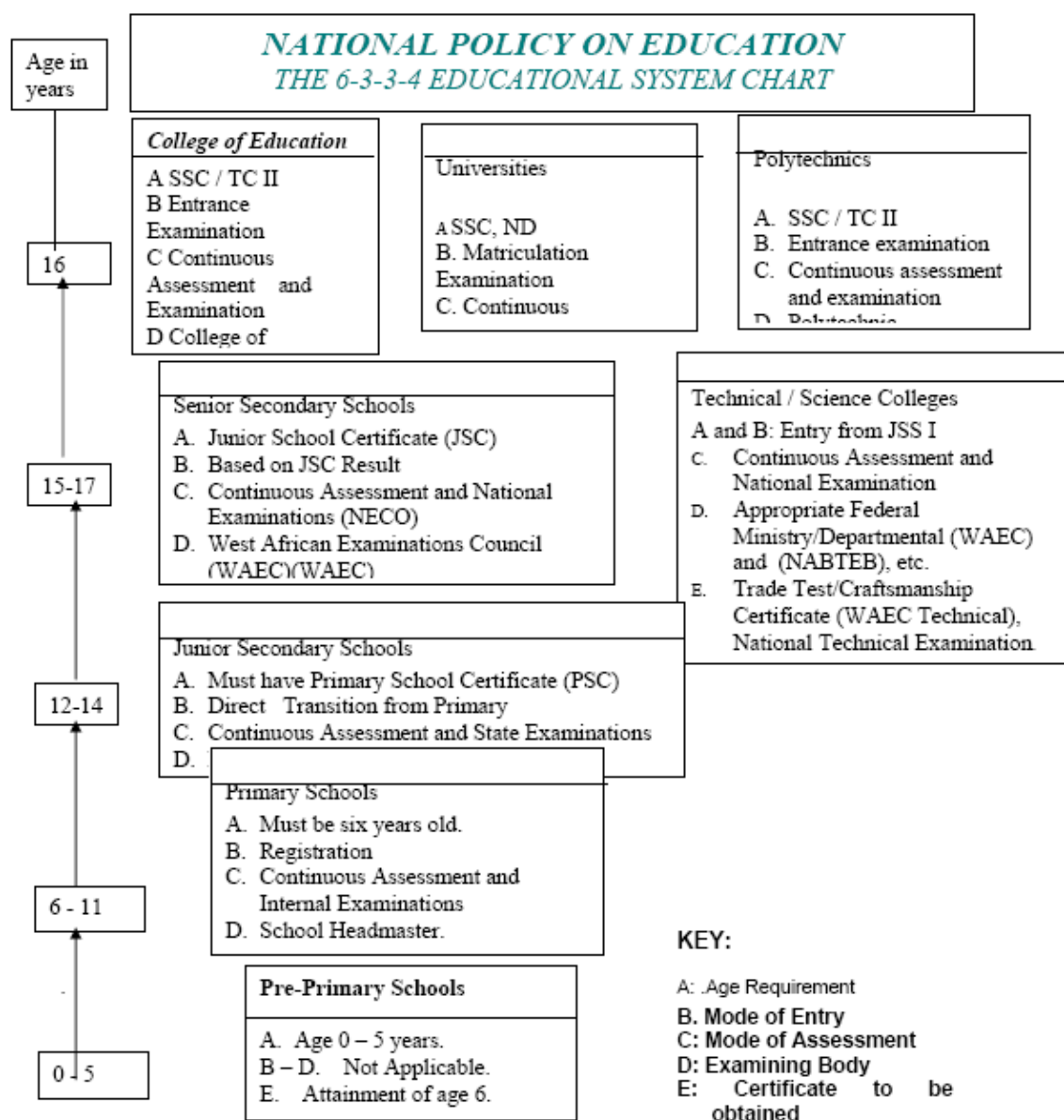
State governments own a large proportion of secondary schools in the country. With regard to state secondary schools, administration and management fall within the purview of the State Ministries of Education and their proprietors, but they have to comply with minimum standards which are prescribed by state laws. The administration of public primary schools is under local education authorities, while pre-primary schools are essentially maintained and administered by their proprietors. Federal and state governments maintain quality control through inspection of schools.

Other ministries involved in education are the ministries of: Women's Affairs and Social Development; Health; Agriculture; Information and Culture; Finance; and the National Planning Commission. For example, the Ministry of Information undertakes publicity and sensitization for educational policies and programmes. The Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and the State Commissions for Women collaborate with Ministries of Education in the promotion of the education of women and girls. The Ministries of Finance provide funding while the National Planning Commission and state ministries of planning approve educational plans.

There are networks of NGOs which collaborate with the federal and state ministries of education in the management of the non-formal education system. They operate private primary schools and offer literacy and other educational programmes. Women's education centres have been established in most of the states. They are involved in mobilization and advocacy in aid for the education of women and girls.

Structure and organization of the education system

Nigeria: structure of the education system (2005)



Pre-school education

Pre-primary education (early childhood care development and education–ECCDE) is for children aged 3-5 years. Attendance is not compulsory. However, parents are strongly encouraged to register their children in ECCDE centers while the government is expected to provide ECCDE centers of good quality. ECCDE is part of basic education.



Primary education

Primary education lasts six years and caters to children aged 6-11+ years. Primary education is compulsory and is part of basic education. According to the new curriculum structure for the nine-year basic education programme, primary education comprises two cycles: lower basic education (grades 1-3), and middle basic education (grades 4-6).

Secondary education

Secondary education is divided into two three-year cycles: junior secondary education, or the upper cycle of nine-year compulsory basic education, culminating in the Basic Education Certificate Examination; and senior secondary, leading to the Senior School Certificate Examination. Junior secondary school (or basic education) graduates can enrol in vocational enterprise institutions or in technical colleges offering three-year programmes leading to the award of National Technical/Commercial Certificates.

Higher education

Tertiary and higher education is provided at colleges of education, universities, polytechnics and colleges of technology. Colleges of education offer three-year programmes leading to the award of the Nigerian Certificate in Education. A Technical Teachers Certificate requires one additional year of study beyond the Certificate in Education. Polytechnics and colleges of technology award national certificates and diplomas, namely: the National Diploma, after two years of study following the senior secondary school; and the Higher National Diploma, awarded after a further course of two years' duration. A Professional Diploma requires an additional one and a half years of study. At the university level, programmes leading to a bachelor's degree normally last four years (five to six years in the case of medicine, surgery, veterinary and dentistry). Postgraduate diploma programmes normally last one year. The duration of master's degree programmes is one to two years; doctoral degree programmes usually require two to three years of study.

The school year extends over ten months, divided into three terms of ten to twelve weeks each at the pre-primary, primary, junior and senior secondary levels. The school year lasts nine months (thirty-six to forty weeks) for technical schools. The academic year consists of nine months, divided into two semesters of eighteen to twenty weeks each.

The educational process

Once a policy decision has been taken at the level of the Federal Government, after discussions at the level of the Joint Consultative Committee on Education and the National Council on Education, the Monitoring Unit of National Policy on Education together with the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) and in collaboration with relevant curriculum/content panels (consisting of educators, experts, curriculum developers and teachers), provide guidelines, materials and training to implement the innovation or change.



The 1969 National Curriculum Conference was the first national attempt to change the colonial orientation of the education system and to promote national consciousness and self-reliance through the educational process. A seminar held in June 1973 on the National Policy on Education adopted several recommendations of the 1969 Conference, including the proposal concerning the new structure of the education system.

The various subjects included in the curricula of primary and secondary education have been specified in the National Policy on Education. The 1997 NERDC National Feedback Conference provided five broad categories of subjects: languages, humanities, sciences (including mathematics), social sciences and technology (including vocational electives). Integrated science and social studies represent a broad field approach to various disciplines. Other content areas have a non-examination status such as population education, environmental education, citizenship education, peace education and drug abuse prevention. These subjects are to be infused into identified subjects in the curriculum and are mostly at the pilot project stage.

Following the decision of the Federal Government to introduce the nine-year basic education programme and the need to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and, by extension, the need to implement the National Economic and Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS, which can be summarized as: value-reorientation, poverty eradication, job creation, wealth generation and using education to empower the people), it became imperative that the existing curricula for primary and junior secondary school (JSS) should be reviewed, re-structured and re-aligned into a nine-year basic education programme. The National Council on Education (NCE) at its meeting in Ibadan in December 2005 directed the NERDC to carry out this assignment. The NCE also approved a new curriculum structure namely: lower basic education (grades 1-3), middle basic education (grades 4-6) and upper basic education (grades 7-9 or JSS 1-3) with subjects listing.

In response to these developments a High Level Policy Committee on Curriculum Development, made up of critical stakeholders and chaired by NERDC took the initiatives to provide the guidelines for re-structuring the curriculum. Between January and March 2006, the NERDC convened a meeting of experts and also organized several workshops to produce the nine-year basic education curriculum, which would ensure continuity and flow of themes, topics and experiences from primary school to junior secondary school levels.

The new curriculum reflects depth, appropriateness, and inter-relatedness of the curricula contents. Also, emerging issues which covered value reorientation, peace and dialogue including human rights education, family life and HIV and AIDS education, entrepreneurial skills, etc., were infused into the relevant contents of the curriculum.

Since the curriculum represents the total experience to which all learners must be exposed, the contents, performance objectives, activities for both teachers and learners and evaluation guide have also been provided. The prescriptions represent the minimum content to be taught in the schools. However, teachers are encouraged to

enrich the contents with relevant materials and information from their immediate environment, by adapting the curriculum to their needs and aspirations.

Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education (early childhood care development and education–ECCDE) caters to children aged 3-5 years, prior to their entering primary school. In terms of the 2004 National Policy, ECCDE aims at: facilitating a smooth transition from home to school; providing adequate care and supervision for children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices, etc.); preparing the child for primary education; inculcating social norms; inculcating in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the local environment, playing with toys, artistic and musical activities, etc.; developing a sense of cooperation and team spirit; teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc., through play; teaching good habits, and especially good health habits.

The curriculum at this level is broad, and the range of subjects offered is quite wide. It focuses on: English language, mathematics (arithmetic), Nigerian languages, writing, reading, rhymes, social studies, music, singing, and elementary science/nature study. Six thirty-minute periods per week are usually devoted to the teaching of English. This is the maximum number of weekly periods for any subjects. Two periods are allocated to the local language. Another subject that is given prominence in the programme is mathematics/arithmetic. Five periods are allocated to this subject per week and, on the average, the children spend one thirty-minute period every day learning mathematics. Topics like counting, recognition of numbers, addition and subtraction are also taught. This gives an important start in the acquisition of numeracy. Three periods are allocated to each of the following subjects: moral and religious instruction, writing, reading, drawing, rhymes, elementary science/nature study, social studies, handicraft and music /singing. On the average, instructional time consists of 28 teaching periods per week.

The medium of instruction at this level is principally the mother tongue, or the language of the immediate community. The evaluation system is essentially based on continuous assessment. Continuous assessment is conceived as a cumulative record of the child's performance in various fields throughout his or her school career obtained through tests, quizzes, etc. The curriculum was reviewed and revised in 2003/04 using an integrated bottom-up approach, targeting children aged 0-5 years. This revised curriculum has been approved for use by the government. The training manual is expected to promote the integrated approach and converge all sectoral interventions—health, nutrition, water and environmental sanitation, psycho-social care, early learning, child protection—with the aim to fulfilling the rights of all young children and creating a conducive environment for them to survive, live, learn and reach their full potentials.

ECCDE has had increased focus of attention since 2000. Although the establishment of early childcare centres and pre-primary facilities is mainly private-sector driven, the government has taken significant steps to regulate this sector using the report of several commissioned studies or surveys through the development of curriculum guideline and training manuals as well as teacher training programmes in colleges of education and quality assurance of early childhood care and education.



The Child Rights Act of 2003, the UBE Act No. 66 of 2004, the National Policies on Education, Food, Nutrition and Health are laws and policies which have given shape to different sectoral interventions on ECCDE in the country.

ECD centres, and daycare centres and play groups, locally tagged ‘Jelesimi’, ‘Ota-akara’, ‘Ibviosukumehu’, etc. in local dialects, are usually for children aged 0-2 years and 2-3 years. The UBE Act of 2004 has an expanded scope which includes programmes and initiatives for early childhood education and development. The UBE programme has made provision for every public primary school to have a pre-primary school linkage to cater for children aged 3-5 years. An inventory of ECC facilities in Nigeria conducted in 2003 showed that most of the ECC facilities were privately owned (42% of the sample population) and 34% by the government, followed by 21% by local communities. These findings are consistent with the ESA 2003 study, which also indicated a greater private ownership (57%) of ECC facilities, compared to ownership by the government (42%). Now that the early childhood care development education is covered by the UBE law, government ownership at state/LGA/community levels increased, particularly regarding centres catering for the 3-5 year olds. Early childhood care has been included in the Bachelor’s degree curriculum of the Faculty of Education of one of the Nigeria’s universities since 1991. Two universities offer Master’s/PhD degrees in early childhood care. Plans are underway to integrate the concepts of this project in the syllabus of colleges of education throughout the country.

In 2005, the total enrolment (kindergartens and nurseries) was estimated at 1.86 million children, for an estimated gross enrolment ratio of 2.65%. In 2006, the total enrolment was estimated at 2.31 million children in 56,188 preschools. (FME, 2008).

Primary education

The goal of primary education is centred on functional literacy and numeracy, the ability to communicate effectively, and the inculcation of positive attitudes towards cooperation, work, community, national development, and continuing learning.

Permanent literacy and numeracy and communication skills are the top priority. Also, a number of emerging social issues such as HIV and AIDS, information technology, environmental education, gender equity and child labour have been introduced in the relevant contents of the curriculum. The core compulsory subjects specified in the basic education curriculum are: language arts (English and a major Nigerian language); mathematics; basic science; social studies; civic education; cultural and creative arts; religious studies; physical and health education; and computer studies. Pupils must also offer one elective (but not more than two) to be chosen among agriculture, home economics, and Arabic language. At the middle basic level (grades 4-6), French language is introduced as core subjects; as in the case of the lower basic level (grades 1-3), pupils must offer one elective (but not more than two).

Typically, a thirty-five-minute period each day for the five days per week is allocated to English language and mathematics. Physical and health education is taught twice per week; religious studies, basic science, and social studies are also



taught twice per week. Drawing, handicraft, music and cultural activities are each allocated one period per week.

In grades 1-3 the medium of instruction is the language of the immediate environment. During this period, English is taught as a subject. From grade 4 onwards, however, English is progressively used as a medium of instruction, while the language of the immediate environment is taught as a subject. The Primary School-leaving Certificate Examination has been phased out. Evaluation at the primary education level is now carried out by continuous assessment.

In terms of the 2004 National Policy on Education, special education is a formal, special educational training given to people (children and adults) with special needs who fall into three categories: the disabled, the disadvantaged and the gifted and talented. The disabled include the visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically and health impaired, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, speech impaired, learning disabled and multiple handicapped. The disadvantaged include children of nomadic pastoralists, migrant fisher folk, migrant farmers, hunters, etc. who, due to their lifestyles and means of livelihood, are unable to have access to conventional education provision and, therefore, require special education to cater for their particular/peculiar needs and circumstances. The gifted or talented, on the other hand, are at the other end of the spectrum of special needs. For them the teaching and learning approaches of conventional formal setting may be inappropriate or even behaviourally counter-productive.

There are about ten million disabled persons in Nigeria—physically handicapped, visually impaired, speech and hearing impaired, behaviour disordered, learning disabled and mentally retarded. The Federal Ministry of Education estimates the population of school-age children with various types of disabilities at 3.25 million or 7% of the Nigerian population, out of whom only 90,000 or 2.76% are enrolled in primary school, while a further 65,000 or 1.85% are in secondary schools. (FME, 2008).

Between 1986 and 1992, the dropout rate in primary school was estimated at 43.2%. According to a survey, the dropout rate was higher in the upper primary classes than in the lower classes, presumably because the pupils in upper classes are mature enough to be engaged in income-generating activities. The Situation and Policy Analysis Survey, conducted in 1992, showed that there was a 17% wastage rate, and that an average of 46.6% of primary school pupils who dropped out from schools were girls.

The results of the 2005 School Census conducted at national level by type of schools showed that in 2005/06 at the primary level there were 22.26 million pupils enrolled in about 59,800 primary schools. The gross enrolment ratio was estimated at 95.9% (103.9% for boys and 87.7% for girls) and the net enrolment ratio was estimated at 84.2% (international method). The transition rate to junior secondary was estimated at 50% and the primary completion rate was estimated at 77.7%. The total number of teachers was estimated at about 598,900, of whom only 50% had the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) which is the minimum qualification required to teach at this level (UNESCO, 2006). The Universal Basic Education Commission



reports that in 2009 there were 58,595 primary schools in the federation, with a total enrolment of 21.85 million pupils.

Secondary education

The broad aim of secondary education within the overall national objectives is the preparation for useful living within the society and for higher education. In terms of the 2004 National Policy, secondary education should: equip students to live effectively in the modern age of science and technology; raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, and live as good citizens; foster the Nigerian unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite within diversity; and foster the desire for achievement and self-improvement. Secondary education lasts six years and is divided into two three-year cycles: junior secondary (or the upper cycle of basic education) and senior secondary.

The junior secondary school (upper basic education, grades 7-9) is designed to enable pupils to acquire further knowledge and develop skills. The core curriculum includes: English studies; a major Nigerian language; French; mathematics; basic science; social studies; civic education; cultural and creative arts; religious studies; physical and health education; basic technology; and computer studies. Electives include: agriculture; home economics; business studies; and Arabic language. Students are expected to offer two electives (but not more than three). The main reform of secondary education is in regard to the fact that access to the junior secondary school is free and compulsory.

Students who complete basic education and have taken the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE)/Junior Secondary School Examination, are streamed into any one of the following options: a) senior secondary school; b) technical college; c) an out-of-school vocational training centre; or d) an apprenticeship scheme. The streaming is based on the BECE results to determine academic ability, aptitude and vocational interest.

Senior secondary education, which is now disarticulated from the junior secondary school (e.g. the upper basic education level) has three main goals: offer a diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles; provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at the sub-professional grade; and prepare potential middle level manpower for higher education and relevant professions and specialization in line with national needs. The senior secondary school has a diversified curriculum, with a core curriculum designed to broaden students' knowledge and outlook. Every student takes six core subjects, plus a minimum of two and a maximum of three from the list of elective subjects (resulting in a minimum of eight and a maximum of nine subjects). One of the three elective subjects may be dropped in the last year of the senior secondary course.

Core subjects are: English; mathematics; one major Nigerian language; one elective out of biology, chemistry, physics or integrated science; one elective out of English literature, history, geography or social studies; agricultural science or a vocational subject. Vocational subject—a total of seventeen—range from agriculture



to typing or technical drawing, and from bookkeeping to auto mechanics and woodwork.

The length of a teaching period at the secondary school level is forty minutes. As in primary schools, and because of their importance, English language and mathematics are taught every day. Each one of the science subjects—biology, chemistry, and physics—are allocated four periods per week. Subjects like agriculture, technical drawing, fine art, bookkeeping/accounting, woodwork, metalwork, geography, further mathematics, economics, social studies, and history, are each allocated three periods a week. The medium of instruction at the secondary school level is English. Overall, there are 37 subjects approved for the SSS course. Based on the dictate of present challenges, the curricula have been expanded to include the following: family life education; HIV and AIDS education (anti HIV and AIDS clubs have been introduced in schools to sensitize students on the pandemic and on safety-consciousness); drug prevention education; basic African cultural knowledge; and Nigerian history. (FME, 2004). It is estimated that the number of people living with AIDS was some 2.9 million at the end of 2005; the number of orphans aged 0-17 years due to AIDS was estimated at 930,000.

Continuous assessment scores are combined with examination scores to determine the advancement of a student from one class to another. The Senior School Certificate is awarded on successful completion of the senior secondary school and the passing of a national examination which is conducted by the West African Examination Council. The Certificate is awarded to candidates who enter and sit for all the core subjects and two or three elective subjects. The core subjects are: English language; one Nigerian language; mathematics; one science subject (chemistry, physics or biology); one of either literature in English, geography or history; agricultural science or vocational subject. There are six grades in order of merit from A to F, with grades B and C further sub-divided. Grade A is the highest and Grade F the lowest. The first five grades (A to E) are grades of pass. The sixth grade (e.g. F) represents a failure.

Technical education and vocational education constitute two distinct educational subsectors which are characterized by their purposes, levels of institutions, course offerings, organization and control. Generally speaking, institutions in the technical education subsector are of tertiary level but non-university in status. Their primary role is to produce middle- and technician-level manpower for commerce, industry, agriculture, health care and teaching.

The technical education subsector includes polytechnics, colleges of technology (mono-disciplinary tertiary colleges) and colleges of education. Colleges of education in this sub-sector train technical education teachers.

The primary role of vocational education is to train low-level manpower, i.e. operatives, artisans, craftsmen and master craftsmen for commerce, industry, agriculture and ancillary services). This subsector includes technical colleges and vocational enterprise institutions. Training programmes offered by the vocational training centres last between one and three years, depending on the skill or vocation.



Governments in the Federation assume direct control of their institutions of vocational education, but interfere little with privately-owned institutions, with the exception of the maintenance of standards. Greater participation by the private sector is encouraged and flourishes more in the vocational education sub-sector than the technical subsector.

Technical colleges are the main alternative route to further formal education and training after basic education. This means that students who complete the education programme can either choose to proceed to senior secondary schools for further general or pre-professional education or proceed to technical colleges for vocational training. Technical subjects are included in the curricula of both junior and senior secondary schools, as a way of diversifying the curriculum and enhancing pre-professional orientation. This policy establishes the crucial importance of technical colleges in the national education system. In 1999, there were some 128 technical colleges in the country, of which 15 were owned by the Federal Government, 101 by the States, and 12 by private individuals and organizations. The curriculum for each trade consists of four components: i) general education; ii) theory and related courses; iii) workshop practice; and iv) industrial training and productive work.

The Federal Ministry of Education reports that in 2005 there were 159 recognized technical colleges offering trades at NTC/NBC level (made up of 19 federal, 137 state and 3 private colleges) with a total enrolment of 92,216 students (of whom 86.1% were boys). There were also 18 approved vocational enterprise institutions, 214 vocational schools owned by states, local governments as well as NGOs, and 1,850 registered open apprenticeship centres (50 per state and the Federal Capital Territory). In the technical colleges there was a total of 2,730 teaching staff comprising 2,285 (83.7%) males and 445 (16.3%) females. (FME, 2009).

In 2005/06, the total enrolment at the junior secondary level was estimated at 3,624,163 students, and the number of teachers was 61,938 (of whom 73.3% were qualified). (UNESCO, 2006).

The 2005 Education Sector Analysis (ESA) study report shows that the total enrolment in senior secondary schools was 2,773,418 students (of whom 43.8% were girls). The gross enrolment ratio (GER) at the secondary school level was estimated at 31.4% in 2005, with an estimated 7.2 million young persons (age group 15-19+ years) not enrolled in school. There is also the problem of low transition rates (e.g. 16%) from junior secondary to senior secondary schools. This picture is even more daunting with respect to technical and vocational education and training (TVET), where shortfall in enrolment is over 80%. (FME, 2009). In 2005/06, the total number of teachers at the senior secondary level was 74,841 (of whom 73% were qualified). (UNESCO, 2006).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

The Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) project, was conceived in 1994 following the Situation and Policy Analysis Survey. The study revealed that the existing monitoring indicators did not include valid measures of the quality of learning outcomes. Subsequently, the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration



with UNICEF sought UNESCO assistance as technical adviser for the implementation of the MLA project.

The aim of the project was to develop empirical instruments which would be used in monitoring the efficiency of performance of the primary school system. These instruments were developed in three domains of knowledge: literacy (English language), numeracy (mathematics) and life skills (social studies, health education, basic science, home economics, etc.). The eventual goal was to provide a valid and more reliable basis for informed policy decision about curriculum matters at this level.

Grade 4 was selected as target for the study because using any lower level would have necessitated the translation of the test items into more than 270 local languages. The immediate focus was to assess what level of skills—in terms of concepts, problem-solving and reasoning abilities, and comprehension—grade 4 pupils in primary schools actually acquired, compared to what they are expected to know with regard to curricular standards at that level. The mean percent scores on the literacy, numeracy and life skills tests were 25.1%, 32.2% and 32.6%, respectively. Although performance was generally poor, pupils were less competent on English language skills and displayed relative more understanding of tasks in mathematics and life skills. In general, pupils were found to have very poor writing skills.

Concerning the numeracy test, results indicated that the level of acquisition of geometry skills was very low. As regards the life skills test, pupils performed better on the science sub-test, followed by survival skills and health and hygiene. The lowest scores were obtained in social studies sub-test. The analysis of performance by location of schools (rural/urban) indicated that pupils in urban schools performed better than pupils in rural schools. The analysis of performance by school type (private/public) showed that pupils in private schools outperformed pupils in public schools in all the three subjects and sub-tests. (FME, 1999 and 2000).

The World Bank reports that the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) carried out national assessments in 2001 and 2003. “These were criterion-referenced tests based on items from four core subjects in the primary school curriculum (English, mathematics, basic science, and social studies). Tests were administered at grades 4, 5, and 6. Results from the UBEC assessment of grade 5 pupils in 2001 (the only grade level to be tested that year) indicate that only one in five students was able to answer correctly more than 30% of the test items. In the same assessment, less than 1% of pupils were able to answer correctly more than half the test items. In 2003 the UBEC carried out a second assessment of the same grade levels. Mean scores across the four subjects were low at each grade level, with students able to answer correctly about one in four questions in English and social studies and about one in three questions in science and social studies. Grade 4 scores ranged from 25 to 50 across the four subjects, grade 5 scores ranged from 25 to 39, and grade 6 scores ranged from 21 to 40. Results at each grade level were lowest for English language and for social studies, subjects that are highly dependent on literacy skill and language use.” (World Bank, 2008, p. 20).

Colleges of education train middle manpower in teacher education. They offer three-year programmes leading to the award of the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE), and since 1998 no teacher with a qualification below this certificate is



expected to teach in any school in the country. The Technical Teacher's Certificate requires one additional year of study. As of 2005 there were 20 federal colleges, 41 state-owned, and 5 privately-owned. In addition, there were ten polytechnics offering NCE programmes, one military college and the National Teachers' Institute (distance education). Furthermore, all conventional universities offer teacher education programmes.

Teaching staff

In terms of the 2004 National Policy on Education, the goals of teacher education shall be to: produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system; encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers; help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals; provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations; and enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

The requirements for the various teacher training programmes differ from one level to the other in terms of academic qualification. For admission to colleges of education, prospective candidates must have at least three credits in the Senior School Certificate—including the subjects they want to study—and two other passes. At the university level, the entry requirement is five credits, which must include the chosen major teaching subjects. In addition, prospective college of education students are required to sit and pass the polytechnic/college of education matriculation examination, while prospective university students must pass the university matriculation examination.

As from 1998, the new minimum qualification required for teaching in the primary school will be the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE). The NCE (three-year programme) is also the qualification required for teaching in junior secondary schools and technical colleges.

At the senior secondary level, the Bachelor of Education degree or the single subject bachelor's degree plus a postgraduate diploma in education is required. However, holders of specialized qualifications like the national diplomas awarded by polytechnics can be employed to teach in secondary schools and technical colleges. For teaching in colleges of education, at least a master's degree is required, while a doctoral degree is required for teaching in universities. Lecturers in colleges of education are required to have a teaching qualification, in addition to their degree.

Students are required to attain a high level of mastery of their teaching subjects, as well as their prescribed electives. Teaching practice constitutes about 25% of the programme. The Curriculum of the NCE course is drawn up by the National Commission for Colleges of Education that also accredits the colleges. University teacher education curriculum is drawn up, along with all other undergraduate curricula, by the National Universities Commission that also accredits university undergraduate programmes.



Teacher-training establishments include:

- Teacher-training colleges, that used to be part of the secondary education programme. They awarded the teacher certificate, Grade II, which in the past was the qualification required for primary school teaching across the country. However, the National Policy on Education having made the NCE the minimum qualification for teaching in the country, the Grade II colleges have been phased out.
- Colleges of education offer post-secondary NCE training programmes. They used to train teachers for the junior secondary school, but they now train primary school teachers, as well in view of the fact that the NCE which they award will become the minimum qualification for primary school teaching. Some of the colleges also run NCE pre-primary courses in order to produce teachers for the pre-primary level of education.
- Universities. All conventional universities in Nigeria offer the four-year bachelor of education degree programmes, open to holders of the Senior School Certificate. NCE senior secondary school teachers are trained in the universities.

In principle, the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) undertakes the accreditation of the courses and programmes of all institutions that prepare individuals intending to be teachers in Nigeria. Such institutions include the colleges of education, schools of education in polytechnics, faculties and institutes of education of universities, and the National Teachers' Institute. TRCN further has the right to satisfy itself that teacher qualifications obtained in teacher education institutions overseas meets the Nigerian National Minimum Teaching Standard before holders of such qualifications could be registered and licensed to teach in Nigeria.

The law has placed the different categories of the tertiary educational institutions under different supervisory agencies. As such, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) supervises the colleges of education, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) take charge of the polytechnics, 'monotechnics' and other technical institutions, and the National Universities Commission (NUC) deals with the universities. These supervisory agencies accredit and set the general standards for the award of the certificates, diploma and degrees in the institutions under them. However, the law requires the professional regulatory agencies to equally accredit the programmes to satisfy themselves that the intending professionals acquire the skills, knowledge and orientations which are necessary for excellent performance on the job. Therefore, notwithstanding the accreditation of the colleges of education and the National Teachers' Institute by the NCCE, they will also be accredited by TRCN. The same applies to the Faculties and Institutes of Education in the universities: Notwithstanding the NUC accreditation, all Faculties and Institutes of Education in the Nigerian universities are to be accredited by TRCN. (TRCN, *Guidelines for the accreditation, monitoring and supervision of teacher education programmes in Nigeria*, 2007).

The critical need of professionalization of the teaching profession, vested in the TRCN began in 2007 with the mandatory registration of all professionally qualified teachers. This action is equally matched with comprehensive training and in-service training seminars and workshops in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria.



More importantly, the TRCN began implementation of the 2004 National Policy provision that “all teachers in education institutions including universities shall be professionally trained.”

The main reform strategy being reinforced since 2004 includes the innovative Pivotal Teacher Training Programme (PTTP), the establishment of the Federal Teachers Corps, the improvement in the status and conditions of service of teachers including the recently introduced Teachers Salary Scale (TSS), a series of incentives such as the Home Ownership/Housing for All Teachers Scheme, and awards such as the Bournvita National Teachers Award—a successful private sector-sponsored programme.

Particular attention is given to making sure that the provision of the 2004 National Policy concerning the mandatory training of all teachers in all educational institutions who are not professionally qualified as well as the registration and certification of all qualified, practicing teachers is adhered to. Secondly, the problem of teachers working in exceptional, difficult or special circumstances is being progressively addressed especially with increasing funding.

The TRCN has been very active in the preparation and continuous training of teachers for quality delivery of programmes at all levels of the education system. The following actions have been taken since 2005 to ensure quality and the professionalization of teaching personnel in close collaboration with a wide range of education institutions, agencies and development partners and local stakeholders: a) registration of more than 700,000 teachers in primary and secondary schools nationwide; b) establishment of a baseline date of over 91,000 unqualified teachers who are being upgraded through the strategic teachers’ upgrading programme (STUP); c) organization of ‘back to the basics’ capacity building workshops for teachers nationwide; and d) began in 2006, the implementation of the Federal Teachers’ Scheme which trains and deploys 40,000 NCE graduate teachers.

The National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) has introduced a specialized teacher training programme which involves trainees who come from the nomadic communities and would return to their respective communities as trained teachers. Head teachers, supervisors and state coordinators of the Nomadic Education Programme are regularly updated and upgraded. Teachers are trained on the use of curriculum guides, innovative teaching approaches, e-learning strategies and on Interactive Radio Instruction, and the production of learning aids.

The National Teachers’ Institute (NTI) was established in 1976 to provide pre-service and in-service training for basic education level through the continuing professional development of teachers’ programme which is a distance learning provision. NTI’s contribution over the years has been to ensure continuous supply of qualified teachers, ensure retention and upgrading of their professional competences. With the introduction of the Universal Basic Education reform, NTI has been increasingly active in upgrading Grade II Certificate teachers. A total of 26,051 teachers have been trained so far, while a further 81,981 trainees (75% of whom are women) in the semi-urban areas enrolled in 2008. It runs the following programmes: the PTTP for teachers at the request of state governments; a postgraduate diploma in education for untrained graduate teachers (some 11,500 teachers have been trained); a



diploma in education in ECCDE, guidance and counselling and school supervision; regular continuing professional development programmes based on teachers' needs for the Federal Ministry of Education, the Universal Basic Education Commission, State Ministries of Education, and State Universal Basic Education Boards. (FME, 2008).

The usual avenue for in-service training of principals and inspectors is through programmes, seminars and workshops during vacation periods. These usually cover educational planning, administration and management. The National Institute of Educational Administration and Planning, set up in Ondo in 1992, plays a crucial role in meeting this need. Refresher courses continue to be arranged for teachers to strengthen their pedagogical skills, as well as to increase their competence in handling continuous assessment data. The need for teachers to acquire this skill has gained urgency, because the issuance of primary school certificates has become the sole responsibility of each head teacher nationwide with effect from 1993.

The scope of UBE implies that 40,000 teachers will be required per annum for the next nine years (starting from 2004) to cope with the massive increase in enrolment as well as quality delivery of instruction and quality learning.

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