A study of educational system in Nigeria is important in that it is one of the most populous country in Africa and there is need to understand the steps that are being taken to access education to this large population. By the end of this chapter the reader should be able to:

- Trace the evolution of education in Nigeria
- To identify the major characteristics of Nigerian education system
- To identify at least three issues affecting education in Nigeria.

BACKGROUND

As of mid 2008, Nigeria's population was estimated at 138 million, split primarily between Muslims (50 percent) and Christians (40 percent). Muslims constitute the majority in the north of the country and Christians in the south. Nigeria comprises of more than 250 ethnic groups. However the following are the largest and politically influential: Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5% and Tiv 2.5%. Five major languages are used in Nigeria. They are Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani that are declared as the
national languages while English is the official language and is widely spoken. Language has created a problem with respect to education. The smaller languages are not written and therefore devising instructional materials in those languages is difficult. In schools the medium of instruction in the first three years is the local language and there after English is used.

Nigeria achieved independence from the United Kingdom in 1960. Nigeria is a federal republic with a presidential system. The constitution provides for a separation of powers between the three branches of government; a strong executive, an elected legislature and an independent judiciary. The country has been affected by military coups that were interspersed by civilian rule. General elections held in February 1999 marked the end of 15 years of military rule and the beginning of civilian rule based on multi-party democracy.

Nigeria is located in Western Africa bordering the Gulf of Guinea, and between Benin and Cameroon to the east. The total land area is 923,768 sq km with land comprising of 910,768 sq km and water covers 13,000 sq km.

The country is endowed with natural resources such as natural gas, petroleum, tin, columbite, iron ore, coal, limestone, lead, Zinc and arable land. Oil accounts for 96% of the countries foreign exchange earnings. The country produces 2.256 million barrels per day. Nigeria and western Cameroon has share similar colonial legacy. The western province of Cameroon was ruled as part of Nigeria until the cessation of the later before independence. This has been creating conflict between the two countries and has led to war due to the natural resources available such as oil.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

There were three fundamentally distinct education systems in Nigeria by 1990: the indigenous system, Quranic schools, and formal European-style education institutions.

**Indigenous system**

In the rural areas where the majority lived, children learned the skills of farming and other work, as well as the duties of adulthood, from participation in the community. Age-based schools in which mature
men instructed groups of young boys in community responsibilities often supplemented this process. Apprentice systems were widespread throughout all occupations; the trainee provided service to the teacher over a period of years and eventually struck out on their own. Indigenous crafts and services from leatherwork to medicine were passed down in families and acquired through apprenticeship training as well. In 1990 indigenous education system included more than 50 percent of the school-age population and operated almost entirely in the private sector. There was virtually no regulation by the government unless training included the need for a license.

**ISLAMIC EDUCATION**

Islamic education was part of religious duty. Children learned up to one or two chapters of the Quran by rote from a local religious teacher, before they were five or six years old. Religious learning included the Arabic alphabet and the ability to read and copy texts in the language, along with those texts required for daily prayers. Any Islamic community provided such instruction in a mallam's house, under a tree, or in a local mosque. This primary level was the most widespread. A smaller number of those young Muslims who wished, or who came from wealthier or more educated homes, went on to examine the meanings of the Arabic texts. Later, grammar, syntax, arithmetic, algebra, logic, rhetoric, jurisprudence, and theology were added; these subjects required specialist teachers at the advanced level. After this level, students traditionally went on to one of the famous Islamic centers of learning.

Throughout the colonial period, a series of formal Muslim schools were set up and run on European lines. These schools were established in almost all major Nigerian cities but were notable in Kano, where Islamic brotherhoods developed an impressive number of schools. They catered for the children of the devout and the rich, who wished to have their children educated in the new and European learning, but within a firmly religious context. Such schools were influential as a form of local private school that retained the predominance of religious values within a modernized school system.
Western-style education came to Nigeria with the missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century. Although Methodists founded the first mission school in 1843, it was the Anglican Church Missionary Society that pushed forward in the early 1850s to found a chain of missions and schools, followed quickly in the late 1850s by the Roman Catholics. In 1887 in what is now southern Nigeria, an education department was founded that began setting curricula requirements and administered grants to the mission societies. By 1914, when north and south were united into one colony, there were fifty-nine government and ninety-one mission primary schools in the south; the missions ran all eleven secondary schools, except for King’s College in Lagos. The missions got a foothold in the middle belt; a mission school for the sons of chiefs was opened in Zaria in 1907 but lasted only two years. In 1909 Hans Vischer, an ex-Anglican missionary was asked to organize the education system of the Protectorate Northern Nigeria. Schools were set up and grants given to missions in the middle belt. In 1914 there were 1,100 primary school pupils in the north, compared with 35,700 in the south; the north had no secondary schools, compared with eleven in the south. By the 1920s, the pressure for school places in the south led to increased numbers of independent schools financed by local efforts and to the sending of favorite sons overseas for more advanced training.

The education system focused strongly on examinations. In 1916 Frederick Lugard, first governor of the unified colony, set up a school inspectorate. Discipline, buildings, and adequacy of teaching staff were to be inspected, but the most points given to a school’s performance went to the numbers and rankings of its examination results. This stress on examinations was still used in 1990 to judge educational results and to obtain qualifications for jobs in government and the private sector.

Progress in education was slow but steady throughout the colonial era until the end of World War II. By 1950 the country had developed a three-tiered system of primary, secondary, and higher education based on the British model of wide participation at the bottom, sorting into academic and vocational training at the secondary level, and higher education for a small elite destined for leadership. On the eve of
independence in the late 1950s, Nigeria had gone through a decade of exceptional educational growth leading to a movement for universal primary education in the Western Region. In the north, primary school enrollments went from 66,000 in 1947 to 206,000 in 1957, in the west (mostly Yoruba areas) from 240,000 to 983,000 in the same period, and in the east from 320,000 to 1,209,000. Secondary level enrollments went from 10,000 for the country as a whole in 1947 to 36,000 in 1957; 90 percent of these, however, were in the south.

THE FORMAL SCHOOL SYSTEM

In 1982, Nigeria switched to the American system of six primary, three junior secondary, and three senior secondary school grades, but the rigid examination system remained. Education is free but not compulsory at any level. The formal education system is six years in primary schools, 3 years of junior secondary school, 3 years of senior secondary and 4 years of university education leading to a bachelors level degree in most fields.

Primary education

Primary education begins at the age of six for the majority of Nigerians and lasts for six years. The curriculum for primary school typically includes subject areas like mathematics, English, social studies, home economics and agriculture. However, the curriculum has just recently been reviewed, and, from September 2008, the primary school curriculum includes ICT, French language and civic education. For the first three years of primary school the medium of instruction is that of the immediate environment. During this period English is taught as a subject. During the remaining years of primary school, English is progressively used as the medium of instruction. Until 2004, graduating students from primary school had to sit the Primary School-Leaving Certificate examination, this examination has been abolished and the Primary School Leaving Certificate is now awarded on the basis of continuous assessment.

Secondary education

The secondary education cycle lasts for six years and is divided into two three-year cycles: junior secondary and senior secondary. Junior secondary school has two streams; pre-vocational and academic and
the core curriculum includes: English, mathematics, French, integrated science, social studies and introduction to technology. Pre-vocational electives include agriculture, business studies, crafts and computer education. Non pre-vocational electives include creative arts, religious and moral education and Arabic. Students typically take between ten and thirteen subjects, including core subjects.

On the successful completion of the junior cycle students are awarded the **Junior Secondary School Certificate (JSSC)/Certificate of Basic Education**, which is necessary to progress to the senior secondary school level. Following the junior secondary school cycle, students are streamed into secondary schools, technical colleges or schools and out of school vocational training centers or apprenticeships offering a range of terminal trade and craft awards.

The senior secondary cycle lasts for three years and each student takes eight subjects from a diversified curriculum that includes six core subjects: English; mathematics; one major Nigerian language; and 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.

The **Senior School Certificate (SSC)** is issued by the West African Examination Council and/or the National Examination Council on successful completion of the senior secondary cycle. The SSC is one of the requirements for undergraduate admission into a Nigerian university. The second requirement for entry to higher education is the **Universities Matriculation Examination (UME)**, which was first conducted in 1978 by the joint admission and matriculation board. Students taking the UME must register for English language and three subjects based on their particular major. A fifty percent total score is considered a pass for the UME examination. However, the different higher education institutions would specify different minimum requirements based on the nature of specific undergraduate programmes.

The Senior School Certificate replaced the **West African General Certificate of Education** Ordinary and Advanced levels (GCE ‘O’ and ‘A’ levels) in 1989. It should be noted that students may still take the GCE ‘O’ and ‘A’ level examinations, though these are not mandatory,
and if successful this would guarantee direct entry to university without being required to take the University Matriculation Examination.

Secondary and post secondary vocational education and training

Vocational education is provided at secondary level through science technical schools following junior school education.

Vocational and innovation enterprise institutions are vocational institutions, which have recently been established to offer part and full-time education leading to the award of certificates and national diplomas. Vocational enterprise institutions (VEIs) would admit candidates with a minimum of the Basic Education Certificate (JSC), and would cover multidisciplinary areas that would prepare learners for jobs in most industries. The Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs) would admit students with a minimum of five credits obtained in the Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC).

A two tier system of nationally certified courses is offered at science technical schools, leading to the award of National Technical/Certificate (known as Craft level Certificate pre 1995) and the Advanced National Technical/Business Certificate (known as the Advanced Craft level Certificate pre 1995) The National Technical/Business Certificate programme lasts three years after Junior School and the qualification is considered comparable to the Senior Secondary. The Advanced Certificate lasts one year and requires the National Technical/Business Certificate and two years relevant industrial experience for entry. This means that a student requires a minimum of six years to qualify as a master craftsperson from a science technical school.

The awarding body for the National and Advanced Technical/Business Certificates is the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB). The National Certificates are recognized by the joint admission and matriculation board (JAMB) as meeting minimum entry requirements for admission into tertiary institutions including the universities, polytechnics and colleges of education.

Non university-sector higher education and training

The provision of technical education takes place in institutions that are considered higher education in level, but non-university in status.
Polytechnics, monotechnics (single-discipline training) and colleges of education all provide higher technical education and training. Entry into non-university higher education institutions is based on performance in both the Senior Secondary Certificate and in the Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education (MPCE) and Examination conducted by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB). In 2008, there were 320,000 candidates sitting the MPCE, numbers of candidates have increased significantly over recent years, reflecting the growth in interest in higher technical education and training and the recent decision by Government to allow polytechnics to award Bachelor of Technology degrees in the near future.

Polytechnics and institutes of technology award the Ordinary Higher Diploma on the successful completion of a two-year programme.

The Higher National Diploma (HND) can be taken as a two-year programme following the completion of the Ordinary Higher Diploma and one year of relevant work experience.

The Professional Diploma is open to holders of the HND and takes at least eighteen months post-HND to complete. The Professional Diploma allows for progression to Masters level nationally.

Colleges, universities, specialized training institutes and professional bodies offer various certificates and diplomas that may be obtained after one, two or three years. The Nursing council of Nigeria awards the Diploma of Midwifery after one year of theoretic and clinical postsecondary studies and the Registered Nurse Certificate after three years of postsecondary study.

The Institute of Medical Laboratory Technology (IMLT) awards the Associate Diploma of Medical Laboratory Technology and the Fellowship Diploma on a four plus one basis of postsecondary education. The IMLT is a professional body that has cooperated with universities to offer examinations and qualifications to technologists. The exam has recently been discontinued in favour of a more academic Bachelors degree in Laboratory Technology. The award of Certificates, Diplomas and Advanced diplomas are intended to support progression to professional registration and employment in specific professional employments.
Higher education and training

The Nigerian system of higher education is binary in nature and is constituted of universities and a non-university sector made up of polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education. Accreditation processes have been introduced at higher education level to ensure certain standards. Higher education and training has also come under increased centralized control through two national commissions, the National Board for Technical Education and the National Universities Commission. These agencies grant approval for all programmes run in Nigerian university and non-university higher education and training institutions. They grant approval for the establishment of all higher education and training institutions and ensure quality assurance of programmes within such institutions.

Either federal or state governments can establish universities. While those universities established by federal government have higher enrolments, there is little or no difference between federal or state administered universities. A council and a senate govern each university. The colleges or institutes that are affiliated with the Universities are autonomous.

In 1993 the Federal government passed legislation to allow for the establishment of private institutions of higher education. The National Universities Commission maintains a register of recognized universities in Nigeria.

Minimum Entry into the university requires five credits passes in the Senior School Certificate and a pass on the Universal Matriculation Examination. Applicants presenting acceptable results in the Nigerian GCE A levels are granted advanced entry to stage two of a four-year Bachelor degree. The numbers applying through this direct entry route are extremely low.

The Bachelor degree is typically four years in duration. In the case of many professional degrees, such as medicine and dentistry, duration may extend to six years for completion. All programmes leading to the award of a Bachelor degree are at Honours degree level. Programmes may be taken as single or combined honours and this would influence the amount of specialization in later years of the programme. A
dissertation is a normal requirement for the successful completion of a Bachelor degree; however, there is not an expectation that the award holder will have undertaken independent research.

A Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) is awarded after the completion of one year of graduate study beyond the Bachelor degree. PGD programs are generally offered in education and public administration. Programmes leading to a **Masters degree** are generally one or two years in duration. The one-year programmes are coursework based and do not involve research work. Study towards the **Doctorate** generally takes three years post Masters degree. Candidates presenting for the award are required to submit a thesis and take an oral examination.

**Teacher training**

Colleges of education and universities provide teacher education. The National Commission governs colleges of education. The Commission provides accreditation services for Colleges of education and maintains standards through periodic accreditation visits. The **National Certificate in Education (NCE)** is a professional teaching certificate awarded by a college of education. It is the minimum certificate that qualifies one to teach in junior secondary schools and technical colleges in Nigeria. The NCE takes three years to complete. Holders of the NCE will typically progress with advanced standing to a Bachelor Degree in Education in a university.

The **Technical Teachers Certificate** requires one additional year of study following the National Certificate in Education.

The universities offer **Bachelor of Education** programmes, which qualify the holder to teach in secondary schools. Alternatively, a single-subject Bachelor degree plus a Postgraduate Diploma in Education would provide the same professional status. The **Higher National Diploma (HND)** awarded by the polytechnics can be used to teach vocational subjects in both secondary and technical schools.

**Administration and organization of education system**

The current administrative system is divided into the Federal Capital Territory and 36 states. The management of education in Nigeria is based on this federal system, so that while basic educational policy regarding structure, curriculum and school year is centrally determined,
some powers over educational delivery are devolved to state and local government. In effect, education is administered by three branches of government: primary education is under the control of local governments, secondary schools fall under the jurisdiction of the state government except the unity schools that are administered by the federal governments. Both the federal and state government administers higher education.

The Federal Ministry of Education owns and runs twenty-five universities, thirteen polytechnics, fifteen technical colleges, twenty colleges of education and sixty-six secondary schools. 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 and management of state government-owned secondary schools falls under the remit of state Ministries of Education. The administration of public primary schools falls under the local education authorities.

Reforms

The rapid expansion of the education system, compounded by a shrinking economy, has constrained educational development in Nigeria. A reduction of expenditure on education has slowed the reform process and even maintaining the system, as it currently exists is challenging. The reform agenda is underpinned by the work of the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), which was established in 1972 to encourage, promote and coordinate educational research programmes in Nigeria.

Today the most crucial strategy for sustainable education development in Nigeria is the Universal Basic Education Scheme launched in 1999. The Universal Basic Education Act passed in 2004 represents the most significant reform to basic education and aims to provide free compulsory education at primary-school level and for the first three years of secondary school, as well as to provide functional literacy for adult illiterates. The national adult literacy rate is 61 per cent for men and 40 per cent for women.

In the 1980s and 1990s the government implemented a series of far-reaching education reforms. These reforms have significantly altered the structure of secondary education. Before the changes went into
effect, secondary school education closely resembled the British system consisting of GCE ‘O’ levels followed by two years of GCE ‘A’ level courses. This structure has been replaced by three years of junior secondary and three years of senior-secondary schooling. As a result, the GCE ‘O’ and ‘A’ Levels have largely been phased out, and replaced by the Junior School Certificate and Senior School Certificate.

In addition, the secondary school curriculum has also been changed. Junior secondary schools now offer both academic and pre-vocational streams. Graduates of junior secondary schools may progress to senior secondary school or to Technical/vocational College.

Curricula at all levels of education have also been reformed to put more of an emphasis on science and technology. At the primary and secondary levels, new courses, such as environmental studies and population studies, have been introduced for the first time. Universities have also introduced a general studies requirement to give students broad-based knowledge to compliment areas of specialization.

In September 2008 a nine-year curriculum from primary to junior secondary was introduced and was intended to ensure that by the time a child ends her basic education, she would have completed a comprehensive education that would include ICT, French language and civic education. The 6-3-3-4 school system is not being jettisoned; however an integrated curriculum covering the first nine years of school education would help to address what the Ministry of Education has described as a disconnect between primary and secondary education in Nigeria.

In October 2008 the Minister of State for Education announced that selected polytechnics and colleges of education would soon be upgraded to award university degrees. As a consequence, higher education and training qualifications would be considered as comparable regardless of whether they were achieved in a university or in a polytechnic/colleges of education. The purpose of this reform was to strengthen polytechnic education and create additional avenues for would be students in a country where hundreds of thousands of qualified school leavers were unable to secure a university place each year. Government limitations on the salary and career prospects of college graduates in the public sector have been removed.
Vocational enterprise institutions (VEIs) and innovation enterprise institutions (IEIs) are institutions recently approved by the Federal Government of Nigeria to provide an alternative route to higher education. They have been established due to the lack of capacity in higher education institutions to accommodate the multitude of secondary school leavers and the low participation of the private sector in skills training. They are private institutions that would offer vocational, technical or professional education and training at post-basic and tertiary levels to equip secondary school leavers and working adults with vocational skills and knowledge.

ISSUES OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Religious groups, mainly Christian missionaries from Europe who used them as tools for proselytizing and converting the Nigerian, originally established the country's schools. The curricula were faith-based and overwhelmed by religious indoctrination, dogma, and brainwashing. Education was used to convert the Nigerians to embrace Christianity or Islam. It was not an avenue for self-realization or intellectual growth.

The Nigerian government took over all the schools in order to instill secular ideals and values into public education in the 1970s. But the Nigerian educational system has retained its religious character-Islamic in the North and Christianity in the South. The government's secularization project never achieved much. Therefore, Christianity and Islam have maintained their influence on Nigeria's schools and students, allowing no space for free, independent, and secular thoughts to thrive and flourish.

Consequently, most educated Nigerians are intellectually inclined to blind faith. The current educational climate is not only repressive but also dangerous. For over a decade, Nigerian schools, colleges, polytechnics, and universities have been bedeviled by the actions of cultists and criminals. Tertiary institutions have been scenes of violence against students by other students. School authorities have often attributed the problems to students' lack of faith, godlessness, or religious indifference. Some have turned to religious leaders for help, and they now flock to the campuses to hold crusades, prayer sessions, and revivals. This has not solved the problems either.
Other problems have been created. Nigerian campuses have been turned into religious places and the education system has become more sectarian. Religious meetings are conducted virtually everywhere in schools - in libraries, lecture halls, and even in laboratories. A number of lecturers have abandoned teaching and researching to become clerics and evangelists. There is no longer any clear demarcation between religious duties and academic work.

Nigerian schools have been turned into breeding grounds for religious militants, terrorists, and bandits. This has been the result of continuous involvement of sectorial conflicts between the Muslims and Christians in their quest to control education. Since the 1980s there have been recurring instances of crises and violence at the University of Sokoto (1986), the University of Ibadan (1987), Queen Amina College Kaduna (1987), Ahmadu Bello University Zaria (1988), Government Vocational Training School Markafi (1990), Government Girls' College Jalingo (1992), Kaduna Polytechnic (1992), and many others. Many incidents have been sparked by efforts to introduce and implement Islamic law in the country. In February 2003, Muslim and Christian students clashed in some secondary schools in Oyo State over the wearing of the Islamic veil. Even though religious groups may have something positive to contribute to Nigerian education, such offers are complicated by the extremes of religious fundamentalism, militancy, and rivalry in the schools.

Despite Nigeria having a lot of resources such as oil, coal, tin and Zinc the proceeds have not been used to develop education in the country. The government has over relied on oil and neglected other sectors of the economy such as agriculture, education and health for the local people. There is inadequate funding by the federal, state and local governments. The funding of education for effective management and administration is poor. The entire education system in Nigeria is under funded. The problem of funding is reflected in poor teachers' remuneration, shortage of infrastructure facilities as well as misappropriations of the available funds. The inadequate funding is not in line with the rising population and inflation trends. Economic hard ships among the teaching staff have encouraged moonlighting. This is further complicated by lack of materials, no incentives for research and writing and use of out dated notes by lecturers. Recently there has been violent protest
in the oil rich region demanding part of the money to be invested in the local areas where oil is drilled.

This has led to low standards of education due to poor funding of the education system. More over the education system is no longer relevant since the colonial heritage and mentality still persisted. The education system lacked relevance in meeting the pressing economic, social and local cultural needs of the nation in favour of foreign ones.

Poor leadership has affected the Nigerian system. The education managers are not result oriented, are ineffective and they lack managerial and administrative skills required to successes in the execution of educational policies and programmes. The Nigerian educational administrators have progressively moved away from generating knowledge into political arena where they have become centers of political actors.

The use of examinations criterion as the primary sorting device to schools and universities has led to widespread cheating among faculties at all levels especially at secondary and post secondary levels.

The teaching of English language beyond primary schools had reached poor levels that faculties complained that they could not understand the written works of their students.

Access to education has been affected by cultural and religious factors. In the Muslim dominated areas in the north the education for girls has been neglected. There are cultures that have discouraged the participation of girls in education. In some regions due to economic problems a large population could not access education.

**QUESTIONS**

i. Discuss at least three issues that are affecting education in Nigeria since independence.

ii. Outline four reforms that have been introduced in Nigeria from 1990 to date.

iii. Describe the educational structure of education in Nigeria

iv. Nigeria has three types of education that has been used to cater for the large population. Discuss the eligibility of using each type
in the modern world filled with information communication and technology.

v. Discuss the rationale used by Nigerians in devolving higher education.

vi. With over ten communities in Nigeria discuss the role played by the "unitary schools" in the development of national cohesion.

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